



Spray Lake Sawmills

B-9 Compartment Collaborative Planning Session Results Forest Harvest Plan

May 1, 2014

On May 1st, 2014 Spray Lake Sawmills held a Collaborative Planning Session to develop preliminary harvest designs for the B-9 compartment. 13 people participated primarily landowners and residents from the rural residential area surrounding Benchlands, the Richards Road, the Jamieson Road and the village of Waiparous. SLS explained the planning and permit regulatory requirements administered by the Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resources Development. The planning hierarchy requirements, including submissions of the Detailed Forest Management Plan (DFMP), the General Development Plan (GDP), the Forest Harvest Plans (FHP) and the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) were shared with participants in a PowerPoint presentation. Detailed GIS maps with orthophotography, wet areas mapping, Lidar, and potential High Conservation Value Forest areas were shared with participants. The maps included preliminary harvest and road locations. Participants were asked what types of maps would be most helpful for them to best understand the proposed harvest plans. Participants were invited to delineate points of interest or site specific recommendations on the maps.

SLS made the following commitments to stakeholders at the session:

- 1) If specific concerns are raised during the session, SLS will arrange a field tour with stakeholders to address specific concerns on the ground and make any needed mitigations etc. prior to any field work or harvest plan submission.
- 2) SLS will listen to stakeholder concerns and follow-up with participants showing how the collaborative planning work will be used to develop draft final harvest plans. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on the draft plans prior to harvest plan submission. SLS will then follow up with stakeholders and write the final harvest plan and submit it to the government.

Below, we have listed the participant comments and questions and have given them careful consideration. Our next steps are to keep participants informed regarding management plan development and to continue to receive and carefully consider feedback while working toward a final management plan.

TOPIC: OHV's	
<p>Many of the participants complained about unmanaged ATV use and stated that: Increasing 4 X 4 uses of historic quad trails are damaging the existing quad trails and in some cases the trails are now unsafe for quads. A quad user she knows broke her ribs on such a trail. Quad users are looking for more trails suitable for them, even if in a closed area. SLS should use their influence to encourage the government to have an effective enforcement program on the FMA. The access management plan in the Ghost is not being adequately enforced. The government is not funding it. It's a free for all out there and it has an impact on the local residents. We get a lot of vandalism out here and ATV's and trucks are illegally operating and target shooting is increasing.</p>	<p>SLS is in favor of enforcement of Public Land Use Zones and access management plans and strongly encourages all of our employees and contractors to follow them. SLS would like to see the government provide sufficient enforcement of the regulations to protect water quality, wildlife and minimize the spread of noxious weeds.</p>
<p>A resident from the Richards Road area asked: Is SLS meeting with the OHV clubs?</p>	<p>SLS is participating on the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group and has included a representative from the local OHV community to participate on the company Public Advisory Committee. SLS has also offered to contribute building supplies and technical expertise to construct OHV stream crossings in partnership with local watershed users and groups.</p>
TOPIC: ROADS	
<p>Several of the Richards road residents asked about all of the new roads and increased access into the area?</p>	<p>SLS fully reclaims its roads with the intention they will be reforested. The top soil is saved alongside road construction areas. This soil contains viable seed and roots that are returned during the reclamation process. After reclamation the exposed soil surface also creates a seedbed for natural regeneration. In some cases SLS plants reclaimed roads with seedlings. In our experience these roads are not typically used after reclamation as they are by and large un-driveable by any vehicle.</p>
<p>A landowner from the Richards Road area suggested we use an existing road to access specific blocks versus building new road. This area was marked on a map.</p>	<p>SLS noted the location and will likely use this portion of existing road to reduce the amount of road constructed.</p>

Richards Road:

A couple of residents from the Richards Road area commented that with tens of thousands of truck loads using the road, it will no doubt be destroyed over the three/four year period - ask mentioned it was never built to standards for heavy truck traffic. The request for a bond to be posted for road repairs, and a complete resurface of the entire length of Richards Road is required. If residents of Richards Road are to put up with a heavily damaged road for at least three years, we need assurance that the road will be rebuilt and resurfaced. It is the cost of doing business, and assures local residents get something out of all the industrial activity in our area.

