

For Immediate Release
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A Decade in Review: Observations on Regulation of Forest and Range Practices in British Columbia – Special Report

Forest Practices Board Mission

To serve the public interest as the independent watchdog for sound forest and range practices in British Columbia.

The board encourages:

- Sound forest and range practices that warrant public confidence.
- Fair and equitable application of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) and the *Wildfire Act* (WA).
- Continuing improvements in forest and range practices.

Board Mandate

- **Audits** – must undertake audits of compliance & enforcement of FRPA and the WA.
- **Investigations** – must deal with public complaints; may conduct special investigations of forestry and range issues in the public interest.
- **Appeals** – may appeal decisions to the Forest Appeals Commission.
- **Reporting** – must report findings to public and government.
- **Recommendations** – may make recommendations for improvement to legislation and practices.

Background

The concept of an independent oversight board was developed as part of the Forest Practices Code in the early 1990s. The code was created in response to public conflict and confrontation over forestry that culminated in the 1993 'War in the Woods' at Clayoquot Sound. The board's role was to provide assurance to the public, and to foreign markets, that industry would follow the strict new forestry legislation and that government would enforce it.

When the *Forest and Range Practices Act* replaced the Forest Practices Code in 2004, government recognized the board as an important component of forest management oversight in B.C., and continued its mandate in the new legislation.

Board Independence and Membership

The board consists of a full-time chair and five to eight part-time members, appointed by Cabinet. Members are appointed to provide a diverse range of backgrounds and experience in forestry-related matters and do not represent a particular stakeholder community. To ensure independence, the board provides reports to the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations at the same time they are provided to the public and the minister does not approve the reports before they are published. The board also has its own separate budget. The ombudsman and the auditor general of B.C. can investigate board activities and operations.

Board Work

Since FRPA came into effect in 2004, the board has published over 250 reports on the results of its audits and investigations and has made over 130 recommendations for improvement in forest and range regulation and practices. That body of work forms the basis for the observations provided in this report.

All board reports are available on the Internet at: www.fpb.gov.bc.ca.