



Reference: 218328

November 2, 2015

Tim Ryan, Chair  
Forest Practices Board  
P.O. Box 9905 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, British Columbia  
V8W 9R1

Dear Tim Ryan:

On behalf of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, please accept this letter as the province's response to the Forest Practices Board's recommendations in its report: *Mitigation of Forestry Impacts to Natural Range Barriers (February 2015)*.

We appreciate the board's evaluation of measures in forest stewardship plans (FSPs) that aim to mitigate the impacts of forest operations on natural range barriers. As outlined below, the board's evaluation is directly informing (a) our upcoming training and renewed administrative guidance on FSP preparation and approval, and (b) our updating of existing administrative guidance on managing natural range barriers.

**Recommendation One**

Government should ensure that measures in operational plans support effective mitigation of impacts to natural range barriers and are verifiable. Alternatively, government could replace the requirement in FRPA to propose and carry out measures with a practice requirement.

**Government Response**

The Range Branch is in the process of updating the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) General Bulletin 21: "Managing Section 48 of FRPA – Natural Range Barriers" to provide current guidance to resource professionals and government decision-makers on developing measures that effectively mitigate the impacts of forest operations on natural range barriers. This bulletin will be heavily informed by what we have learned from the board's report. To this end, we plan to invite the board's investigator, Doug Wahl, to review a draft of the bulletin later this fall. We are working towards completing and releasing the bulletin in early 2016.

As the board is aware, the ministry is developing new provincial training and renewing administrative guidance on preparation and approval of FSPs, with a view to starting training and delivery in early 2016. In doing so, we are considering the detailed results of several

recent board investigations (e.g., community watersheds, natural range barriers, and forest stewardship plans).

The main objective of this training will be to clearly convey the government's expectations for FSP content, including results, strategies and measures. For measures, the FSP training and supporting materials will highlight characteristics of effective, practical and verifiable measures, and will include examples of measures that meet those characteristics. This training will be available to resource practitioners who prepare FSPs and to government decision-makers.

The board's suggestion that government could replace the requirement for measures in FSPs with a practice requirement is an option the ministry is considering. We are also considering the utility of defining "natural range barrier" in regulation to help ensure appropriate, consistent interpretation of this term in operational plans. Policy analysis on these fronts will be initiated in early 2016.

***Recommendation Two***

Government should ensure that policies governing the stumpage appraisal system provide licensees and range users with sufficient time to determine if, and to what extent, forest practices have impacted a natural range barrier and the appropriate mitigation that is required.

***Government Response***

As a first course of action in addressing this issue, the Range Branch actively promotes communication between forest and range licensees during operational planning to ensure natural range barriers are identified and avoided to the greatest degree possible. This communication is emphasized and discussed in our updated FRPA General Bulletin on Natural Range Barriers. Ideally, the need to mitigate impacts to natural range barriers through range improvements, and utilization of the appraisal system to covering these costs, should be a failsafe if upfront planning is not able to prevent these impacts.

With that said, the Range Branch is currently exploring opportunities to address this recommendation with the Timber Pricing Branch. The underlying issue appears to relate to "cumulative harvesting" rather than costing. However, there may be an appropriate mechanism (i.e., change of circumstance clause) in the Interior Appraisal Manual to appropriately account for range improvement costs that can only be determined *after* forest operations have been completed and impacts to natural range barriers have been assessed. Further analysis of this issue is underway, and we will include any new insights on how to effectively account for range improvement costs in cutting authority appraisals in our updated FRPA bulletin.

***Recommendation Three***

Government should ensure that guidance is developed to clarify the purpose and scope of natural range barriers, including where on the range tenure section 48 of FRPA is meant to apply (e.g., pasture or tenure boundaries) and the values the requirement is intended to mitigate.

***Government Response***

As mentioned in response to Recommendation One, the Range Branch is updating the FRPA General Bulletin on Natural Range Barriers with a view to addressing the board's findings, including the importance of clarifying the purpose, scope and values associated with natural range barriers. We hope to solicit the feedback of the board's investigator later this fall, and publish the updated bulletin in early 2016.

For more information on the ministry's actions to address the board's recommendations regarding natural range barriers, please contact Doug Fraser, Range Practices Officer, Range Branch, by phone at 250 746-1436 or by email at [doug.fraser@gov.bc.ca](mailto:doug.fraser@gov.bc.ca). For further information on planned improvements to the FRPA and FSPs, including upcoming training, please contact Norah White, Sustainable Forest Management Policy Officer, Resource Practices Branch, by phone at 250 387-8013 or by email at [norah.white@gov.bc.ca](mailto:norah.white@gov.bc.ca).

In closing, we thank the board again for this important report on the effectiveness of FSP measures in mitigating impacts to natural range barriers. The board's input is actively being addressed as we move forward on guidance and training on natural range barriers and FSPs.

Sincerely,



T. R. (Tim) Sheldon  
Deputy Minister

pc: Tom Ethier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Stewardship Division  
Rick Manwaring, Assistant Deputy Minister, South Area (Range Program)  
Jennifer Davis, Director, Resource Practices Branch  
Perry Grilz, Director, Range Branch  
Norah White, Sustainable Forest Management Policy Officer, Resource Practices Branch  
Doug Fraser, Range Practices Officer, Range Branch

File: File: 97325-20/2013-01

December 15, 2015

Tim Sheldan  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations  
PO Box 9352, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9M1

Dear Tim Sheldan:

**Re: Response to the Board's Special Investigation Report FPB/SIR/42, *Mitigation of Forestry Impacts to Natural Range Barriers***

Thank you for your letter of November 2, 2015, which provides an update on FLNR's progress in implementing recommendations made by the Board in its investigation of the impacts of forest operations on natural range barriers.

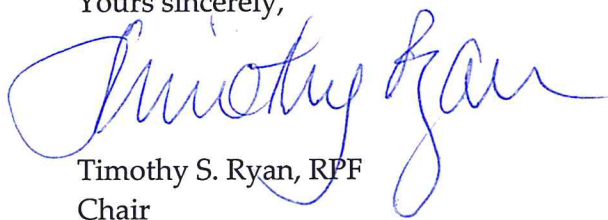
We are pleased to see that FLNR has endorsed each of the Board's three recommendations and will integrate training to improve effective, practical and verifiable measures, with upcoming FSP training.

FPB staff, Doug Wahl, will be pleased to provide feedback on the draft FRPA bulletin in relation to issues identified in our investigation.

The Board recognizes that the issues raised in this investigation are complex and will take time to fully address. We will continue to monitor progress in implementing the actions described in your letter.

We now consider this investigation closed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy Ryan".

Timothy S. Ryan, RPF  
Chair