



AUG 27 2007

Dr. Bruce Fraser, Chair
Forest Practices Board
P.O. Box 9905 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 9E1

Dear Dr. Fraser:

Re: Forest Practices Board Recommendations--Special Report 24

On behalf of the British Columbia Inter-agency Emergency Preparedness Council (IEPC), please accept this letter prepared by the Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) as government's response to three recommendations in the Forest Practices Board's special report 24, *Post-Wildfire Hazard Assessment Risk Management (February 2006)*.



RECOMMENDATION 1

Leadership: *The Board recommends that the provincial government designate a lead agency (or agencies) for post-wildfire hazard assessment and post-wildfire risk management.*

Response by MFR and MPSSG

While the majority of wildfires in British Columbia occur away from populated centers and infrastructure, a small number of them do have the potential to pose a risk to public safety, private property and infrastructure located within and downslope from the burned areas from post-wildfire natural hazards such as severe erosion and flood events. The provincial government recognizes the need for a coordinated approach to assessing and managing post-wildfire hazards and risks. Since 2005 the government has been working on several initiatives to address this need in response to large-scale erosion and flooding events associated with burn areas from the 2003 and 2004 wildfires in the Southern Interior Forest Region (SIFR).

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MFR, with input from Emergency Management BC of MPSSG through the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP), has completed a working draft policy framework that describes the respective roles and responsibilities of Protection Branch of MFR and PEP in post-wildfire hazard and risk identification and management. Under this framework, the MFR on behalf of the province is the lead ministry with the primary responsibility to (1) identify post-wildfire erosion and flood hazards associated with wildfires on Crown lands, (2) make a preliminary determination whether a significant elevated risk to public safety and critical infrastructure exists after such wildfires, and (3) notify PEP of elevated risk levels as appropriate. PEP has the primary responsibility to communicate identified post-wildfire risk as necessary to affected stakeholders in cooperation with local governments and agencies. Local governments plan and implement risk mitigation activities to reduce the risk to public safety and critical infrastructure. In turn, PEP will work with local governments to help them discharge their responsibilities for risk mitigation.

RECOMMENDATION 2

***Standard Process:** The Board recommends that the provincial government complete a standard operating procedure for post-wildfire risk assessment and management and implement it where appropriate.*

Response by MFR and MPSSG

MFR, with assistance from PEP, has developed a working draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the management of increased risk from severe surface erosion, landslide, gully processes, and flood events after wildfires. Under the SOP, MFR will rapidly screen wildfires to identify those burn areas that are located on, or directly above, moderate to steep slopes above human settlements, private property, or infrastructure. Those wildfires determined to pose a moderate to high risk will undergo more detailed risk assessments by qualified professionals to provide a preliminary determination of the change in risk from post-wildfire natural hazards.

MFR's SOP was developed to ensure that the increased risk from natural hazards following severe wildfires is systematically identified and communicated to PEP. In addition to the SOP, MFR has prepared detailed technical procedures that will be used by qualified professionals to identify significant post-wildfire erosion and landslide hazards and provide a methodology to analyze the associated risks to people, property and infrastructure. The procedures are provided in a working draft document entitled *Risk Assessment of Post-wildfire Natural Hazards*. The document was developed by a working group comprised mostly of professional geoscientists, professional engineers and professional agrologists. The procedures in the document are based on current information available from the US Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program, advice from US Forest Service staff familiar with post-wildfire risk assessments, and the knowledge and experience of MFR staff and private consultants. The procedures are a work-in-progress that were initially developed and applied in 2006, and will be refined periodically.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Funding: *The Board recommends that, where there is an unacceptable risk to people, property or infrastructure after an interface wildfire, the provincial government should explore ways of helping those at risk manage and mitigate the risk.*

Response by MFR and MPSSG

As a result of the working draft policy framework discussed earlier under Recommendation 1, MFR is expecting to expand its internal procedures to identify post-wildfire hazards within an entire wildfire burn area, not just the portion of land affected by fire suppression and control activities, as was past practice. The use of the Fire Suppression Vote to fund the cost of post-wildfire risk assessments within the wildfire boundary in accordance with the SOP is also being considered.

