

INFO special report

Comment on the cutblock review

Transitional provisions of the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act*

Introduction

The new *Forest Practices Code of B.C. Act* requires a review of all cutblocks (areas identified for timber harvesting) approved before June 15, 1995, and scheduled for harvesting after that date.

These cutblocks must be assessed for conformity with five significant requirements of the *Act* and the *Cutblock and Road Review Regulation*.

The Forest Practices Board carried out this study about four months into the six-month period in which cutblocks must be assessed and reported. The study provides an early indication of:

- how many cutblocks must be reviewed;
- how many cutblocks have been assessed and reported;
- how many cutblocks are reported to conform with the *Regulation's* requirements; and,
- which of the *Act's* five significant requirements substantively affect the cutblocks.

The work by the Board allowed it to provide a timely indication of the effect the *Act* may have on harvesting plans that were in place when the *Act* came into force on June 15, 1995.

After December 15, 1995, when all cutblocks are assessed and reported, the reports will be reviewed by Ministry of Forests' district and regional managers to determine if changes to previously approved plans are needed.

Summary

Provincially, about 21,000 cutblocks will be assessed and reported in the cutblock review. About 34 per cent were assessed and reported by October 15, 1995, with 71 per cent expected to be assessed and reported by November 15, 1995.

About 83 per cent of the cutblocks assessed and reported by October 15, 1995, were reported to conform with the *Regulation*.

The Board visited three Ministry of Forests' regional offices and two district offices in each of these regions to examine cutblock reports submitted by October 15, 1995.

In the locations visited, 14 per cent of the cutblocks were reported as not conforming with the *Regulation*. Almost 70 per cent of these cutblocks listed reasons which district and regional managers must consider in deciding if changes are needed.

Based on the Board's work in the location visits, cutblock size was the most common reason identified in the Prince George Forest Region for cutblocks not conforming with the *Regulation*.

Green-up was the most common reason identified in the Nelson and Vancouver Forest Regions for cutblocks not conforming with the *Regulation*.

Requirements of the Act

The *Act* requires major licence holders, woodlot licence holders, and government for short-term timber sales under the Small Business Forest Enterprise Program (SBFEP) to assess and report on cutblocks.

The cutblocks must be assessed for conformity with the *Cutblock and Road Review Regulation* respecting five key standards:

- cutblock size;
- green-up¹;
- the location of the cutblocks relative to high-value fish-bearing streams;
- community watersheds²; and,
- terrain hazard assessment.

The *Regulation* specifies, for the purposes of the review, that the maximum size for cutblocks is:

- 40 hectares in the Vancouver, Nelson and Kamloops Forest Regions; and,
- 60 hectares in the Cariboo, Prince Rupert and Prince George Forest Regions.

For green-up, the *Regulation* specifies that a cutblock cannot be harvested before previously harvested areas touching the cutblock are greened-up.

The location of cutblocks relative to high-value fish-bearing streams must be assessed. The *Regulation* specifies that harvesting cannot take place in the riparian reserve zone, the area adjacent to a stream. The required riparian reserve zones vary in width from 10 to 30 metres, depending on the stream width.

Cutblocks in community watersheds must be assessed for:

- the likelihood of slides;

- the risk of landslide debris being deposited into streams;
- slopes greater than 60 per cent; and,
- surface soil erosion or mass-wasting hazard.

In certain situations, a terrain hazard assessment must be undertaken to assess considerations similar to those for community watersheds.

Reports for all the previously approved cutblocks must be submitted for review by December 15, 1995. Holders of major licences or woodlot licences must submit reports to the district manager. District managers must submit reports for the SBFEP cutblocks to regional managers.

Scope of special report

The work for the special report was completed in two parts:

- a survey of all Ministry of Forests' district and regional offices; and,
- visits to nine Ministry of Forests' offices.

The province-wide survey of 43 district offices and six regional offices requested the following information:

- the estimated total number of cutblocks to be assessed and reported;
- the number of cutblocks assessed and reported by October 15, 1995;
- the number of cutblocks reported in conformity; and,
- the number of cutblocks expected to be reported between October 15 and November 15, 1995.

The Board visited three Ministry of Forests' regional offices and two district offices in each of these regions. The visits included a detailed assessment of all reports submitted by licence holders to the six district offices and by district managers to the three regional offices.

Examination of these reports provided the board with information on the following:

- which of the five key standards are being identified as affecting conformity of particular cutblocks; and,
- the specific reasons why cutblocks may not conform with the *Regulation*, e.g. harvesting being carried out to recover damaged timber.

1. Green-up: the minimum height and stocking levels which trees on a cutblock must achieve before an adjacent stand of timber may be harvested.

2. Community watersheds:

- (a) A watershed licenced under the *Water Act* for community water use for human consumption as of June 15, 1995, (when the Code came into effect) and no larger than 500 square kilometres; or,
- (b) all or part of a watershed licenced under the *Water Act* for community water use for human consumption designated by a Ministry of Forests' regional manager under the Code.

Watershed: An area of land that collects and discharges water into a single main stream through a series of smaller tributaries.

