

AAC CERTAINTY: AN INTELLIGENT APPROACH

By Les Kiss

Addressing the annual allowable cut (AAC) has been top-of-mind for Coast Forest Products Association (CFPA) members for years. Ever since the early 1990s, when the AAC began a sharp and steady decline by 8 million m³ to its current level of 16.5 million m³, certainty and stability of fibre supply is one of the largest challenges facing our industry. For an industry that today provides over 38,000 livelihoods to British Columbians and contributes to the provincial economy, a further decline will have a devastating impact.

If the status quo continues, the AAC is projected to decrease by another 40 per cent in the next 20 years.

Our goal is simple—yet a suitable solution has proven elusive. The path to delivering a competitive forest economy to British Columbia, while delivering world-leading forest management practices that account for environmental values, is an arduous, continuous journey. But we believe that there is a way to improve delivery of these goals.

The solution lies in an integrated, multi-faceted approach. Sometimes dubbed “intelligent design,” this strategy uses a rational reserve design that optimizes wildlife habitats (including species at risk), old growth retention, biodiversity and socio-economic objectives concurrently. It comes from a combination of years of operational experience and the best available scientific information derived from ongoing research by scientists and a number of forest professionals.

Bob Craven of Interfor illustrated this work approach in his piece, *Opportunity for Change: A New Era of Integrated Resource Management?* published on the CFPA “What’s New?” blog. Faced with the challenge of a greatly reduced land base and timber supply, Interfor explored innovative ways to access the forest resources while providing habitat for ungulates, species at risk such as the northern goshawk and marbled murrelet, old-growth areas and visual

objectives that support the recreation and tourism industry.

Interfor started by asking forest professionals, engineers and biologists to remove all the previously identified constraints on their planning maps. This blank sheet approach allowed the review of the region with a fresh perspective and the identification of areas that could support a combination of species and/or value(s) by the virtue of co-location. From there, they were able to take an integrated approach across the planning area, essentially increasing

their capacity to better consider the cumulative value of each and every hectare in the Stella Lake area. The result was a solution that provided for all of these important values and, at the same time, minimized the timber supply impact to 23 per cent rather than 35 per cent.

The Stella Lake example suggests a viable opportunity for stabilizing the AAC in other areas of the Coast. CFPA will be initiating additional study areas at various scales (watershed, LUP, TSA etc.) to assess if the Stella lake findings are replicated. If these studies validate this integrated approach, we will have an improved science-based model that will enhance forest management, stabilize harvest levels, provide greater stability for communities and quality products for our customers—all the while preserving and improving the ecological integrity of the managed forest.

Alternatively, if the status quo continues, the AAC is projected to decrease by another 40 per cent in the next 20 years. This is even greater than the mountain pine beetle epidemic devastation caused to the BC Interior timber supply. This would marginalize the industry and its ability to provide a quality way-of-life for the people and communities who depend on it. Clearly, something needs to be done now.

The implementation of this integrated

approach will not come easily but it can and should be done. Success hinges on the establishment of science-supported wildlife targets, set timelines to get things done and ongoing basic economic analytics of the harvestability of the coast timber profile. It depends on the use of advanced 3-D technology such as LiDAR and continued monitoring and research. It will require close collaboration between government and forest industry professionals as well as First Nations and communities providing their input on areas of interest at the front end of the planning process. It is a tall order for numerous stakeholders to come together for the good of our provincial economy, the stability of BC communities, and our forest dependent species, but we know collaboration will allow us to achieve these goals.

The coastal forest industry is here today because of its innovative and creative approach to daunting challenges. We’re ready to solve the AAC downward spiral by stabilizing it in the medium term and creating an upward trend in the longer term. To ensure success we will continue to share our knowledge, findings and expertise with our government, First Nations and community partners.

Let’s collaborate to intelligently design our forest management activities to improve habitat, forest stewardship, and to strengthen economic stability across the coast.▲

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