

Designing a Path Forward

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OLD GROWTH STRATEGIC REVIEW

MINISTRY OF FORESTS

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

MINISTRY OF JOBS, ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND INNOVATION

Introduction

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is an accompaniment to the Provincial Multi-Sectoral Forum occurring February 6-7 in Vancouver, B.C. The content of the handbook provides an overview of topics of each discussion session, discussion questions, and other background information regarding future collaboration opportunities and the Old Growth Strategic Review.

A New Future for Old Forests – A Strategic Review of How British Columbia Manages for Old Forests Within its Ancient Ecosystem

In 2019 and 2020, an independent panel appointed by the Province undertook a review of old growth management in B.C. The panel's report, *A New Future for Old Forests: A Strategic Review of How British Columbia Manages Old Forests within its Ancient Ecosystems* (Old Growth Strategic Review or OGSR), was submitted to the provincial government on April 30, 2020. The authors of the OGSR engaged with First Nations, forest industry representatives and workers, tourism and recreation stakeholders, professional associations, academics, environmental non-governmental organizations, other stakeholders, and local communities to explore different perspectives on old growth management, taking the interests of all British Columbians into account.

The Province has accepted all 14 recommendations from the report and is embarking on a new, holistic approach to protecting old growth forests. The Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship are responsible for developing an OGSR action plan and implementing OGSR recommendation 2 through the development of a B.C. Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity (Declaration). This Declaration will provide a framework that will guide and shape the management of not only old forests, but the province's land and water management framework into the future. In alignment with our commitments under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, we are continuing to explore ways to meaningfully collaborate with First Nations to identify key principles, activities, and actions to implement the Old Growth Strategic Review and to co-develop a Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity.

Designing a Path Forward

Modernizing how we manage old forests in British Columbia is essential to the long-term sustainability of our forests, our economy, and our future. The next step in the path forward is to create an action plan to

implement the OGSR recommendations and to develop a B.C. Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity (Declaration), which will together shape a new, more holistic approach to the management of forests, waters, and lands in B.C. Whereas the OGSR described what shifts were needed to foster a paradigm shift in our old forest management, the action plan will build upon the recommendations of the OGSR to outline how they will be implemented, including a shared vision and priorities, key actions, and the timelines for implementation.

The Declaration specifically addresses Recommendation 2 of the OGSR which calls for the “conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity of British Columbia’s forests” to be an overarching priority in provincial legislation and for this priority to apply to all sectors and hence other ecosystem types. Both the action plan and the Declaration require collaboration with First Nations throughout the process, and engagement with multiple industry sectors, interested parties and partners to identify solutions-based actions that support implementation of OGSR recommendations and a Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity.

Over the coming months, there will be various opportunities to provide input on two products: the action plan and Declaration. Your input and expertise will help the Province identify solutions and actions to support the implementation of the OGSR recommendations and the creation of a Declaration.

Multi-Sectoral Forum

The February 6-7 forum in Vancouver is designed to bring expertise from multiple sectors and interest groups together at one table to work together to identify solutions.

The objectives of the Multi-Sectoral Forum are to:

- **Inform**
 - Understanding of the objectives for the two products and how they fit together.
 - Understanding of what a paradigm shift involves and what we aim to accomplish with a Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity
 - Information on the process moving forward and roles for the action plan and Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity.
- **Report** – Report back what was heard in the First Nations Collaboration Forum.
- **Collaborate** – Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity.
 - Promote an understanding of the need for transformative change and what it entails.
 - Bring forward ideas on the components needed in a declaration on ecosystem health to support a paradigm shift.
- **Involve**

- Gather constructive and solution-focused ideas on the key actions and activities to implement the OGSR recommendations, and to support the development of the Declaration.

Forum Agenda Summary

DAY 1 – DESIGNING A DECLARATION

TIMING	Session Theme	Topic
8:00 – 9:00 A.M.	Registration and Breakfast	
9:00 – 10:00 A.M.	Welcome and opening remarks	Welcome, opening remarks and setting the stage for action plan and Declaration; includes “What we Heard from the First Nations Collaboration Forum”
10:00 – 10:15 A.M.	Wellness Break	
10:15 – 11:45 A.M.	Session #1: Transformative Change Panel Discussion [Panelists: Garry Merkel, Lenny Joe, Linda Coady, Lisa Matthaus, Shane Berg, Celine Davis]	How we move towards transformation change and collective actions to achieve the future state
11:45 A.M. – 12:45 P.M.	Lunch	
12:45 – 1:00 P.M.	Activity	Introduction to breakout group activity
1:00 – 1:45 P.M.	Session #2: Declaration- Part 1	Transformative nature of a declaration
1:45 – 2:00 P.M.	Report back from facilitators	What was heard session 2
2:00 – 2:15 P.M.	Wellness Break	
2:15 – 3:15 P.M.	Session #3: Declaration – Part 2	Components of a declaration
3:15 – 3:30 P.M.	Report back from facilitators	What was heard session 3
3:30 – 4:30 P.M.	Session #4: Outcome and next steps	Supporting a paradigm shift
4:30 – 4:45 P.M.	Report back from facilitators	What was heard in session 4
4:45 – 5:00 P.M.	Closing	

