

Attention: Brent May, District Manager – Nadina District

As the ministry is aware, the Burns Lake Community Forest (BLCF) is working in collaboration with the Northwest Fire Center and Nadina District to implement actions, where feasible, to reduce the wildfire risks to communities from mountain pine beetle damaged forests within the BLCF land base. Please find the following rationale and supporting information for your consideration to exercise your discretionary statutory authority as is necessary to begin to implement these actions.

Background

Strategic wildfire management activity is expected to be implemented on the BLCF over a 3-year period through new cutting permits as follows (It should be noted that a 1 CP issuance will not change the rational exemption process, and for ease of continuity we have maintained the WFM nomenclature to help ministry for differentiation of each years project focus)

- CP WFM is considered period 1, Fiscal 2019-2020 and in progress – South of Burns Lake
- **CP WFM2 will be considered period 2, Fiscal 2020-2021 and is Teschinkut -Spud Mountain**
- CP WFM3 will be considered period 3 Fiscal 2021-2022 is North of Highway 16

This submission is specifically for cutblocks located within WFM2 area. Subsequent requests will be submitted for each area of priority as identified by the landscape fire management plan. Implementation of this CP WFM2 Authorization is comprised of openings identified under the landscape fire management plan for the BLCF within zones of imminent threat (page 53- Figure 25 – Very High Priority). Within the large polygon areas, the BLCF will implement strategic and tactical operational blocks to remove dead pine blowdown areas using clear-cut and partial harvesting techniques in operationally feasible stands with species composition of greater than 50% green standing. The areas will be pre-identified for type of treatment. For the purposes of wildlife management and to maintain and restore hydrological function following treatment implementation, a road rehabilitation and deactivation prescription will be completed. Following treatment implementation, and in consultation with the NWFC and fire specialists, a landscape level burn prescription will be implemented to reduce

the likelihood of future wildfire activities and to support the general principle of a fire-based ecosystem managed landscape.

Urgency and Risk

As mentioned above, the period 2 operations that will be conducted under CP WFM2 are focused on areas designated as an imminent threat to communities, Highway Corridors and are Very High to High Priority, and removal of dead and blown down timber is a prominent aspect of achieving community wildfire protection objectives. The ability of the BLCF to conduct operations under CP WFM2 is dependent on the economic viability of those operations. We find ourselves at the very end of the economic 'shelf life' of the subject dead timber, and the risk grows with each passing day that the mills that may purchase long-dead timber from the BLCF will decide to discontinue such purchases. Such a decision is beyond the control of the BLCF and the ministry. When that occurs, the BLCF will lose its capacity to apply the rights and obligations of the community forest agreement to the achievement of the community wildfire protection objectives of interest to communities, the ministry and the BLCF.

The BLCF hopes to maximize its contribution to the collaboration with the ministry to safeguard communities near the community forest. There is, therefore, urgency for community wildfire protection operations to be maintained within the Burns Lake Community Forest, which depends on the types of decisions from the ministry outlined in this submission.

To achieve the desired large landscape fire management objectives through the described operational activities it will be necessary for the ministry to exercise its statutory authority to:

- 1) Exempt the BLCF to a degree from the normal requirements to achieve VQO-Retention (R) and VQO-Partial Retention (PR) results, and

Visual Quality Objective Polygons

Operational activities, such as road construction, right-of-way construction and timber harvesting will result in an alteration of the visual landscape in R and PR VQO's. The *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation*, section 1.1 (b), requires that the alteration in R VQO's, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint, be:

- i. Difficult to see;
- ii. Small in scale, and
- iii. Natural in appearance.

The *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation*, section 1.1 (c), requires that the alteration in PR VQO's, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint, is:

- iv. Easy to see;

- v. Small to medium in scale, and
- vi. Natural and not rectilinear or geometric in shape

In a letter to the BLCF dated June 5, 2017, the regional executive director reiterated the ministry's findings of the 2013 review of land use objectives in the Lakes TSA, saying *"After an extensive review, the ministry confirmed on June 27, 2014, that there was support for harvesting visually sensitive landscapes in a manner that decreases wildfire risk to communities...I am also aware that the BLCF is a successful recipient of fuel mitigation funding from the Forest Enhancement Society. This work is beneficial in preventing wildfires near the community of Burns Lake and I encourage you to continue this type of work."* The BLCF has continued the work with multiple partners and has engaged Northwest Fire Center (NWFC) representatives and the local District Manager to bring this project to fruition. The Boer Mountain FES project and CP WFM period 1 are testaments of BLCF commitments to landscape level for hazard abatement and wildfire mitigation in Nadina District

The approved FSP for the BLCF in section 4.5 includes strategies to achieve the results prescribed for a partial retention and retention VQO. However, it is not practicable to achieve these results on the VQO polygons encompassed by the High Priority Hazard Zones within CP WFM2. Section 12 (7) of the *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation* provides that *"If the minister determines that it is not practicable, given the circumstances or conditions applicable to a particular area, for the person otherwise required to do so, to specify a result or strategy consistent with an established objective for that area, the minister must exempt the person from that requirement in relation to that area."* The VQO in question is 'an established objective' as that term is defined in legislation, and the ministry delegation matrix delegates the minister's authority under section 12 (7) to the district manager.

For these reasons, the BLCF requests that the ministry exempt the BLCF pursuant to section 12 (7) of the FPPR from the requirement to specify a result or strategy consistent with the partial retention and retention VQO's in relation to the areas in question.

