Jumpingpound Creek Collaborative Planning Session
May 13th, 2016
Summary of Stakeholder Comments and SLS Response

Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS) hosted a collaborative planning session to discuss the planned timber harvest in the Jumpingpound Creek compartment. SLS reviewed the planning hierarchy and government submissions required prior to harvest operations. The group then discussed SLS and stakeholder values in the area, both specific and general.

Attendees:

- Allen Mottet – Spray Lake Sawmills
- Matt Denney – Spray Lake Sawmills
- Shaun Peter – Trail User
- Reid Thomas – General Interest
- Don Hill – Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance
- David Mills – Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance
- John Buckley – Grazing Quota Holder
- Pat Bedry – Rancher and Realtor
- Marv Bedry – Rancher
- Trevor Wilson – General Interest, Trial User
- Alf Skrastins – Greater Bragg Creek Trails Association

Subject: Road Safety

The main point of access for harvest and haul is Powderface Trail. Powderface Trail is closed seasonally Dec 1 - May 15 inclusive. Due to the 2013 floods, the Powderface Trail has not been open May 16 - Nov 30. Alberta Transportation has stated that work is ongoing and the plan is to have all work complete by May 15, 2016 and open the road May 16, 2016. When Powderface Trail is open, there is traffic from multiple user groups.

Discussion / Comments:

- Powderface Trail safety for public while being used by logging trucks.
- Request for road review of corners and blind spots on Powderface Trail.
- Grazing concerns about increased traffic.
- Increase in use on narrow road.

SLS Response:
Log haul on Powderface Trail will generally be completed within the closure period, when it is closed to the public. Alberta Transportation is the authority on this road, granting approval for its use, and solely responsible for it maintenance. SLS will work with AT regarding a road review to ensure that the road can be used to complete a safe log haul. An increase in traffic increases the exposure for an incident to occur. SLS log truck drivers are trained professionals and continuously provide us with both safe and efficient hauling. If an incident were to occur, with another vehicle, pedestrian, livestock, or wildlife an investigation is conducted to determine root cause and develop mitigation strategies with Alberta Transportation.

Subject: Recreation

SLS's objective is to manage the implications of forest management activities on forest recreations. In a high use area such as Jumpingpound there is a significant benefit to co-ordination between land users. As per the OGR, SLS shall restore designated recreational trails and their associated watercourse crossings that are affected by their operations. SLS meets with Alberta Culture and Tourism and Environment and Parks to review FHP submissions. A full review of aesthetics, recreations values and mitigation measures takes place.

Discussion / Comments:

- Importance of the Jumpingpound area for outdoor recreation
- Cox Hill, Jumpingpound Ridge Trail, and Lusk Pass are designated as the Trans-Canada Trail
- Lusk Pass Trail overlap with planned haul route
    - Reclamation standards

SLS Response:
SLS will continue to investigate this area with Alberta and stakeholders to determine the most appropriate tactic(s) to reduce the impacts of timber harvest and reforestation on recreational activities. Trails that are impacts will be returned to previous or better condition following completion of SLS's activities. Please see the Aesthetics section for more information on specifics.

Subject: Aesthetics

In the SLS Detailed Forest Management Plan (DFMP), it has been determined that this area has a high visual sensitivity rating. SLS's objectives is to mitigate the impact of timber operations on the visual quality of the forest landscape. OGR 5.5 goes into further detail.

Discussion / Comments:
As per the Operating Ground Rules (OGR), there are many tactics to reduce the impacts of timber harvest and reforestation on visual quality. These include partial or selection cutting, retention of forest structure and lesser vegetation, large patches of structure retention deferred for future harvest, modification of harvest area design, low impact scarification techniques, vegetative buffers, and utilizing natural topography.

- Harvest boundary should be investigated and adjusted to retain the aesthetic value of the popular trails in the area
- Request for buffer on Jumpingpound ridge trail. This is a very high profile trail and a buffer is felt as the most appropriate strategy
- Request for 50m minimum buffer along ALL trails, specifically sight lines from Jumpingpound Ridge, Cox Ridge, Lusk Pass and Baldy Pass.
- Consider the value of a side trail from a main trail to the edge of a cut block. The long views are an attraction to many trail users.
- Merits of retaining structure near trails, is this broadly supported?
- Road classification for Powderface Trail, what is the impact of OGR 7.2.4

SLS Response:
Mitigating timber harvest impacts on visual resources is considered by Spray Lake Sawmills in several ways. The first step was in the development of the current Forest Management Plan (FMP), which

integrated aesthetic values overtime throughout the FMA. This was in part accomplished by designating 30% of the total FMA/B9 Quota area as forested retention or *passive land base*. The passive land base is unavailable for harvest and is designed to meet a multitude of important resource values. Another built in component of the FMP, partly designed to enhance aesthetic values, includes the 20-year adjacency constraint and operational harvest-sequencing plan. This approach limits the areas available for harvest by maintaining forested areas adjacent to harvested blocks on the landscape overtime.