Additionally, MFR may undertake cost-effective treatments on Crown land within the wildfire boundary as part of its normal rehabilitation efforts to mitigate the increased risk to public safety from soil erosion, landslide, and flooding events created by the wildfire. For example, these treatments may include (1) erosion control techniques such as mulching, seeding or re-vegetation activities, (2) physical erosion control measures that create sediment traps and barriers to water movement such as hill slope placement of woody debris and straw wattles, and (3) drainage control upgrading or deactivation of pre-fire non-status roads that are shown to be directly elevating a hazard within a fire area, if prescribed by qualified professionals. The Fire Suppression Vote may also be used to fund these treatments on Crown land, in accordance with funding guidelines provided in the working draft policy framework that MFR expects to finalize in fiscal 2007/2008. Other funding sources may be used if available.

PEP will work with a local government and other stakeholders to develop a risk mitigation plan as necessary. To the best of its ability, MFR will coordinate its risk mitigation activities on Crown land with those of local government and others. Under the *Emergency Program Act*, local governments must provide the initial response to most emergencies. Where an unacceptable risk is determined to be within provincial jurisdiction, beyond the capabilities of the local government or potentially catastrophic in nature, PEP will take the lead role and provide funding support for agreed-to mitigation measures. PEP will look at any issues based on their immediacy to negatively impact public safety or infrastructure.

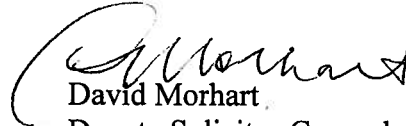
I trust this letter addresses the board's special report recommendations. If the board has any questions regarding government's response to the recommendations on leadership and standard process, please contact Ken Soneff, Forest Science Officer, Southern Interior Forest Region, at 250 828-4164. If the board has any questions regarding government's response to

the recommendation on funding, please contact Brian Simpson, Acting Director, Protection Branch, at 250 365-4012 with respect to Protection Branch funding responsibilities or Cam Filmer, Executive Director, Provincial Emergency Program, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General at 250 952-4917 with respect to PEP funding responsibilities.

Yours truly,



Doug Konkin
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Forests and Range



David Morhart
Deputy Solicitor General
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

pc: Honourable John Les, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Honourable Rich Coleman, Minister of Forests and Range
Wes Shoemaker, Associate Deputy Minister, Emergency Management BC, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Tim Sheldan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division, Ministry of Forests and Range
Cam Filmer, Executive Director, Provincial Emergency Program, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Peter Fuglem, Executive Director, Operations, Ministry of Forests and Range
Brian Simpson, Acting Director, Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range
Jim Langridge, Director, Resource Tenures and Engineering Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range
Judi Beck, Manager of Fire Management, Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range
Ken Soneff, Forest Science Officer, Southern Interior Forest Region, Ministry of Forests and Range
James Whyte, Director of Operations, Provincial Emergency Program, Emergency Management BC, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Dwayne Meredith, Manager, Natural Hazard Mitigation, Provincial Emergency Program, Emergency Management BC, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Glenn Moore, Senior Structures and Roads Engineer, Resource Tenures and Engineering Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range



File: 97350-20/2006-24

September 21, 2007

Doug Konkin
Deputy Minister
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David Morhart
Deputy Solicitor General
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
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Victoria, BC V8W 9J7

Dear Doug Konkin and David Morhart:

Re: Forest Practices Board Recommendations – Special Report 24

Thank you for your letter of August 27, 2007 responding to the recommendations made in the Forest Practices Board's 2006 special report 24, *Post-Wildfire Hazard Assessment Risk Management*.

The Board believes that with the leadership shown through your agencies, as well as the development of standard operating procedures for risk management, the risk to public safety from soil erosion, landslide and flooding events created by wildfire will be reduced.

The Board considers that you have met the recommendations in the report and the file is now closed.

I would like to thank both of you for the co-operation shown by you and your staff during this project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Fraser".

Bruce Fraser, PhD
Chair

cc: Honourable John Les, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Honourable Rich Coleman, Minister of Forests and Range