Use of the Reserve for entry and exit of logging trucks on a well constructed and maintained wide gravel road appears to be the best option. There will be much less new road access and expense in building a road, or roads to Jamieson. Safety concerns for the villages of Waipourous and Benchlands will be minimized, if the Reserve route is used. Current use of hwy 40 has skyrocketed, with 4 x 4, ATV and travel trailers using the access road 24/7, all winter long. Wreck less driving seems to be the norm, and I predict fatal accidents, if logging trucks and speeding mud wagons meet on the narrow winding road.

Negotiations with local Native groups is never easy, but surely they can be adequately compensated for the use of their road, and an improved access to Richards Road. They can still prohibit private entry to the Reserve, and should anyway, with large logging trucks using the area.

This option will not only cost much less than building road access to Jamieson, but will most importantly preserve what is left of a semi wilderness area of Richards Road. Any unnecessary road building will bring more ATV's, Mud Wagons, dirt bikes and people to

The log haul will be limited to frozen conditions to minimize impacts to the road surface. SLS is discussing several options in case of no response from the Stoney First Nations including 1) use of the Jamieson road via private land and; 2) use of road allowance access south of the Jameson road. The following will be employed to minimize impacts:

- The potential new road connecting the Richards and Jamieson Roads will be closed to public access.
- Details around road maintenance will be agreed upon between SLS and the MD of Big Horn in the Road Use Agreement.
- As much as possible, the empty Log trucks will enter the area via highway 40 and Richard's road, and exit the area via the Jamieson road. This will keep traffic flow in one direction.
- SLS will abide by the 90% road ban.
- Approximately 1800 loads of logs to be hauled per year for 3 years.
- SLS does not anticipate harvesting and hauling operations back in this area for approximately 15 years.

Question & Comment	Response
our previously quiet little valley and the unique character of the area.	
<p>A village of Waiparous resident commented SLS has done a good job of managing its log trucks to address public safety considerations in the village of Waiparous.</p> <p>Another couple of residents from the Richards Road area commented: we have called and complained about the log trucks taking up too much of the road and SLS quickly responded and the trucks were more courteous after we complained- we appreciate that.</p>	SLS strives to have a safe log haul program. The public is encouraged to report log haul public safety issues immediately.
A couple of participants from the Richards Road area stated, the best route into the area is through the Stoney Reserve.	SLS agrees and has been making every effort to meet with the Stoney First Nations to discuss this option. SLS will continue to pursue this option for a reasonable period of time.
TOPIC: WATER	
A Benchlands resident affiliated with the BRBC stated the following: there are springs in the area that need protected and that he worked on a spring mapping project and turned the information into the government and the connections between springs and creeks are real and there is a real value to wetland's. After the area is logged it will turn as hard as concrete and then all of the water will flow overland downstream and we will lose the sponge that stores water and the losers will be downstream.	SLS asked for the maps to learn the spring locations. The participant stated SLS needs to ask the government for the information. Presently SLS is using the wet areas mapping tool provided by the government to locate potential wet areas. It is SLS's policy to protect wetlands and the company has no plans to harvest or disturb wetlands. SLS is following the provincial ground rules and the literature supports that in general wetlands adjacent to forest areas will likely stay the same or have more water recharge after timber harvest.
A landowner near the Richards road said the wet areas mapping product is very close to the wetlands he is aware of.	SLS will use the wetlands mapping tool to help design cut block and road locations.
A Ghost Valley resident affiliated with the BRBC commented that water flows are low on the Benchlands, ½ of the people living on the Benchlands have lost their well water. Residents in the area are filling up water jugs near the Waiparous Creek bridge on the Richards road for domestic use, make sure the area is left open for vehicle access. A resident of Benchlands affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance commented that	It is unlikely SLS will install a bridge over the Waiparous Creek. SLS will not block users from accessing the river.