SLS's goal as forest managers is to attempt to keep up with the fuel loading by replacing the natural process of wildfire with responsible timber harvesting and reforestation. Leaving a merchantable treed buffer along recreational trails does not follow this philosophy or the research supporting it and results in a legacy of unhealthy and unproductive forestlands.

The Jumpingpound Creek compartment is rated high in the Visual Sensitivity Assessment. Given the stakeholder concerns about visual impacts and the potential for leaving buffers along recreational trails, SLS will continue to investigate this area with stakeholders to determine a tactic to reduce the impacts of timber harvest and reforestation on visual quality.

For more information on detailed aesthetic value management please reference the Stewardship Report located on our website: http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/detailed-forest-management-plan/

Subject: Weeds

SLS typically operates on land with grazing interests, holding shared concerns about the spread of weeds especially noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. As per the OGR, SLS is committed to minimize the impact of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. SLS follows Alberta's requirements regarding weed management in forestry operations. Where risk of spread is high, all equipment used for timber operations are cleaned and free of weed (seed or plant) prior to entry into a working area. OGR 10.2 goes into further detail.

Discussion / Comments:

- Noxious weeds in area:
    - Field Scabious
    - Tall Buttercup
- Prohibited noxious weeds in area:
    - Orange Hawkweed
- Monitoring and mitigation of presence within the disturbance areas will need to be addressed

SLS Response:
SLS operations will be consistent with OGR. SLS will work with area ranchers and rangeland agrologists to minimize the impact of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. SLS will work with rancher to develop Grazing Timber Agreement, which includes monitoring standards to ensure objectives are being met. All

operations will comply with applicable ground rules and Act's (Weed Act, Forest Reserves Act, etc.)

Subject: Retention

Retention has many purposes:

- Provide conditions more analogous to those created by natural disturbance events
- Creation of temporary refuges for forest biota to re-colonize harvest areas
- Maintenance of snags and live residual trees in harvest areas for biota that depend on these structures following natural disturbance
- Provide wildlife thermal and hiding cover within harvest areas through the rotation
- Provide wildlife travel corridors within large harvest areas and compartments
- Aid in meeting forest aesthetics objectives

OGR 7.4 goes into further detail.

Discussion / Comments:

- New directive from Alberta in the works to require 10% retention.
    - Is SLS designing blocks to meet this directive?
    - What other objectives are met by meeting the 10% retention objective?
- How retention can be used to meet visual objectives
- Use of wildlife corridors in block retention planning
    - Difficulty for wildlife navigation in different stand structures
    - Can SLS review potential locations for wildlife corridors?

SLS Response:
The new '10% retention' draft directive is being formulated and is currently not in place. SLS harvest areas are currently being designed to meet existing retention targets. The current targets have been determined at an appropriate level to meet the objectives as laid out in OGR 7.4. SLS has reviewed the draft directive and responded with comments to Alberta with its position. The specifics in how the 10% retention target is met will greatly influence other targets such as aesthetics, line of sight, distance to wildlife cover, wildlife habitat targets, etc. Retention will be considered when field checking the harvest areas, meeting the retention targets will aid in SLS being able to meet many other objectives, such as visual. Due to the terrain and amount of buffered area on watercourses in the Jumpingpound Compartment, SLS will exceed wildlife targets. Consideration for wildlife travel and corridors is an important part of harvest design and will be incorporated throughout operations.

Subject: Wetland Policy:

SLS does not harvest in wetlands and will follow OGR Section 6.0 Watershed Protection to manage the impact of timber operations on water quality, quantity, and flow. All streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and riparian areas are high value resources and receive special management through normal operations; all these areas are field verified to ensure correct management strategy in being implemented.

Discussion / Comments:

- June 1, 2016: Alberta Wetland Policy
- Is SLS forest harvest planning and implementation impacted by wetland policy, and if so, how?

SLS Response:
That Alberta Wetland Policy (as printed September 2013) lays out the framework for conserving, restoring, and protecting Alberta's wetlands. This policy is to be implemented July 4, 2016 (delayed from June 1, 2016). SLS has been and will continue to follow this policy, using the primary and preferred mitigation response: avoidance. SLS does not harvest in wetlands, and avoids wetland areas through road building. If road building must cross a wetland area, SLS will work with Alberta to reduce the negative impacts on the wetland to the smallest practicable degree. To date SLS has no area where avoidance and/or minimization efforts were not feasible or effective. SLS forest harvest planning and operations are not impacted by the implementation of the Alberta Wetland Policy.