DAY 2 – DESIGNING AN ACTION PLAN

TIMING	Session Theme k	Topic
8:00 – 9:00 A.M.	Registration and breakfast	
9:00 – 9:15 A.M.	Forum welcome	Welcome
9:15 – 10:00 A.M.	Recap of Day 1	Day 1 recap and setting the stage for the action plan
10:00 – 10:15 A.M.	Break	
10:15 – 10:30 A.M.	Activity	Introduction to breakout group activity
10:30 – 11:15 A.M.	Session1: Improving Forest Management	Consider new ways for effective management of B.C. forests.
11:15 – 11:45 A.M.	Report back from facilitators	What was heard in session 1
11:45 – 12:45 P.M.	Lunch	
12:45 – 1:00 P.M.	Activity	Introduction to breakout group activity
1:00 – 2:15 P.M.	Session 2: Improving Information Management	Consider opportunities to improve how information is communicated and data is managed.
2:15 – 2:30 P.M.	Break	
2:30 – 3:30 P.M.	Session 3: Improving Community Resiliency	Explore opportunities to create greater economic certainty and resilience for B.C. communities.
3:30 – 3:45 P.M.	Report back from facilitators	What we heard Session 2 & 3
3:45 – 4:30 P.M.	Session 4: The Path Forward	Moving the action plan and Declaration towards implementation
4:30 – 5:00 P.M.	Wrap up and closing	Summary of day, next steps in collaboration and engagement, and process for co-creating an action plan and a Declaration.

Day 1 – February 6, 2023 – Setting the stage for transformative change and designing the Declaration and Action Plan

Introduction

The action plan and the Declaration will be important tools to support implementation of the recommendations in the OGSR and to establish a new framework to sustainably manage land and water resources.

The way forward is characterized by a long-term paradigm shift in how we manage forests, land and water, including:

- Developing a collaborative framework with Indigenous Governments and partners.
- Prioritizing ecosystem-health to manage for multiple values; and
- Clarifying the role of communities in the resource management decision making process.

A focus on ecosystem health as a broad-based goal could guide future development to minimize biodiversity risk and ensure better outcomes for species, habitats, and human communities. A collaborative and adaptive approach to management, where ecosystem health is not limited to current conditions, will support long-term resilience of B.C.'s natural resources, maintaining them for future generations.

Session #1 – Transformative Change - Panel Discussion

In recent decades, the need to conserve biodiversity, including forest ecosystems, has become more urgent in response to increasing threats to ecosystems (primarily from human activities), but also as a way of helping to increase our adaptive capacity to global environmental change. The mounting effects of climate change (including catastrophic wildfires, flooding, and mountain pine beetle outbreaks) have compounded the impacts of human-induced habitat fragmentation and loss, threatening the productive capacity and resilience of many ecosystem types. Recognizing these challenges, along with the health, safety, and livelihood risks that they bring to human populations, communities across British Columbia are now advocating for a higher standard of ecosystem stewardship and biodiversity conservation.

B.C. forests provide a high-value, renewable resource that provides economic benefits to our province. These same forests also provide essential ecosystem services, such as maintenance of wildlife habitat, water and air purification, carbon capture, and nutrient cycling, as well as social and cultural benefits to British Columbians. They are a legacy to be cherished by future generations.

A new integrated and inclusive stewardship paradigm that prioritizes ecosystem resilience and biodiversity is needed to address the emerging environmental challenges, achieve true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and ensure economic resiliency. Focusing on ecosystem health as a broad-based goal will serve to guide future development to minimize biodiversity risk and ensure ecosystem health and resiliency, and well-being outcomes for species, habitats, and human communities.

Panelist:

- Garry Merkel, A New Future for Old Forests co-author
- Lenny Joe, BC First Nations Forestry Council
- Lisa Matthaus, Organizing for Change
- Linda Coady, BC Council of Forest Industries
- Shane Berg, Ministry of Forests
- Celine Davis, Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship

Panel Discussion Questions

- Reflecting on what you heard in terms of transformative change and thinking about the OGSR recommendations which touch on both strategic and technical aspects of managing forests and other ecosystems in B.C., can you share your thoughts on what is needed to achieve this transformative change and how do we successfully implement the recommendations?
- Building on what we have just heard, what do you see as opportunities we can build on to achieve success? (e.g., new relationships and partnerships, new ways of working or structural or operational changes, and or ways of thinking, etc.)