Benchlands has always had limited water available.	
<p>A Ghost Valley resident affiliated with the BRBC asked the following questions and made the following comments: Does SLS review water management plans prepared for watershed protection? What does SLS do about water quality monitoring? What about cumulative effects? A cumulative impact assessment approach is needed to consider past logging activities and other land uses.</p>	<p>SLS continues to work with the Bow River Basin Council and other water quality groups concerning watershed management issues and provides feedback to watershed management plans. SLS has a representative participating on the Bow River Basin Council Board of Directors.</p> <p>In 2006, SLS organized a cumulative effects group to discuss options for developing a collaborative water quality monitoring program. The group included ENGO's, oil and gas, and government interests. Unfortunately, an agreement was not reached on how to proceed with a joint program. SLS continues to be interested in a joint, cumulative impact water quality monitoring program. SLS has completed extensive water quality monitoring and watershed analysis (6 streams measured for 9 years). The sub watersheds studied had varying levels of use, ranging from virtually no activity (the control) to high use, including forestry, riparian grazing and heavy ATV, and recreational use. This information is summarized in the second version of the stewardship report posted on our company website.</p> <p>http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/5-year-Stewardship-Report.pdf</p>
<p>A Ghost Valley resident affiliated with the BRBC asked the following questions and made the following comments: How does your watershed model work?</p>	<p>The Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) model ("ECA-Alberta") written by Dr. Uldis Silins, a forest hydrologist with the University of Alberta, was used to predict the cumulative effects from forest harvesting, and the potential change in water yield and the associated rate of hydrologic recovery over time. Overall, projections for the increase in water yields were all less than the 15% threshold used by AESRD over the 200 year planning horizon, representing the volume that can be added to a unit hydrograph without significantly affecting peak flows. The stewardship report found on the company website offers a more detailed explanation.</p> <p>http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/5-year-Stewardship-Report.pdf</p>

Question & Comment	Response
A participant asked What is the forestry setback from the Ghost River? And suggested we review the original survey of the river and measure from survey OHWM.	The set back is a 60 meter buffer from the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). SLS has located the survey in its GIS and checked its distance to the cut block edge to ensure the setback requirement is met.
TOPIC: REFORESTATION	
<p>A Benchlands resident affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance asked do you post your reforestation information online?</p> <p>And commented they would like to visit some examples of 30 year old plantations?</p>	<p>Yes, SLS has provided a five year summary of our reforestation program in the Stewardship Report on our website. Since 2000, SLS has planted approximately 34 million trees.</p> <p>http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/5-year-Stewardship-Report.pdf</p> <p>Please contact us and we can share some locations that may be of interest.</p>
A couple of residents from the Richards road area asked: what about forest grazing leases? Do the lease holders have free grazing after you harvest?	It's SLS's goal to have constructive and positive working relationships with all forest users including grazing permit holders. Forest operations have to be balanced to meet a variety of objectives in addition to maintaining healthy range sites for cattle grazing. Typically where we harvest there are no AUMS allotted for those areas.
TOPIC: AESTHETICS	
A landowner from the Richards Road area asked why not use selective logging?	The forests found in Western Alberta are generally dry and cold and naturally prone to large stand replacing wildfires. SLS's, FMA is a fire dominated ecosystem and lodgepole pine and white spruce are the dominate conifer tree species. In general, these species do not persist for long periods of time on the landscape and are not fire resistant. The establishment of young forest habitat, by way of timber harvests, having large openings with variable edges and variable retention levels are consistent with the FMA's forest ecology and landscape patterns. The dominant species, lodgepole pine also requires full sunlight for growth and survival, which limits partial cutting options. Retention levels are based on the forest types we are operating in. In general, higher levels of retention exist in mixed wood stands and areas having species such as Douglas fir and in stands having a spruce and hardwood understory. As a standard practice, SLS is leaving green tree retention scattered throughout post-harvest blocks to provide structural diversity.

