

NSR in BC: Fact and Friction

The ABCFP is aware that a number of articles have been published on the topic of reforestation activities in BC. These articles specifically discuss the amount of forest land in the province that is currently identified as Not Satisfactorily Restocked (NSR). Most, but not all, of these articles identify concern about the status of reforestation in BC and some relate this issue to matters of particular interest to the ABCFP in its role as regulator of professional forestry practice in BC. As is common in professional discussions, there are contradicting opinions and disagreement on the facts, or interpretations of the facts, that are being used to support the positions of the various authors. As a result, the ABCFP has prepared the following response.

Accurate descriptions of NSR are not a simple matter. Various definitions and types of NSR exist and various methods exist for the collection, recording and reporting of data.

1. The reforestation status of areas may be
 - assessed from aerial surveys,
 - compiled from ground surveys, or
 - estimated, based on knowledge of site disturbances or visual assessment of sites.
2. The data from areas actually surveyed may be considered sample data and may be extrapolated to represent larger areas that have not been surveyed.
3. NSR may include land that is categorized as non-productive.
4. NSR may be specific to:
 - 'backlog' - pre-'82, '82-'87, or later,
 - the responsible entity - MFR, licensee or BCTS, or
 - the type of disturbance - harvest, fire or pest.

Other complicating factors can include:

- events, treatments or site conditions that impact the success of reforestation on a site,
- how a disturbed site is stratified,
- which stocking standards are used,
- the degree of statistical precision of the data and how it is reported, and
- the difficulty to keep account of constant and continual changes to the amount of area disturbed.

For all of these reasons and more, the fact that an area is not satisfactorily restocked is difficult to establish without additional information. With factual data that is not easily comparable, it is possible for individuals to appear to be discussing the same thing when they're actually not or, conversely, to appear to be discussing different things which are approximately the same. Open dialogue is important and it is best when supported by agreed upon facts. Some sources for factual data include the Ministry of Forests and Range Annual Report and the State of the Forests reporting documents. In addition, forest professionals who are specialists and knowledgeable on this issue can be relied on to provide quality professional opinions.

Another theme in the recent articles is the expectation that reduced staffing levels in the Ministry of Forests and Range will result in negative impacts to forest management in BC. The ABCFP generally supports the view that more forest professionals per hectare of forest land in our province is a good thing because more forest professionals help to ensure that our forests are professionally managed in accordance with the ABCFP Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. However, the decision to establish the appropriate MFR staffing levels is a social decision that government is entitled to make as elected representatives of the people of BC.

Are enough trees being planted in BC? The facts surrounding this debate do not begin to tell the story. We can refer readers to many great sources of information, and the book *A Critique of Silviculture – Managing for Complexity* is one of these. The authors tell us that management success can no longer be defined by single measures such as percent stocking or cubic metres and need to focus on more spatial and temporal measures that assess many values such as timber production, keystone species habitat, carbon sequestration, resilience of forests and assisted forest migration to mitigate climate change.

Forest professionals are working on all of these examples. Ultimately the public owner does have the best resource professionals in the forest advising the forest land users and the ABCFP encourages their debate.

It is a healthy profession that can have debate of important issues in open dialogue by knowledgeable forest professionals who have varying opinions on forestry topics. The information exchange associated with this current NSR issue contributes to the foundation of knowledge for public readers and for forest professionals.

Links

May 11th, 2010 – Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/bcs-reforestation-crisis>

June 10th, 2010 – Times Colonist

<http://www.timescolonist.com/technology/Neglect+woods+manage+forest/3135211/story.html>

June 12th, 2010 - Times Colonist

<http://www.timescolonist.com/Forest+land+failure+threatens+future/3146818/story.html>

June 12th, 2010 - Times Colonist

<http://www.timescolonist.com/technology/Ministry+Forests+Replanting+trees+still/3146817/story.html>

June 12th, 2010 – Times Colonist

<http://www.timescolonist.com/technology/Government+failing+protect+forests/3146816/story.html>

June 12th, 2010 – Times Colonist

<http://www.timescolonist.com/business/Public+forests+placed+risk/3146815/story.html>

June 18th, 2010 – Times Colonist

<http://www.timescolonist.com/Minister+confirms+replanting+failure/3170169/story.html>

July 20th, 2010 – Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association

<http://www.wsca.ca/index.php?Page=225.0&Key=793>

August 2010 – FOCUS online

<http://focusonline.ca/?q=node/71>