

**Chief Forester Order
Respecting the AAC Determination for
the Fort St. John TSA**

Section 8.3.1 of the *Forest Act* stipulates in part that:

If ... the chief forester considers that the allowable annual cut ... is not likely to be changed significantly with a new determination, then ... the chief forester by written order may postpone the next determination ... to a date that is up to 10 years after the date of the relevant last determination, and must give written reasons for the postponement.

In March 2003, the chief forester determined a new Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) for the Fort St. John Timber Supply Area (TSA). The AAC, effective March 1, 2003 is 2,115,000 cubic metres with the following two partitions:

- 1,200,000 cubic metres per year for coniferous leading stands; and
- 915,000 cubic metres per year for deciduous leading stands.

In deciding whether to postpone the next AAC determination for the Fort St. John TSA, I have reviewed:

- each of the factors potentially affecting timber supply on the TSA;
- the Fort St. John TSA: Rationale for AAC Determination, dated March 1, 2003;
- the Fort St. John TSA Timber Supply Area Analysis Report, dated June 2, 2002; and
- the First Nations consultation summary, dated March 20, 2007.

I note the timber supply forecast in the 2002 analysis report indicated that an annual harvest of 2,719,000 cubic metres could be maintained for the first 30 years after which it gradually declined to a long-term level of 2,425,000 cubic metres per year. The base case harvest flow has three components:

- Coniferous leading stands maintaining a harvest level of 1,694,000 cubic metres for the entire planning horizon;
- Deciduous leading stands maintaining a harvest level of 915,000 cubic metres per year for 30 years before declining 10percent per decade to a long-term harvest level of 632,000 cubic metres per year; and
- Small pine component that maintains a harvest level of 110,000 cubic metres per year for 16 decades before declining to the long-term harvest level of 99,000 cubic metres per year.

Unsalvaged losses are 37,500 cubic metres per year over the entire planning horizon.

Two alternative harvest flows were examined in the 2002 analysis. The first alternative, in which the coniferous harvest level was increased by 10 percent for 10 years, indicated the base case timber supply could be maintained for 30 decades with a minor change in the long-term timber supply. The second alternative, in which an increase of 20 percent in the small pine harvest and a 10 percent increase in the deciduous harvest level, indicated that the base case timber supply could be supported with a minor medium term decrease and minor long term changes. These alternative forecasts further confirm the resiliency of the timber supply in this management unit.

In the 2003 rationale, the chief forester discussed the impact and interaction of key factors affecting timber supply in the short, medium, and long terms. I have reviewed each factor specified under Section 8 of the *Forest Act* and have also discussed current practice and the availability of new information with the Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) district and branch specialists. I am aware that since the last (2003) determination:

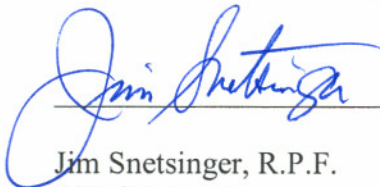
- Current information indicates that a decrease in the timber harvesting land base, due to seismic activity related to the oil and gas industry, has probably led to an underestimated impact on the base case;
- Natural disturbance sensitivity analyses indicate that changes in current practices and requirements associated with finalization of landscape unit boundaries to meet objectives in the Fort St. John Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) should not impact the short and medium term timber supply.
- MFR staff and licensees are monitoring a small, but increasing population of mountain pine beetle. While no treatments for mountain pine beetles have been undertaken, authority has been granted to harvest an area of highly infested timber in the southwest of the TSA. At this time, staff believe that the current AAC is sufficient to harvest any attacked or at-risk stands.
- Analyses undertaken to assess changes to integrated resource management due to the Fort St. John Pilot Project (FSJPP) Sustainable Forest Management Plan (2004 – 2010) indicate a 2.4 to -1.15 percent impact on the base case timber supply.
- Staff indicate that while some progress has been made in implementing the chief forester's recommendations in his 2003 rationale, there is little new information to reduce the accounted for risk and uncertainty associated with key factors affecting the timber supply.

I note that there has been little harvesting in the mixed-wood stands that does not impact the base case short term timber supply. However, given the magnitude of the mixed-wood land base and its contribution to the medium to long term timber supply, I request that the district staff monitor this harvest and report performance for the next AAC determination.

After reviewing the factors considered in the last determination, including key factors for which the associated uncertainty and risk led the chief forester to adjust the base case and recommend staff actions, and the currently available information, I find it unlikely that the AAC would change significantly with a new determination made according to the existing schedule.

I have reviewed a document dated March 20, 2007, from the British Columbia Forest Service district staff, which summarized the consultation process with the eight First Nations with land base interests within the Fort St. John TSA, including the Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nations, Fort Nelson First Nations, Halfway River First Nations, Dene Tha, Prophet River First Nations, Saulneau First Nations, and West Moberly First Nations. I am satisfied that they were advised that a postponement of the AAC determination for the Fort St. John TSA, under the provisions of the *Forest Act*, was being considered, invited to provide site-specific comments on how postponement would affect their Treaty Rights under Treaty 8, and that postponement would not affect operational or harvesting plans.

In summary, based upon my review of the factors discussed in the 2003 rationale, the limited new data available, and my knowledge of the timber supply dynamics of this management unit, I have determined that the AAC for the Fort St. John TSA would not likely change with a new determination. Under my authority as outlined in Section 8 (3.1) of the *Forest Act*, I hereby postpone the next AAC determination to a date prior to January 22, 2013, which is 10 years since the last determination. If significant new information is made available to me or if major changes in management assumptions occur, then I am prepared to revisit the next determination sooner than the maximum 10-year period indicated in the legislation.



Jim Snetsinger, R.P.F.
Chief Forester



Date