Discussions were held with district and regional staff involved in assessing and reporting cutblocks to confirm, and expand on, findings from the examination of reports.

No discussions were held with licence holders.

The scope of the special report excluded:

- the requirement to assess roads and the related submission of reports -- to keep the study manageable;
- compliance with the assessment and reporting requirements of the *Act* -- cutblocks do not have to be assessed and reported until December 15, 1995;
- district managers' review of the reports received from major licence and woodlot licence holders, or the regional managers' review of reports received from the district managers; and,
- the accuracy of the reports.

Submission of reports

The province-wide survey indicated that about 21,000 cutblocks will be assessed and reported by major licence and woodlot licence holders and district managers by December 15, 1995 (Table 1).

Submission as of October 15, 1995

Province-wide, about 34 per cent of the cutblocks were assessed and reported by October 15, 1995 (Table 2).

On a regional basis, the percentages of cutblocks that have been assessed and reported by October 15 are:

Cariboo Forest Region	6%
Kamloops Forest Region	44%
Nelson Forest Region	64%
Prince George Forest Region	45%
Prince Rupert Forest Region	11%
Vancouver Forest Region	16%

The survey information on Table 2 also shows submissions by type -- SBFEP, major licence, and woodlot licence.

The percentages of cutblocks assessed and reported

as of October 15 on a provincial basis are:

- 16 per cent of the SBFEP cutblocks;
- 37 per cent of the major licence cutblocks; and,
- 20 per cent of the woodlot licence cutblocks.

The percentages of cutblocks assessed and reported for the three categories by October 15 vary regionally.

Submissions expected by November 15, 1995

Province-wide, about 73 per cent of the cutblocks are expected to be assessed and reported by November 15, 1995 (Table 3).

On a regional basis, the percentages of cutblocks expected to be assessed and reported by November 15, 1995 are:

Cariboo Forest Region	48%
Kamloops Forest Region	78%
Nelson Forest Region	89%
Prince George Forest Region	99%
Prince Rupert Forest Region	52%
Vancouver Forest Region	48%

The survey information on Table 3 also shows submissions by SBFEP, major licence, and woodlot licence types.

It indicates that overall, about 70 per cent will be assessed and reported by November 15, 1995. In all three categories, the percentages of cutblocks to be assessed and reported by November 15 vary regionally.

Examination of cutblock reports

The Board visited two district offices in each of the Ministry of Forests' Nelson, Prince George, and Vancouver Forest Regions, and the three regional offices, to examine cutblock reports in detail.

The Board selected the three regions to ensure broad coverage of differing requirements and conditions throughout the province, e.g. cutblock size and both coastal and interior conditions.

The Board examined reports for about 16 per cent of the 12,500 cutblocks that will be assessed and reported in the three regions visited.

This included reports for all of the assessed cutblocks, including those assessed in conformity and not in conformity with the *Regulation*.

Reports for a total of 1,939 cutblocks were reviewed by the board. This included 1,309 cutblocks reported by October 15, 1995, and 630 cutblocks reported after October 15, 1995.

The total number of cutblocks estimated to be assessed and reported in the three regions by December 15, 1995, represents approximately 60 per cent of the estimated 21,000 cutblocks affected by the review province-wide.

Because the date of our visits to each of the locations differed, we have used the number of cutblocks that were reported by October 15, 1995, as a basis for the analysis below.

This analysis relates only to those cutblocks reported in the locations visited by the board. The cutblocks represent about 19, 10, and three per cent of the total cutblocks to be reviewed in the Nelson, Prince George, and Vancouver Forest Regions respectively.

Cutblock size

About three per cent of the total number of cutblocks assessed and reported were identified in the reports as not conforming with the *Regulation* because of cutblock size.

In the Prince George Forest Region, about six per cent of the cutblocks assessed and reported were identified as not in conformity because of cutblock size. This was the primary reason identified as affecting cutblock conformity in the region. The reasons reported for the non-conformity included the following:

- cutblocks incorporate natural disturbances patterns; and,
- cutblocks damaged from fire, insect or windthrow.

In the Nelson and Vancouver Forest Regions, cutblock size was identified in about two per cent of the cutblocks assessed and reported as not in conformity.

Both regions indicated that guidelines which provided guidance on cutblock size were in place

before the *Act* came into effect.

In the Nelson Forest Region harvesting guidelines have been in place for the past five years, while the Vancouver Forest Region implemented the *Coastal Planning Guidelines* approximately three years before the *Act* came into effect. These have to some extent addressed the requirements of the *Act*.

Green-up

About five per cent of the total number of cutblocks assessed and reported were identified in the reports as not conforming because of green-up.

In the Nelson and Vancouver Forest Regions, green-up was the primary cause for cutblocks being identified as not conforming with the *Regulation* -- about six per cent.

The main reason reported in all three regions was that harvesting was being carried out to recover timber damaged from fire, insects, or windthrow.

Other reasons included the following:

- the use of non-clearcut silviculture systems; and,
- that harvesting would be consistent with approved land-use plans.

About 14 per cent of the cutblocks that were identified as not in conformity because of green-up did not provide any reasons of why the cutblocks did not conform with the *Regulation*.

