

Board Bulletin, Volume 10

Woodlot Licences – What’s a Woodlot Licensee Required to Do?

This bulletin is the tenth in a series of Forest Practices Board bulletins describing aspects of forest legislation, practices and trends, and their implications for forest stewardship. These bulletins are intended to foster discussion and to improve understanding of forest practices.

A **woodlot licence (WL)** is a legal agreement between the Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) and a licence holder that gives exclusive rights to manage and harvest Crown timber within a woodlot area. The person(s) who holds the licence (woodlot licensee) is responsible for all planning, road construction and maintenance, timber harvesting, and fire hazard abatement, as well as meeting milestones for reporting and for reforestation.



The Forest Practices Board has audited WLs a number of times over the past 15 years—most recently, five WLs in the Arrow Boundary Forest District in 2007 and five WLs in the Quesnel Forest District in 2009. These audits looked at how well woodlot licensees were meeting their legal obligations in managing their woodlots. The audited WLs were each unique in many different ways, including size, reason for harvest, and even technical forestry skills of the woodlot holder. Auditors did note a common theme – all of these woodlot licensees are striving to be good stewards of the land and to promote sound forest management. However, the audits identified some areas that need improvement. There are some important common things all woodlot licensees should be doing to ensure they meet their legal obligations.

A woodlot licence comes with a number of responsibilities. Woodlot licensees are expected to:

1. Be informed of all relevant legal requirements set out in the *Forest Act (FA)*, the *Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)*, including the *Woodlot Licence Planning and Practices Regulation (WLPPR)*, the *Wildfire Act (WA)* and regulation, as well as their woodlot licence agreement.
2. Be diligent and take reasonable care to follow all the legal requirements.
3. Be prepared to meet all legal obligations. These obligations carry through the life of a cutblock from planning up to the achievement of free growing stand.

Some examples of woodlot licensee obligations in the life of a typical cutblock include:

Pre-harvesting Stage

Once the woodlot licence plan is approved, but before timber can be harvested, a licensee must:

- Get the necessary cutting permits, road permits and road use permits from the MFR district office. This includes permits for roads that were previously built within the woodlot.
- Prepare a map for the cutblock showing the biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification (BEC) site series and stocking standards. The licensee must keep this map until a free-growing stand is achieved.
- Notify the MFR district manager before beginning timber harvesting or construction of a permanent road.

- If planting is prescribed, order tree seedlings that conform to the current chief forester standards for appropriate tree species for the area.

Commencement of Harvesting Stage

Once harvesting begins, the licensee is responsible for all harvesting, road construction and maintenance, and fire-hazard abatement, as well as for meeting milestones (prescribed deadlines) for reporting and reforestation to a free-growing condition. Milestone dates for conducting fire-hazard assessments and abating fire hazards are set in regulation. For reforestation, milestone dates to regenerate a cutblock to a free-growing condition are set in the woodlot licence plan. The time frame to address fire hazard is a matter of months, whereas the time frame to meet regeneration and free-growing due dates can range over a 3- to 20- year period.



- Because logging slash represents a potential fire hazard, sections 11 and 12 of the *Wildfire Regulation* require that a fire-hazard assessment be conducted within 6 months, and if a fire hazard exists, it is to be abated (removed) within 12 months of starting harvesting.
- For reforestation, licensees must meet stocking standards by a regeneration due date and a free-growing due date. Stocking standards, regeneration due dates and free-growing dates are specified in the woodlot licence plan. Licensees must comply with the stocking standards by the required dates and ensure tree seedlings meet the current chief forester's standards for seed use.

Reporting and Record Keeping Stage

Licensees have an on-going obligation to submit or retain the following information:

- Submit reports on all harvesting, reforestation, milestones achieved and changes in vegetation cover to the MFR electronic forest management data system by April 30 each year.
- Carry out, and retain a copy of, a free-growing survey on the net area to be reforested (NAR) by the free-growing due date.
- Retain all records about bridges and major culverts, from construction, through to one year after removal of the structure, including any inspections that have been done.
- Retain all planting records including surveys, maps, seed lot numbers and quantities planted.

It is good practice to maintain records of **ALL** woodlot activities. Retain copies of woodlot-related correspondence and e-mails, including submissions, approved permits, photographs and maps, formal assessments, silviculture surveys and records of planting and other treatments.

All of the woodlot licensees audited to date are striving to achieve sound forest management. For those woodlot licensees looking to improve their practices, the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations and/or the local woodlot associations provides a means of getting to know other woodlot licensees and a network which can provide assistance. In addition local MFR staff, as well as local forestry professionals, are all good sources of information and advice.

Federation of BC Woodlot Associations Website: www.woodlot.bc.ca
FPB Glossary of forestry terms: <http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca/content.aspx?id=1202>