

---

# **Assessment of the State of Forest Inventories in British Columbia: An Update to the 2006 ABCFP Review**

**February 2012**

**PUBLIC OVERVIEW**

## **Public Overview**

The ABCFP is pleased to release this latest report on the state of forest inventories in BC. The report is a follow up to our 2006 paper and recommendations to the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO). Author Ian Moss, RPF, researched the current BC inventory program budget, staffing and function, in order to assess how well the program is meeting the needs of forest management and stewardship.

### **Why is the forest inventory in BC so important and why is the ABCFP concerned?**

Recent events in Burns Lake highlight the importance of forest inventory as a vital component in forest management and decision making in BC. The question is simple: Is the current wood supply adequate to keep a reconstructed mill operating for a significant length of time? The impacts of mountain pine beetle (MPB) and forest fires have exacerbated the inventory question not only in Burns Lake, but in communities all over BC. Without accurate forest inventory information, forest professionals are not able to adequately advise potential investors as to the quantity and quality of timber available, both now and into the future, in order for them to make important investment decisions. Detailed and accurate knowledge of the number and types of trees in our forests is needed to address these kinds of questions and to provide confidence that the decisions being made will have a positive and lasting effect on the public of BC.

### **What did we find out and are there grounds for concern?**

The report finds some encouraging news but also several aspects of concern, within the provincial inventory program. The good news is that given the resources available, MFLNRO's Forest Analysis and Inventory Branch is doing an admirable job of tackling the challenges in front of them. Achievements include:

- improved public access to inventory products and the integration of new data collection technologies,
- a focus on re-inventory of older 'backlog' areas and stands affected by the MPB, and
- linking inventory data to other applications used by tenure holders and the public.

However, there are significant limitations within the scope and resources of the current program. The 2011 inventory budget was \$8.4 million, but this falls far short of the long-term average funding of \$15 million. This funding gap represents a range of activities, technology and expertise that, if employed, could improve our current knowledge of the state of our forests. The report includes the following concerns:

- There is a need for improved, routine reporting of changes in the forest due to harvesting and other activities, such as fires (as reinforced by the Forest Practices Board document *Reporting the Results of Forestry Activities: Compliance with Section 86 of the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation*, 2011.) The current information gap affects our ability to assess and tally Not Satisfactorily Restocked (NSR) areas, or evaluate reserve areas left following harvesting activities;
- Permanent sample plots have not been re-measured for the last two years which has an impact on the currency of datasets and our ability to examine the effects of climate change;
- Timber cruise data, which presents a wealth of stand-level detail across the province, are not linked to the inventory, resulting in a lost opportunity for forest professionals to collaborate on decades of data collected by tenure holders.

### **What does this mean to the ABCFP and the public?**

The report highlights the need to closely examine the question of whether the inventory, as it currently exists, is sufficient for ensuring sustainability of our forests and forest resources. Currently, the Inventory Branch is continuing to focus on fulfilling its role in maintaining an up-to-date inventory using a risk-management approach. This approach was adopted to meet its obligations, given limited funding, available human resources, and level of access to supporting infrastructure including computer software and hardware. While current staff is doing a good job with the resources they have available, without an influx funding, the ABCFP is concerned that the inventory program will not provide the information our members need to manage the forest resources over the short or long term.

Whether we recognize it or not, the health of the provincial forest inventory affects all of us. ABCFP members rely on this information for a wide range of tasks they do every day; from forest development planning decisions to designing silviculture investment strategies. The public and Aboriginal peoples are affected by the decisions and investments made through the knowledge of secure employment opportunities and the ongoing access to forest lands for other purposes.

The ABCFP is committed to an ongoing dialogue with government to ensure the effectiveness of our forest inventory and to continue to advocate for and uphold principles of forest stewardship. We take our duty to serve and protect the public's interest in the forest very seriously and as such, will continue to advocate for a stronger forest inventory program.

*The ABCFP would like to thank Ian Moss, RPF, and his employer Tesera Systems Inc. for the time and effort in preparing this report. The full report can viewed on the ABCFP's website.*



330-321 Water Street  
Vancouver, BC V6B 1B8  
Tel: 604.687.8027 Fax: 604.687.3264  
E-mail: [info@abcfp.ca](mailto:info@abcfp.ca)  
Website: [www.abcfp.ca](http://www.abcfp.ca)

*Ensuring BC's Forests Are In Good Hands.*