Question & Comment	Response
A landowner from the Richards Rd area asked if the slash will be left out in the blocks and stated it's not aesthetically appealing?	SLS processes trees at the stump to evenly distribute the foliage/tops across the block. Approximately 90% of the nutrients in a tree (like nitrogen and phosphorous) are located in the needles and branches (not the log) and are important for soil nutrition and forest health. The coarse woody debris (branches, tops and unusable wood) are also important for protecting seedlings from winter's desiccating Chinook winds and provides critical shade on dry summer days, greatly increasing seedling survival.
A resident of Waiparous stated they are not a representative of the village of Waiparous and has heard that some residents of the village of Waiparous are concerned that the harvesting may impair the aesthetics of the area, causing a decline in property values. The resident asked if there will there be additional fire hazards near the village of Waiparous?	The harvesting is not visible from the village of Waiparous. The current fire hazard will be greatly reduced where there has been harvesting.
A Ghost Valley resident affiliated with the BRBC asked when there is a contravention to a rule, what happens?	SLS has professional licensed foresters who supervise operations. Our operations are regulated by the AESRD who also have professional licensed foresters and resource professionals who routinely conduct inspections. Even the best operations have occasional mistakes. When mistakes occur, there are consequences. SLS can be fined and penalized for those mistakes becoming violations.
TOPIC: PLANNING	
Several participants wanted to know What type of long term planning do you have?	The Detailed Forest Management Plan is a 20 year plan, renewed every 10 years with the Alberta government. Forest management is modelled over a 200 year period. All harvest areas are reforested to meet provincial standards.
A resident of Benchlands affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance asked if the Annual Operating Plans are available online?	AOP's are not posted online. AOPs serve as the annual planning permit application SLS is required to submit to the AESRD for approval. The Forest Harvest Plan Maps, showing harvest block and road locations are posted under the quick links tab on the company website. http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/

TOPIC: SOCIOECONOMICS	
<p>Two participants, one a resident of Benchlands affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance, the other a resident from the Ghost Valley affiliated with the BRBC wanted to discuss long term socioeconomic issues surrounding forest management. A resident from the Ghost Valley affiliated with the BRBC commented: let's talk about community and generational consideration. SLS has the resources to do that. The problem is the population. Things have changed dramatically, we are losing wetlands and we have global warming it's difficult for plants and animals to adapt. We need to invent a new language to deal with the issues. How do we benefit from the Logging when the lumber is exported from Canada?</p> <p>A Benchlands resident affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance commented that SLS should schedule a more general socioeconomics discussion.</p>	<p>Socioeconomic issues concerning forest management allocations are government based planning decisions, contained in the regional planning process such as the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP). The government has been providing extensive opportunities for public consultation regarding socioeconomic concerns as part of the SSRP process.</p> <p>The wood products industry is the third largest industry in the province. The industry is sustainable and renewable and is vitally important for sustaining Alberta families and communities. SLS products are made by Albertans and are sold within Western Canada. SLS believes communities benefit, due to job creation (manufacturing jobs are scarce in Canada), company and employee related spending (helping diversify and sustain the economy at large) and tax base contributions. Society as a whole also benefits in terms of maintaining forest health and biodiversity, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires that can negatively impact municipal drinking water, air quality and important wildlife habitat.</p>
TOPIC: WILDLIFE and BIODIVERSITY	
<p>A participant affiliated with the Ghost River Rediscovery asked if SLS is conducting research or studies to monitor Biodiversity. Are you comparing unmanaged forest biodiversity to managed forest biodiversity?</p>	<p>SLS has been involved in multiple biodiversity research projects over the years. Examples can be found on our website by accessing our 5 year Stewardship Report section 2. <i>Adaptive Management and Research</i>. Another good reference in the 5 year Stewardship Report can be found in section 4. <i>Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat Supply</i>. http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/5-year-Stewardship-Report.pdf</p> <p>SLS completed a High Conservation Value Forest Assessment (HCVF) in October of 2013. This document provides details as to how SLS is addressing and managing the forests to maintain biodiversity. The HCVF management approach was established by the World Wildlife Fund and is a foundation of our Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forest certification program. The HCVF Assessment is found on the company website at: http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/HCVF-v2-October-15-2013-</p>

