

Chief Forester Order Respecting the AAC Determination for the Nass Timber Supply Area

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 June 2002, the former Chief Forester determined a new Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) for the Nass Timber Supply Area (TSA). The current AAC of 865,000 cubic metres came into effect on August 1, 2002 and represents a 24 percent reduction from the 1996 to 2001 AAC of 1,150,000 cubic metres. The current AAC includes a partition of 200,000 cubic metres for the Upper Nass.

In considering whether to postpone the next AAC determination for the Nass TSA, I have reviewed:

- each of the factors potentially affecting timber supply on the TSA;
- the previous *Rationale for AAC Determination* dated August 2002, in which the impact and interaction of key factors affecting timber supply in the short, medium and long terms were considered; and
- the *Nass Timber Supply Area Analysis Report* dated June 2001.

In reviewing each factor, I have also discussed current practice and the availability of new information with Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR) district and branch specialists.

In making his August 2002 determination, the former chief forester identified significant uncertainty in a number of factors, including physical and economic operability, site productivity estimates and problem forest types. In reviewing each factor, I find that the magnitude of the uncertainty is largely unchanged and therefore I encourage MoFR staff to continue to undertake the appropriate studies in collaboration with local licensees to help reduce this uncertainty prior to the next determination.


I note that work has been done in the Nass to develop more accurate means of assessing site productivity in support of AAC determinations. An initiative called Site Index by Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification site series (SIBEC) has been undertaken to address this matter. New SIBEC results for the Nass TSA have been published in 2006. A substantial increase in Site Index is indicated for young thrifty stands. This will have a strong upward pressure on the long-term harvest level.

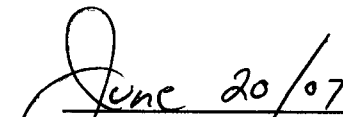
I am aware that due to market factors and poor quality timber, there has been a significant undercut in the Nass TSA and that current harvest levels represent only 25 percent of the AAC. The total undercut for the past five years is about 3,335,442 cubic metres. I am also aware that this has been a long standing situation in the Nass and that there was a substantial undercut during the 1996 to 2001 period as well.

I note that since April 1, 2006, new log grade changes are in effect which put the previously un-counted dead potential timber into AAC. In the Nass TSA, this change to log grades represents an increase of available timber supply of approximately 9.8 percent.

I am aware of the Province's legal obligation stemming from court decisions to consult First Nations on proposed decisions concerning various forest management matters. I have reviewed the information obtained through the First Nations consultation process undertaken by the Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR) with the First Nations whose asserted traditional territories cover all or part of the area covered by the Nass TSA. The First Nations consulted were: Nisga'a, Gitksan (various Houses), Gitanyow, Thaltan and Ski km lax ha. I am aware that District staff sent letters dated October 10, 2006 to the aforementioned First Nations providing them with information regarding the proposed AAC determination postponement and asking them for information related to their aboriginal interests, and how a possible decision to postpone the AAC determination may impact these interests. I am aware that responses were received from Warren Fekete of the Nisga'a and Gitksan Chief Wii Gyet, Lloyd Morrison. No specific concerns regarding the postponement were expressed and I am not aware of aboriginal interests that may be impacted by the postponement of the AAC determination. I note that MOFR Kalum Forest District staff continue to be available to meet and consult with First Nations on specific issues which can be addressed at the operational planning level. If new information does arise in the future, then I will consider it carefully and may revisit my decision.

In summary, based on my review of the factors discussed in the 2002 rationale, the limited new data available, the limited harvesting performance and my knowledge of the timber supply dynamics of this unit, I have determined that the AAC for the Nass TSA would not likely change with a new determination made according to the existing schedule. 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 July 30, 2012 which is 10 years since the last determination. If additional 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 at an earlier date.


Jim Snetsinger
Chief Forester


Date

