

Burnt Timber Creek Collaborative Planning Session
May 1, 2019
Summary of Stakeholder Comments

Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS) hosted a collaborative planning session to discuss the planned timber harvest in the Burnt Timber 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
- Paul Clark – MD Bighorn
- Greg Harris – MD Mountain View
- Reid Thomas – Jamieson Road Resident
- Grace Wark – AWA
- Kendra Tippe – MD Bighorn
- Peggy Holroyd – Cochrane Resident / AEP
- Lesley Peterson – Trout Unlimited Canada

The intent of the session is to develop preliminary harvest designs on a forest compartment basis. The session covered the Burnt Timber Creek Compartment. Area specific topics and comments were discussed however much of the conversation focused on Detailed Forest Management Plan (DFMP, FMP) and the Operating Ground Rules (OGR). Although addressed briefly in the subjects and SLS responses below please understand that these topics are considered out of scope of the Collaborative Planning Session, as there are other avenues and public sessions to address these concerns.

Subject: Planning Hierarchy

General discussion throughout presentation on planning hierarchy and government submission relating to inputs and output of the DFMP, operational plans, and OGR, specifically:

1. Opportunities for the public to participate in the OGR review process.
2. Coordination of timing of the 5 Year Stewardship Report with the annual submission of the 5 year General Development Plan.
3. Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat Supply assessments and results
4. Adjacency constraints and ecological recovery when developing harvest plans
5. Pre-harvest surveys including species abundance and composition, forest health/damaging agents. Public access to this information.
6. Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) model development and use as a planning tool
7. Stand sequencing in regards to age class, risk rating, etc.
8. Relationship between the forthcoming East Kananaskis – Ghost Subregional plan and the upcoming SLS FMP, specifically thresholds for spatial and linear disturbance.

SLS Response:

1. Although there is no direct public participation in the OGR review process, public input is a vital part of the development of DFMP objectives. The OGR is developed in conjunction with the DFMP to ensure that DFMP objectives are being met on the ground. The purpose of the OGR review is to fine-tune the OGR and provide any necessary clarification, not to re-develop. Please see our website for more information on OGR at:
<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/operating-ground-rules/>
2. Although the Stewardship Report (SR) and General Development Plan (GDP) are both developed under the DFMP, there is no requirement or need to submit them on the same schedule. The focus of the SR is on the implementation of the DFMP objectives and monitoring programs. One of the main objectives of the SR is to create a feedback loop for adaptive sustainable forest management and continuous improvement. The SR is available on our website:
<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/5-year-Stewardship-Report.pdf>. The General Development Plan GDP is submitted annually specifying annual harvest activities for a five year period. The GDP schedules compartment and license harvest levels, general haul routes and access plans including road construction and maintenance activities. Last year's GDP is available on our website:
<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/general-development-plans/>
3. SLS works with Alberta to gain a landscape level of understanding of the vegetative diversity and wildlife habitat requirements both spatially and temporally. SLS and Alberta have developed an Ecological Land Classification and Habitat Suitability Models to provide a baseline for the natural range of variability. The objective is to maintain the natural vegetation range of variability and habitat for key species over time. Please see DFMP 5.4 Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat Supply, DFMP 8.3 Projecting Effects of Timber Harvest Scenarios on Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat, Stewardship Report 4 Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat Supply all available on our website:
<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/detailed-forest-management-plan/>
4. The adjacency constraint in the Timber Supply Analysis (TSA) in the DFMP is 20 years. The model requires a target; the 20-year constraint is input into the TSA to meet multiple objectives to ensure the desired future forest condition such as but not limited to uneven age class, visual resources, biodiversity, integration objectives, and regeneration lag period.
5. Pre Harvest Assessments (PHA) are internal SLS documents designed to ensure the harvest area is operated in accordance to the plan and OGR. PHA's are completed for every harvest block and include:
 - a. Timber information (piece size, volume, species, diameter, height)
 - b. Harvest information (season, difficulty, coarse woody debris, snags, forest health)
 - c. Site information (aspect, slope, moisture regime, drainage class, duff depth)
 - d. Road information (construction details, access control, installations)
 - e. Installation information (crossing type, watercourse class, applicable buffers)

- f. Wildlife and Vegetation information (wildlife zones, protected species, invasive species)
 - g. Grazing, recreation, and other stakeholder information
 - h. Safety information
6. SLS used the “ECA-Alberta” hydrologic model to assess the potential effect of harvest operations on water production within the FMA for the existing detailed Forest Management Plan (DFMP). To learn more about how SLS keeps the water clean visit:
<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/water/>
7. The timber supply analysis (TSA) is a technical modeling exercise that relies upon the Values Objective Indicators and Targets (VOITs) aligned with the provincial Forest Management Planning Standards. To learn more about the FMP process and the VOITs that drive the TSA, see the FMP Renewal Update Table 1: GoA VOIT working version (received March 2018)
<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FMP-Renewal-Update-VOIT-Information-Package-Winter-2019.pdf>. SHS is the spatial representation of the forest polygons selected for harvest over time to ensure the sustainable annual allowable harvest level is achieved. The stand sequencing is based on several criteria including:
 - a. Rate of decline
 - b. Height
 - c. Volume
 - d. Age
 - e. FireSmart priorities
 - f. Insect and disease susceptibility
 - g. Adjacency to previous harvest areas and green-up
 - h. Water yield
 - i. Maximum block size
 - j. Wildlife habitat
8. SLS activities are subject to the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and applicable sub-regional plans per the Alberta Land Stewardship Act.