Additional Considerations:

In addition to the considerations outlined above, the BLCF believes the following considerations are relevant to the requested ministry decisions:

- a) Treatment of the proposed areas in question is consistent with the wildfire management plan completed by B.A. Blackwell and associates for the BLCF area-based tenure;
- b) The public has expressed support for such decisions as determined by the ministry review in 2013/2014 and reiterated in June 2017 by Regional Executive Director;
- c) The ministry and the BLCF have a shared interest to realize the public good that will accrue from the implementation of this landscape wildfire project;
- d) It is not practicable to implement the landscape wildfire project and also meet the established objective for visual quality in the defined area (detailed Spatial and Tabular examination of VQO polygons by BLCF GIS, strictly based on percent alteration) (Appendix 1)
- e) Recognition that the Lakes District Land and Resources Management Plan section 41.3 anticipated the types of measures proposed in this submission (page 52 Ch 3)

- 41.3 “Forest management activities within Visual and Significant Visual Areas (eg., harvesting, salvage, fire, and beetle control) will be consistent with the objectives of maintaining the integrity of visual resources. *It is recognized, however that salvage harvesting following catastrophic events (eg., fire blowdown, infestation) may compromise visual quality from time to time.*
- f) The District Manager has committed to amend landscape constraints as required to enable successful implementation of the Landscape Fire Management Plan for Burns the Lake Community Forest;
- g) The success of CP WFM2 authorization, and the subsequent authorizations identified in year year 3 priority zones, hinges on the statutory decisions of the ministry outlined in this submission, which is a role that only the ministry can play in the collaboration to address community wildfire protection objectives;
- h) In the broader context, this exemption request takes into consideration field confirmed forest conditions, forest health issues, economic recovery of damaged timber, and has utilized new and improved data sets, ecologically significant and environmentally sensitive areas, and the BLCF Forest Stewardship Council certification criteria under objectives for ecosystem restoration. This project effectively captures the multiple resource values as originally contemplated by the static reserves;
- i) We have found extensively through the K1A area-based tenure that high composition of dead pine polygons in excess of 50% are having increasingly large affects on the integrity of the forest stands within the K1A area. Large tracks of blowdown are causing/leading to spruce blowdown and exacerbating the effects of a spruce beetle infestations;
- j) The BLCF has considered the implications of the community wildfire protection project to the current AAC determination, which will expire in May 2020, including an examination of the possible implications of the project to the green vs dry AAC partition (see Appendix 3). The timber harvesting under the project is respectful of the AAC partition;
- k) The BLCF has completed public and first nation communication and engagement on the proceedings of this project and subsequent activities through formal published communications via paper, Facebook and website posts:
 - Official media release of the Wildfire report (June, 2019)
 - Public Open House/BBQ and community input session (July, 2019)
 - Addendum to the October 2018 Referral under K1A_IS2_2018 to reflect the Landscape Wildlife Plan incorporation (August,2019)
 - Re-referral of Landscape Wildfire Plan and 5 yr harvest plan areas May 2020
 - Continued community & First Nation communication throughout 2020
 - Formal Public communication in local paper June 2020
 - Scheduling of formal public information sessions July 2020
 - Public Open House/BBQ & Community Session July 22nd COMFOR office

The BLCF will continue public and first nation communication and engagement on the proceedings of this project throughout its finalization and completion.

Exemption Request Summary

In summary, the BLCF requests that the District Manager and/or Regional Executive Director exercise his discretion to:

- a) *If required*, issue the cutting permit associated with CP WFM2 on an urgent basis, with CP authorization in place by **August 1st, 2020** for commencement of operational activities.
- b) Exempt the BLCF pursuant to section 12 (7) of the FPPR from the requirement to specify a result or strategy consistent with the partial retention and retention VQO's in relation to the areas in question (see attached map); and

We ask that you consider the foregoing rationale to support the authorization for community sustainability and to protect midterm timber supply through the commitment to manage for the hazards of wildfire and forest health. We want to acknowledge the importance of managing the land base with an 'area based ethos' and managing this area based tenure for all social, environmental and economic opportunities. We trust that our rationale supports our request.

We want to thank you for your consideration, and if you have any further questions or concerns please feel free to contact me directly at 250-692-7724- ext 227 or 250-692-0495 on my cell.

Sincerely

Frank Varga RPF



APPENDIX 1- WFM VQO Overview 2020-05-19 Map.pdf

This attachment provides a landscape level overview of proposed area for operations to implement landscape fire management objectives. The following table provides details of the map.

***** Polygons within VQO area that are less than 50% dead will be subject to Partial Harvesting to target dead pine removal and incidental green, followed by hazard abatement piling *****

VQO Retention Name	Area (Ha)	WFM2 Area Fuel Management Harvesting Area (ha)	Total Proposed Harvesting Alterations (%)	% Dead (LIDAR)
H16_5	316.9	50.2	15.8	66
H16_10	1069.8	201.8	18.9	72
H16_6	156.1	1.7	1.1	88
H16_3	508.3	79.3	15.6	66
TL_1	23.7	6.6	27.8	50

VQO Partial Retention Name	Area (Ha)	WFM2 Area Fuel Management Harvesting Area (ha)	Total Proposed Harvesting Alterations (%)	% Dead (LIDAR)
TL_107	248.6	5.6	6.8	65
TL_114	1216.9	301	24.7	75
H16_103	298.2	28.3	9.5	73
BL_101	751.3	247.9	33	73