Session #2 –Declaration - Part 1

A declaration on ecosystem health and biodiversity could guide land and water management practices through:

- better aligning goals of minimizing species loss (and preventing irreversible loss of biodiversity).
- maintaining vital ecosystem services; and
- ensuring the resiliency and long-term cultural, social, and economic wellbeing of communities across the province.

Discussion Questions

Building on what was brought forward in the panel discussion:

- What additional changes or innovative ideas might be needed in terms of land and water management frameworks to support a paradigm shift?

- Based on the examples of declarations shared, what could a declaration on ecosystem health and biodiversity include to ensure it can support this paradigm shift?

Session #3 –Declaration - Part 2

Components of a declaration

Many declarations include components such as goals and or targets that are aligned with the vision. These goals and targets help set strategic direction, inform decision-making, and catalyze behavioural change for communities and individuals. Declarations can also often include commitments.

Commitments can be action focused and related to goals and targets and set an accountability for the Province or others entering the commitment.

Discussion Questions

In thinking about what is needed in a declaration to achieve the prioritization of ecosystem health and biodiversity across all sectors and ecosystems, consider the following question:

- What important goals could be considered for inclusion in the Declaration?
- What types of key outcomes could be included?
- What types of commitment could be considered?
- Are there additional components that should be considered?

Session #4 – Outcomes and Next Steps

A key objective will be that once the Declaration is in place, staff can identify immediate improvements that can be made to policies and programs including implementation guidance, changes to existing policy, improved information, and accountability, while also considering longer term changes.

Discussion Questions

- What initiative or work are you involved with that could support the Declaration
- What other work could you or others bring forward that would support the Declaration and the paradigm shift?
- Is there anything that needs further exploration, based on what you have heard so far today?

Day 2 – February 7, 2023 – Designing an Action Plan

Introduction

The OGSR provided fourteen recommendations to manage and protect B.C.'s old growth forest biodiversity, attributes, values, and benefits. Some recommendations are multi-sectoral, while others are

more specific to forest management. Broadly speaking, the recommendations can be categorized as transformational, operational, and transitional. The next step is to translate the recommendations into an action plan for implementation.

Session #1 – Improving Forest Management

B.C. is currently considered a world leader in sustainable forest management; however, there are areas that can be improved as science and societal values evolve. There is a need and opportunity to consider new ways to manage our forests to address a decreasing timber supply while maintaining social, health, and economic well-being. The OGSR states that an effective management system has clear and publicly driven goals, programs, and methods to achieve those goals, and robust oversight and effective monitoring.

Decisions regarding the management and stewardship of our forests should be evidence-based, include Indigenous knowledge, and focus on unique and localized outcomes. The OGSR emphasizes that old forests do not exist in isolation; effective forest stewardship requires that the whole system be effective.

Discussion Questions

- What actions, goals or initiatives would improve how forests are managed?
- What are some barriers we might face as we move towards new ways to manage our forests?
- Are there any specific topics or areas which require further conversations?

Session #2 – Improving Information Management

Through the OGSR, we have heard that confidence in forest information management and data collection is lacking. The Province must improve how information is communicated and enhance transparency around how data is collected and used to make decisions.

First Nations hold a significant and important body of knowledge about caring for, and sustainably living, on the land base. Indigenous knowledge should be meaningfully incorporated into how the Province makes land management decisions. Robust information management will also require the province to work collaboratively with stakeholders, including industry and local governments.

Discussion Questions

- What actions, goals or initiatives would improve information management?
- What are some barriers we might face when we look to improve data and reporting?
- Are there any specific topics or areas which require further conversations?

Session #3 – Improving Community Resiliency

The OGSR states that there is an opportunity to create greater certainty and resiliency for communities that are dependent on the forest sector.

We are currently facing a decreasing timber supply. Stressors linked to climate change, such as the mountain pine beetle epidemic and severe wildfires, further constrain timber supply. There are innovative forest-based economic opportunities that can be realized in response to forest industry change, such as value-added products, biofuels, and eco-tourism. Many rural communities have experienced significant social and economic change in recent years, and a transition that reflects the values of local citizens can help address those changes.

Discussion Questions

- What actions, goals or initiatives would improve community resiliency in the face of changes in the forest sector?
- What opportunities do you see in your community for new sources of resiliency (e.g., value-added manufacturing, high-value bio-products, carbon crediting projects)?

Session #4 – The Path Forward

As we continue the development of an action plan, we will have further opportunities to collaborate and hear one another's perspectives. Regional collaboration sessions are planned for the early spring to discuss the content of the action plan and Declaration. The Declaration is expected to be completed in spring 2023 and the action plan will be complete by late 2023.

Recognizing the breadth of important topics that fall underneath the scope of the action plan and Declaration, the Province, First Nation collaborators, and stakeholders should consider priorities for discussion in the short term and longer-term actions that require further engagement as co-development of the draft action plan and Declaration continues.

Discussion Questions

- What would you like to focus on in the regional forums to help advance this work?