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Board audit finds BCTS generally compliant, flags reforestation concerns

MERRITT – BC Timber Sales generally complied with forestry and wildfire requirements in the Cascades Natural Resource District, but some decisions to declare reforestation obligations complete were based on outdated information or made despite forest-health concerns, according to a Forest Practices Board audit.

The audit examined BC Timber Sales operations in the Merritt Field Unit between July 1, 2024, and July 25, 2025. It found two non-compliances and two unsound practices related to free-growing declarations. BC Timber Sales makes a free-growing declaration to indicate a harvested area has been reforested and to relieve itself of any further obligations.

“Free-growing declarations need to be based on current and accurate information,” said Gerry Grant, vice-chair, Forest Practices Board. “That is especially important when there are known forest-health concerns that could affect the growth and survival of the young trees over time.”

In one case, BC Timber Sales missed the required deadline to declare a cutblock free growing. In another, a cutblock did not meet minimum stocking standards for preferred tree species when BC Timber Sales declared it free growing. After the audit, BC Timber Sales amended its stocking standards and subsequently met the minimum free-growing requirements for that cutblock.

The board also found that three declarations relied largely on survey data that ranged from three to five years old. In another case, BC Timber Sales declared a young stand free growing even though a 2024 survey found that 93% of live trees were affected by western spruce budworm, an insect that can damage or kill trees.

The audit also found that mature trees intended to be retained in a wildlife tree-retention area were mistakenly cut in one cutblock due to incorrect marking and communication errors. This was not considered a non-compliance, but the board found the practice fell short of effective forest management.

The board commended BC Timber Sales for its work following the November 2021 floods, which caused widespread damage to roads and bridges in the district. Auditors found BC Timber Sales managed risks to the public through repairs and road closures.

The audit area is within the territories of 71 First Nations. These Indigenous people have been stewards of the land since time immemorial, and the Forest Practices Board recognizes their deep connection with the land that continues to this day.

Learn More:

- To read the full report, visit: <https://www.bcfpb.ca/release-publications/releases/ARC275-BCTS-Cascades>

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