	Final.pdf
<p>A Ghost Valley resident affiliated with the BRBC and a resident of Benchlands affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance asked, how do you identify critical wildlife Areas?</p> <p>Both participants wanted to learn more about SLS's HCFV management and monitoring strategies.</p>	<p>Maps are provided by the government of Alberta and contained in the Integrated Resource Plans (IRP) as prime protection zones and critical wildlife zones. As new wildlife areas, such as Key Wildlife Biodiversity Zones are identified, they are incorporated into our management practices.</p> <p>SLS discussed some of the HCFV designations and suggests for more detailed information to visit the HCFV Assessment found on the company website at: http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/HCFV-v2-October-15-2013-Final.pdf</p>
TOPIC: FOREST MANAGEMENT	
A Richards Road resident asked if there are any pine beetle areas in the planning unit?	The area is rated as low to moderate risk of mountain pine beetle infestation.
A resident of the Richards Road area asked When will you come back to harvest in this area?	Long term forest management planning is based on a forest compartment basis. A spatial harvest sequence is established for a 20 year period. This approach maintains forested areas adjacent to harvested blocks on the landscape overtime. SLS is planning on harvesting several years' worth of harvest blocks to reduce the harvest interval in the area which reduces the linear footprint and the frequency we re-enter the area.
A Richards Road resident commented the forest area is likely to burn up in a wildfire due to accumulation of dead and dying trees. The forest will have less risk to a fire after the logging.	SLS agrees.
<p>Block 3251</p> <p>Residents of the Richards Road area had specific questions concerning block 3251: Won't the removal of trees make the problem worse? That's an area the neighboring landowners enjoy for walking and horseback riding.</p>	<p>SLS has toured this site with concerned landowners last year and moved the boundary back from the escarpment edge. SLS then toured the site with AESRD specialists this year and developed the following site specific prescription: <i>A variable width hard buffer ranging from 0-20m has been applied to the cutblock boundary closest to this feature (escarpment), with the widest sections being applied to the areas that showed the most recent evidence of soil disturbance. A special Management zone will also be applied to the hard</i></p>

<p>A participant asked, have you contacted a geotechnical engineer?</p> <p>A resident from the Richards Road Area suggested SLS should horse log block 3251, it would be a great for public relations.</p> <p>The resident disagreed with the assumption that horse logging does more damage to the under story, than mechanical equipment. If the contractor has experience, and knows what he is doing, any skid trails can easily be rehabilitated after completion of logging, using a harrow. You will be hard pressed to see evidence of activity the next year, if done correctly.</p>	<p><i>Buffer. This zone will vary in width depending on its proximity to the edge of the feature, but could range from 5-20m. The intent of this zone is to modify the way in which the machinery harvests the timber to protect as much of the understory as possible. Logging will be permitted within this zone, but will target only mature trees, understory and immature trees will be left standing where feasible. The purpose of this is to create a “feathered edge” effect along the boundary adjacent to the feature in an effort to direct winds over the remaining trees and provide more soil stability from the understory trees’ root systems.</i> SLS will also contact the AESRD to learn if a geotechnical engineer is available to also evaluate the site and provide consultation. As a result of the feedback obtained from this session, SLS will mark on the ground variable sized and spaced reserve tree groupings throughout the block.</p> <p>A horse logging approach may actually cause more damage to the site (all things being equal) than conventional logging equipment. Typically when horses skid logs, soils are furrowed from the plow effect of the logs being pulled by the horse. On a horse logging operation, trees are hand felled and typically cause more damage to the understory vegetation than mechanical felling. Logs are also cut by hand leaving more unprocessed slash in the block which requires pile burning to reduce the fire hazard and may result in a loss of nutrients on site.</p>
<p>TOPIC: MAPS</p>	
<p>A Benchlands resident affiliated with the Ghost Watershed Alliance, commented, we need maps to understand what’s going on without maps we can’t do anything.</p> <p>A Ghost Valley resident affiliated with the</p>	

<p>BRBC commented your maps are fine the way they are, that's not the problem.</p> <p>A resident from the Richards Road Area suggested SLS provide a map starting with the county map as the base map and add: roads, water, private land, topography, and cut block sequencing with the features labelled?</p>	<p>SLS will provide a map as requested containing roads, water, private land, topography, and cut block sequencing with the features labelled and post it on our website.</p>
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