

Board Bulletin, Volume 17 Stewardship – A Forest Practices Board Perspective

March 2016

This bulletin explores stewardship from a Forest Practices Board perspective. It is intended to foster discussion and promote stewardship of public forest and range resources.

The Forest Practices Board has often used the term stewardship in its reports and communications. This bulletin describes the Board's perspective on stewardship, within the context of the Board's fundamental purpose of encouraging sound forest and range practices that warrant public confidence and continuous improvement of those practices. The Board will apply the definition and principles in this bulletin to help promote stewardship across BC.

A Board Definition of Stewardship

The Forest Practices Board defines stewardship as:

Ensuring responsible resource use today, while maintaining the health of the land for future generations.

The Board recognizes that management of lands and resources in the public interest requires more than a collection of activities and standards prescribed in law. In addition to responsible practices today, a long-term outlook is required that sustains the full range of resources for future generations.

Principles of Stewardship

The following five principles build on the Board's definition of stewardship and, together, these provide a vision for stewardship of forests and rangelands in BC.

1. PLANNING IS COMPREHENSIVE AND BASED ON THE BEST AVAILABLE INFORMATION, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING FUTURE UNCERTAINTIES.

Planning that demonstrates stewardship is ongoing and charts a path for management and on-the-ground practices over time. Planning:

- establishes a clear hierarchy of goals and objectives, with measurable or verifiable outcomes at appropriate scales, including the landscape scale;
- reflects the complexity of ecological conditions and processes, while remaining feasible to implement;
- incorporates information that is up-to-date, comprehensive, and reliable;
- coordinates and integrates the activities of tenure holders and other resource users over time (this includes coordination and collaboration among multiple tenure holders operating in the same area);

- considers potential risks and tradeoffs among competing resource uses and values to facilitate decisions regarding those trade-offs (this includes assessment of cumulative effects); and
- acknowledges future environmental, social and economic uncertainties and anticipates vulnerabilities, to maintain options and benefits over the long term.

2. PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING ARE TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIVE TO INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC.

To manage forests and rangelands effectively on behalf of the public requires engagement with other interests and a high level of transparency through the decision-making process. The public should have the opportunity to provide input and to feel that their input is heard and considered. Therefore, planning and decision-making ensures:

- resource data are readily available, so the public is able to participate effectively in planning and management at appropriate times;
- the public is consulted in a manner that is proactive and effective,¹ and collaboration is sought where opportunities arise;
- the public is provided with access to professional assessments and other relevant information; and
- the rationales for management decisions that potentially impact the public are documented and shared.

3. PRACTICES ON THE GROUND SUSTAIN ECOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUES.

On-the-ground forest and range practices that reflect stewardship demonstrate a clear understanding of landbase characteristics and the values present. Practices will:

- maintain, enhance or restore the long-term productive capacity of ecosystems;
- maintain ecological structures, composition and functions across the landscape and over time, informed by natural disturbance regimes and influences, such as climate change; and
- recognize and manage risks to all values, including environmental, social, cultural and economic, at relevant scales.

4. MANAGEMENT INCORPORATES MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IS ADAPTIVE TO NEW INFORMATION

Management should be based on up-to-date knowledge and adapted to reflect the evolving understanding of the interplay between the environment and use of natural resources. This includes:

- fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation through research, monitoring, training and extension that will further the understanding of good management and practice;

¹ For consultation to be effective the Board has outlined eight principles including consultation that is: early and meaningful, allocated sufficient time, adequately resourced, inclusive, informative and accessible, responsive and genuine, verifiable and continuous (Board Bulletin, Volume 3 – Opportunity for Public Consultation under the Forest and Range Practices Act available at <https://www.bcfpb.ca/reports-publications/reports/bulletin-003-opportunity-public-consultation-under-frpa-2003/>).

- integrating the most relevant learnings available from various sources (science, monitoring, traditional knowledge, business) into planning, decision-making and practices in a timely manner, through effective feedback loops; and
- promoting flexibility, innovation and adaptability within resource management organizations.

5. MANAGERS DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUTCOMES

Stewardship requires follow-through on programs and projects to ensure that they are properly implemented and that they achieve their desired outcomes. Accountability is demonstrated by:

- tracking and documenting decisions and activities;
- conducting inspections and monitoring operations to ensure that activities on-the-ground are carried out according to plan, possibly through independent verification;
- evaluating whether plans and practices meet intended outcomes;
- recognizing problems when they occur, in a transparent fashion, accepting responsibility where appropriate, taking corrective actions in a timely manner; and
- providing adequate resources to support and maintain management systems, strategies and activities.

Stewardship by who for whom? Who is responsible?

Management of public lands and resources in BC is complex because there are so many players involved. It is important to be clear about stewardship responsibilities. No one group is necessarily responsible for all aspects of all principles and responsibilities may change, depending on the situation.

- Government's role is to ensure the legal and policy framework is adequate and supports the complex and evolving challenges of resource management in BC, including climate change and cumulative effects, to ensure stewardship of public lands.²
- First Nations may apply their own knowledge, priorities and values to land and resource management within their territories, as original stewards of the lands.
- Depending on the type of tenure, tenure holders have a permitted right and responsibility to use and, where delegated, to manage specific resources on the landbase according to requirements set out in the laws and policies of the day. Tenure holders have an economic stake and must balance stewardship aspirations with costs and benefits to themselves and their shareholders while meeting government's legislated direction and public expectations.
- Resource professionals, such as foresters, biologists, engineers and others, have a responsibility to provide expert advice to tenure holders regarding planning and practices, and may be provided guidance through their professional organizations.³

² Forest Practices Board. 2014. *A Decade in Review: Observations on Regulation of Forest and Range Practices in British Columbia*. FPB/SR/46. Available at <https://www.bcfpb.ca/sites/default/files/reports/SR46-A-Decade-in-Review.pdf>

³ The Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABCFP) has prepared a series of guidance papers on how to manage non-statutory expectations in forest practices in the broader public interest.

- The broad objectives set out under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* allow tenure holders and their professionals to apply flexibility and innovation in managing public lands and resources. Achieving stewardship may require going beyond legal requirements to manage values and address significant issues in the public interest over the long term.
- Many people gain enjoyment and benefits from access to, and use of, forest and range resources. These resource users also have a responsibility to respect the land and the rights of other users, and to participate constructively in public consultations for management of forest and range resources.

Conclusion

Stewardship combines good practices with the intent to “do the right thing” over the long term. Stewards are knowledgeable of, and committed to, the sustainability of the resources that they manage and use. Stewardship of our provincial forests and rangelands is essential to provide the continuous flow of benefits that British Columbians enjoy. The Board encourages all parties involved in the management of our forests and rangelands, including communities and the public, to consider and discuss the Board’s stewardship principles for the purpose of promoting a common understanding and goals for stewardship across the landscape.

In its future work, the Board will point out examples of stewardship, evaluated against these principles, in order to foster discussion and to promote improved performance from licensees, managers, practitioners and users of BC’s forests, rangelands and resources.

We welcome your thoughts on this bulletin. You can send comments to fpboard@gov.bc.ca, or join the discussion on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