Subject: Roads

Discussion on how SLS plans to access operating areas, the overlap of pre-existing roads and the development of new routes:

1. Road use agreements with public and private roads
2. Development of permanent roads to be left in place for access such as fire roads.
3. Temporary road timing and reclamation requirements
4. Access Control

SLS Response:

1. As roads are one of the most significant components of forest harvesting operations, forest operators along with Government of Alberta co-ordinate and integrate road planning and construction plans with other resource operators. As necessary, road use agreements for public or private roads will be in place prior to operations. Municipal Districts are notified during the

design stage if any road use agreements are required to determine the level of consultation needed on a road specific basis.

2. SLS utilizes existing access where possible then builds Class 4 temporary roads that are fully re-contoured and reclaimed following operations. Many of SLS operating areas have permanent road disturbance restrictions.
3. All SLS roads approved under an Annual Operating Plan (AOP) require full reclamation. There is a 3-year window to build and reclaim temporary roads as per the OGR.
4. Wildlife, sensitive areas, protection of road quality, and safety are reasons for implementing access control. SLS does not have the right to restrict access, but works with Alberta to control access to these areas, which are jointly monitored. SLS will reclaim all roads, and crossings following harvest operations. A number of strategies and tactics are available for controlling or restricting access:
 - a. Physical barriers (gates, barricades, piling, crossing removal)
 - b. Road conditions (berms, ditches, road stands, selective grade removal, roll-back, no snow removal)
 - c. Regulatory (sanctuaries, timing restrictions, signage)

Please see our website for more information on OGR access control requirements at:

<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/operating-ground-rules/>

Subject: Local Harvest History

Request to provide more information on the Burnt Timber compartment history; how it may be helpful in future sessions to provide this information.

1. More detailed explanation of the area and characteristics of the landscape
2. Location and harvest dates of previous cut blocks and road systems

SLS Response:

1. Harvest history is incorporated into the Alberta Vegetation Inventory (AVI), which has been redone for the new FMP. For more information of AVI standards please see: <https://www.alberta.ca/vegetation-inventory-standards.aspx>
2. The location of previously harvested blocks is seen on the ortho photo maps provided for the session. The area covered by the Burnt Timber compartment has a long history of forest operations. Recent SLS activities in the compartment include operations in 2010 (approx. 604ha), 2017 (approx. 139ha), 2018 (approx. 707ha), and contingency operations for 2019 (approx. 90ha). The road network of the area consists mostly of Hunter Valley Road (AT authority), and oil/gas road dispositions. Following operations associated with this session, the Burnt Timber compartment will not be operated again under the current DFMP.

Subject: Stakeholder Integration

Discussion on how SLS integrates with local stakeholders, specifically ranchers

1. Agreements required for operations

2. Timing of notification prior to operations

SLS Response:

1. Agreement is required between timber and grazing operators in the form of a Grazing Timber Agreement requiring Alberta endorsement, which is to be completed prior to AOP approval.
2. Timing is regulated by the Grazing and Timber Integration Manual. A 2-year notification timeline applies to grazing licenses and leases prior to timber harvesting operations. For more information of Grazing and Timber Integrations visit: <https://www.alberta.ca/grazing-and-timber-integration.aspx>

Subject: Watershed and Critical Fish Habitat Protection

Discussion of Burnt Timber Creek and Fallen Timber Creek, SLS watershed protection, and known critical habitat

1. Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) model development and use as a planning tool
2. Bull Trout spawning area, known habitat for Bull Trout and the future federal listing
3. Watercourse protection buffers
4. GWAS bioengineering project in area

SLS Response:

1. The model predicts hydrological recovery within areas where harvesting or other disturbances have occurred by estimating changes in water yield over time in relation to the regrowth of vegetation. Spray Lake has used the ECA-Alberta hydrologic model to assess the potential change in water yield following harvesting and the associated rate of hydrologic recovery over time. 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. Please see DFMP 8.4 Equivalent Clearcut Area Modeling (<https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/woodlands/forest-management-planning/detailed-forest-management-plan/>) and visit: <https://www.spraylakesawmills.com/water/> for more information.
2. SLS will be alerted if there is a change to the listing of Bull Trout, and will manage as per direction from Alberta. As per the current OGR, Bull Trout habitat is adequately protected by OGR Section 6.0 Watershed Protection.
3. Water related issues are recognized as a high priority for the east slopes. The DFMP has netted out watershed buffers prior to doing the timber supply analysis. Buffer areas do not contribute to the sustainable timber supply and are not sequenced for harvest. OGR Section 6.0 Watershed Protection defines stream classifications and associated buffers. These buffers are the scientifically 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.
4. The location of this project was not identified, however, will be not be impacted by harvest operations as the OGR buffer requirement will be met.

Subject: Weed Control

Following up on the session, questions regarding the management of invasive weed species, both generally and specifically to the BT compartment.

1. Protocol for preventing or mitigating invasive weed species from entering into operating areas
2. Process for controlling invasive weed species found during or after operations have completed
3. Herbicides use and other weed management tools
4. Liability of weed control following a harvest operation, specifically to SLS's timing

SLS Response:

1. SLS operations will be consistent with the OGRs. SLS will work with area ranchers and provincial rangeland agronomists to minimize the impact of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. SLS will work with ranchers to develop a 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 Control Act, Forest Reserves Act, Forests Act, etc.) 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. Any seed used in road reclamation will be certified weed free.
2. SLS staff and contractors are trained in the identification of restricted and noxious weeds and the importance of destroying individual weed plants and reporting new infestations.
3. Alberta is the authority on type and timing of weed control. SLS will work with Alberta to control infestations in a proactive manner.
4. SLS operations will comply with applicable ground rules and Acts (Weed Control Act, Forest Reserves Act, Forests Act, etc.) Alberta is the authority on type and timing of weed control and determining accountability under the applicable Acts. SLS will work with Alberta to control infestations in a proactive manner.

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.