

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

This document provides an overview of the complaint investigation process. For more details, please refer to the Board's *Complaint Investigation Process* document, which can be found on the Board's website: www.bcfpb.ca.

The Board encourages fair and reasonable application of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Wildfire Act*. It represents the public interest, not that of any single person or group, so the Board is not an advocate for the complainant or a defender of government ministries or licensees. The Board examines issues related to a complaint as a neutral third party. The Board rarely attributes blame; a Board report typically identifies problems, and makes recommendations to reduce the likelihood that the problems will recur in future. The investigation will not stop or delay processes or decisions; however, participants may choose to change their actions or plans as an investigation proceeds. The complaint investigation process can take up to a year or more depending on the complexity of the issues being investigated, the need for field work in the snow free season, and the availability of the participants during the process

The Complaint Investigation Process

1 Making a Complaint

The first step is to contact the Board with your concern. Board staff will help you with problem solving, and may ask that you work further with the involved forest or range licensee and government ministry to resolve the concern. If the concern cannot be resolved, you may submit a written complaint (*Notice of Complaint* form) to the Board.

2 Initial Review

Once a complaint form is received, the Board considers whether the complaint, or aspects of it, is within the Board's jurisdiction to investigate. If so, the Board will notify all involved parties of the nature of the complaint and will identify the issues that will be examined. The Board prefers to settle disputes rather than investigating and reporting, so it will continuously look for ways to resolve the complaint.

3 The Investigation

Once all involved parties have been advised that they are participants in a complaint, an investigator consults with participants, visits the site of the complaint and gathers necessary information. The Board can require a party to provide information and records related to the investigation, but cannot order anyone to stop work or change a decision.

4 Reporting

Once the field investigation is complete, the investigator consults with the participants to verify facts and answer questions. A draft report is then prepared. Before the Board finalizes its report, the Board chair considers whether anyone might be adversely affected by it. If so, that party is given an opportunity to respond to the draft report in a process called "representations." This process may lead to the Board changing its report. The Board's final report describes the findings and conclusions of the investigation, and may include recommendations that the Board considers appropriate. Usually, a detailed report is prepared and sent to the participants and relevant government ministers. Sometimes, the final report is simply a closing letter to the participants and government. The final report is posted publicly on the Board's website at: www.bcfpb.ca.

5 Recommendations

If a recommendation is made, the Board usually asks the involved parties to reply by a given date about what they have done in response to the recommendations. Otherwise, the Board automatically follows up after one year. The Board will put the parties' responses to recommendations and the Board's reaction to those responses on its website. If the Board considers a response inadequate, the Board will inform the complainant and may advise the relevant government ministers and the Lieutenant Governor in Council.