For more information, please visit the water quality page on our website:
http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/water/

Subject: Maximum Cutblock Size

Harvest areas are designed to implement timber operations in a manner that ensures landscapes maintain biodiversity and ecosystem function. The variability of natural disturbances shall be considered when planning harvest are size and shape. This variability will help to provide habitat for species that are dependent on natural disturbance regimes. OGR 7.2 goes into more detail.

Discussion / Comments:

- OGR 7.2.2.1 and 7.2.2.2 note maximum cutblock sizes, is SLS following the OGR?

SLS Response:
OGR's 7.2.2.1 and 7.2.2.2 only apply in the absence of Spatial Harvest Sequence and where a two pass harvest is planned. The Jumping pound Creek harvest area is sequenced and is not a two pass harvest.

The Pre Industrial Forest Condition (PIC) study concluded that the size of harvest blocks, currently at less than 100 ha, falls within the natural range of variation. However, under PIC burning conditions, less than 20% of fires would have been less than 100 ha. The PIC model indicated mean fire size under a fire suppression regime was established at 537 ha for the Subalpine, 1,454 ha for the Upper Foothills/Montane and 800 ha for the Lower Foothills. Under a PIC fire regime, mean fire size would be expected to be much larger.

In terms of landscape management, SLS is addressing the findings of the fire disturbance research in several ways. SLS is increasing the size of harvest blocks by adjoining blocks while leaving a patchwork of island remnants and preserving travel corridors and shelter for wildlife. SLS is also increasing the amount of patterning of a harvest block to make them more visually appealing, reminiscent of fire boundaries

and increasing edge habitat for a variety of species. Larger block sizes are consistent with natural conditions and generally provide higher quality habitat conditions.

Subject: Mountain Pine Beetle

The impact of mountain pine beetle is addressed when planning harvesting; priority for management will be based on greatest impact / most damage. MPB increases the wildfire hazard, reduces merchantable timber volume, and detracts from landscape aesthetics. OGR 10.1 goes into future detail.

Discussion / Comments:

- What is SLS's MPB strategy in the Jumpingpound Compartment?

SLS Response:
Alberta has implemented the 'healthy pine strategy' to reduce the amount of timber susceptible to MPB. This works by identifying the most susceptible stands and amending harvest plans of FMA holders to reduce the amount of susceptible pine by 75% over the next 20 years. Although focusing on high-risk areas, SLS does not follow this strategy. A dramatically increased harvest level is unrealistic in the SLS FMA from social, economic, and environmental standpoints. The implications of an increased harvest level outweigh the benefit of the MPB control in an area with relatively low levels of outbreak compared to other areas in the province. The Timber Supply Analysis completed in the DFMP determines a sustainable level of harvest with focus on older, high-risk areas earlier in the sequencing. The harvest activities in the Jumpingpound Creek compartment will follow SLS's MPB strategy.

Subject: Wildfire Mitigation

Discussion/ Comments:

- Jumpingound harvest is not part of FireSmart program

SLS Response:
Alberta regulates the FireSmart program, for more information please visit:
http://wildfire.alberta.ca/fire-smart/default.aspx

Subject: Watershed Protection

SLS will follow OGR Section 6.0 Watershed Protection to manage the impact of timber operations on water quality, quantity, and flow. All streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and riparian areas are high value resources and receive special management through normal operations; all these areas are field verified to ensure correct management strategy in being implemented.

Discussion / Comments:

- Stream classification and associated buffers
- Effects of harvesting in the headwaters
- Effects of harvest on downstream flooding / instantaneous peak flow

- Any studies?

SLS Response:
Forest regulations require that actual harvest levels are reconciled with the water yield modelled. SHS is used to ensure harvest levels meet or are below modelled thresholds. Regional targets for watershed resource monitoring are found in the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP). Timber harvest has no measureable impact on the natural variability of stream quality or quantity. OGR Section 6.0 Watershed Protection defines stream classifications and associated buffers. These buffers are the proven distance required to eliminate any significant impact on water quality, quantity, and flow. All streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and riparian areas are high value resources and receive special management through normal operations.

For more information, please visit the water quality page on our website:
http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/water/

Additional SLS comments

Supplemental to the OGR, SLS developed a series of resource management objectives designed to measure performance in meeting the stated goals identified in the DFMP. Some of the plan metrics include water quality, road access and reclamation, reforestation program, biodiversity and wildlife habitat supply, soil disturbance, and sustainable timber supply. SLS has consistently met or exceeded all of the stated plan objectives. Please see the SLS Stewardship Report, which summarizes the annual and five-year monitoring deliverables in reference to the planning objectives identified in the DFMP at http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/detailed-forest-management-plan/

SLS would like to thank all those who participated in this year's collaborative planning sessions and all of our public consultation; your interest and comments are greatly appreciated.