

Terms of Reference for a Special Report

An Evaluation of the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP)

BACKGROUND

Monitoring and continuous improvement is a foundational piece in the BC results-based model of forest and range stewardship. The role of government's Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP) is to monitor results on the ground to ensure planning and practices, as well as policy, are effective in meeting government objectives for sustainable forest and range management, as established in the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA). FREP uses science-based and peer-reviewed monitoring protocols to collect data and report on condition and trends for a number of specific forest values identified in FRPA.

FREP was established in 2003, and has since been developing monitoring protocols for the 11 FRPA values and reporting its results. Through this set of protocols and reports, FREP is trying to influence practices on the ground. An evaluation of FREP will help it move forward in the most effective manner.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this special report is to determine the effectiveness of the FREP program in implementing continuous improvement and adaptive management as a foundation for the FRPA legislative framework. Specifically, this evaluation will:

1. Describe the role and intent for the FREP program within the FRPA framework.
2. Describe program outcomes for FREP and determine if they are well founded, reasonable and achievable.
3. Describe the program design.
4. Evaluate FREP implementation (in its design context) to determine if it is meeting, or likely to meet the expected program outcomes and fulfill its role within the FRPA framework.
5. If appropriate, provide recommendations to improve FREP design and/or delivery.

SCOPE

This project will evaluate general FREP program design elements, such as inputs, activities and outputs, as well as the functional linkages between the elements. The project will not evaluate “value for money”.

The project will evaluate implementation activities by: evaluating broad approaches (across monitoring protocols) for collecting data; general quality, use and reporting of data; and linkages back to program outcomes and intent. While the project may evaluate the types of monitoring protocols used, how they are developed and general sampling approaches, it will not evaluate the effectiveness of individual protocols nor the science behind their development.

APPROACH

In general, this special report will be prepared by exploring the intent, structure and function of the FREP program using the following three information sources:

1. Published reports, related documents and data – including FREP program backgrounders, implementation planning documents, data, reports, other relevant program documents and published literature for monitoring and adaptive management.
2. Interviews with FREP staff and other key stakeholder groups who can provide added information related to program intent, structure and function – including:
 - a. Those involved in program operations – key FREP headquarters staff, MFLNRO regional staff who are involved in FREP and FREP implementation staff in a minimum of four MFLNRO district offices.
 - b. Those served or affected by the program – local licensee practitioners in the sample districts, other licensee representatives, possibly ENGOs and academia.
 - c. Those who are intended users of the results of this program evaluation – MFLNRO executive and senior staff who make decisions about the program structure and support.
3. A project advisory panel who are known for their expertise in monitoring and adaptive management (from academia and operations) – to provide input and feedback for us to consider at key points in our evaluations. This panel will provide advice, not make decisions.

REPORTING

Based on this evaluation, the Board will prepare a special report under section 135 of FRPA.