High-value fish-bearing streams

High-value fish-bearing streams were identified in four per cent of the cutblocks assessed and reported.

In the Prince George Forest Region, about five per cent of the cutblocks were identified as not conforming with the *Regulation* because of high-value fish-bearing streams.

Ministry staff felt this was primarily due to a conservative classification of streams because of the lack of inventory information. It was indicated that this would be addressed in the region during the ministry review of these reports.

In the Nelson Forest Region, high-value fish-bearing streams were identified in about four per cent of the cutblocks.

The cutblock reports indicated that silviculture prescriptions and logging plans to be submitted for 90 per cent of these cutblocks will address the *Regulation's* requirement. The other cutblocks did not conform because of reasons relating to the salvage of damaged timber and issues regarding the riparian zone widths.

In the Vancouver Forest Region, high-value fish-bearing streams were reported in about one per cent of the cutblocks (two cutblocks). Reports for both cutblocks indicated that the salvage of damaged timber was the reason for the cutblock not conforming.

Staff indicated that regionally the following would affect cutblocks being reviewed for high-value fish-bearing streams:

- the *Coastal Fish Forestry Guidelines* have been in effect in the region before the *Act* came into effect, which has addressed the requirements to some extent; and,
- most of the streams in the cutblocks being assessed in the review are steeper gradient and of low fish value.

Community watersheds

Less than one per cent of the cutblocks reported identified community watersheds.

Ministry staff indicated that operations in community watersheds would not be significant.

Table 1

Total estimated number of cutblocks subject to review under Sections 225 and 226 of the *Forest Practices Code of B.C. Act* and expected to be reported by December 15, 1995.

Region	SBFEP*	Major licenses	Woodlot licenses	Total
Cariboo Forest Region	368	2,303	208	2,879
Kamloops Forest Region	300	3,232	96	3,628
Nelson Forest Region	322	3,768	143	4,233
Prince George Forest Region	484	2,929	187	3,600
Prince Rupert Forest Region	524	1,197	67	1,788
Vancouver Forest Region	327	4,329	31	4,687
Total	2,325	17,758	732	20,815

Terrain hazard assessment

The factors indicating terrain instability were reported in about three per cent of the cutblocks assessed and reported.

Almost all of these were in the Nelson Forest Region, where about four per cent of the cutblocks assessed and reported identified terrain instability.

In most of these cutblocks, a detailed terrain hazard assessment had been completed by a qualified person and on slopes over 35 per cent, there was greater use of cable harvesting systems. Therefore, it was indicated that these cutblocks would likely conform with the *Regulation*.

Terrain instability was reported in the Vancouver Forest Region in about four per cent of the cutblocks. Staff in the region indicated that regional guidelines have been in place in the region to address operations on sensitive terrain.

None of the cutblocks assessed and reported as of October 15, 1995, in the Prince George Forest Region identified terrain instability.

Staff indicated that while terrain instability is a resource management issue in the region, it was not significant in the assessment of cutblocks as most operations in the region are on areas of more stable terrain.

Table 2

Number of cutblocks assessed and reported on as of October 15, 1995, and as a percentage of the total estimated cutblocks (Table 1) that will be assessed and reported.

Region	SBFEP*		Major licenses		Woodlot licenses		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Cariboo Forest Region	29	8%	135	6%	14	7%	178	6%
Kamloops Forest Region	47	16%	1,545	48%	16	17%	1,608	44%
Nelson Forest Region	71	22%	2,564	68%	70	49%	2,705	64%
Prince George Forest Region	185	38%	1,426	49%	19	10%	1,630	45%
Prince Rupert Forest Region	40	8%	142	12%	23	34%	205	11%
Vancouver Forest Region	-	0%	730	17%	6	19%	736	16%
Total	372	16%	6,542	37%	148	20%	7,062	34%

Table 3

Number of cutblocks expected to be assessed and reported by November 15, 1995, and as a percentage of the total estimated cutblocks (Table 1) that will be assessed and reported.

Region	SBFEP*		Major licenses		Woodlot licenses		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Cariboo Forest Region	267	72%	1,058	46%	55	26%	1,380	48%
Kamloops Forest Region	284	95%	2,449	76%	86	89%	2,819	78%
Nelson Forest Region	226	70%	3,412	91%	107	75%	3,745	89%
Prince George Forest Region	484	100%	2,929	100%	184	98%	3,597	99%
Prince Rupert Forest Region	170	32%	720	60%	36	56%	926	52%
Vancouver Forest Region	254	78%	1,953	45%	31	100%	2,238	48%
Total	1,685	73%	12,521	71%	499	68%	14,705	71%

* SBFEP - Small Business Forest Enterprise Program

More information:

You can get more information on the Forest Practices Board and on the complaints process by getting a copy of:

- *The Forest Practices Board -- An Introduction;*
- *The Forest Practices Board's role in responding to public complaints;*
- *Complaints summary [June 15 - Aug. 15, 1995]; and,*
- *Complaints summary [Aug. 16 - Oct. 15, 1995].*

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Information on the Forest Practices Board is also available from:

- the offices of Government Agents throughout the province; and,
- the district, regional, and head offices of the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources.