

**VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH WOODLANDS ADVISORY GROUP
(VINWAG)**

***Western Forest Products Inc.*
Community Advisory Group
Minutes of Meeting September 10th, 2015**

Attendance:

Jon Flintoft, WFP	Gaby Wickstrom, Port McNeill & District Chamber of Commerce
Fred Roberston, Education	Ione Brown, NICFLP
Dale Dorward, Small Business	Janet Dorward, Business
Ray Harper, Labour	Pat English, Local Government Alternate
John Tidbury, District of Port Hardy	

Presenters: Jennifer Russell, Pacificus Biological Services, Jane Cameron, CSA Technical Advisory Committee and Stillwater PAG Member, Will Sloan, WFP Certification Coordinator

Regrets: Ben Trerise, Fish and Wildlife, Dave Trebett, Tourism and Recreation, Katherine Dolmage, Aquaculture, Patrick Donaghy, Local Government, Tom Doak-Dunelly, General Public, Gunnar Wigard, Large Contractors, Jeff Houle, Small Contractors, Joli White, Tourism and Recreation Alternate, Graham MacDonald, Town of Port McNeill, Steve Lacasse, Environment

Observers: Kelly McMahon, NWAC, WFP, Ralph Wallas, Roger Briscoe, Operations Manager, WFP

Advisors: Paul Barolet, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations

Chairperson and Facilitator: Annemarie Koch

Minutes taken by: Jon Flintoft and Annemarie Koch

1.0 SAFETY AND INTRODUCTIONS

Annemarie welcomed everyone to the meeting, stressed the importance of safety in WFP's operations and reviewed the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. Annemarie reviewed the objectives of the meeting, namely to review the minutes and action items from the June 4th meeting, hear a presentation by Pacificus Biological Services operations manager Jennifer Russell on the effects of recent changes to the Fisheries Act on forest management as it relates to fisheries habitat management (habitat management, Criterion 2, Ecosystem Condition and Productivity), hear a presentation from CSA Technical Advisory Committee member Jane Cameron on proposed changes to the CSA standard, discuss the September 11th field trip and set the date of the next meeting, which will be a joint meeting with NWAC at Black Bear Resort and look at recruitment and retention strategies in the forest sector on northern Vancouver Island.

Annemarie reminded everyone to take a look at the operational map that Jon had brought for members to review. She welcomed presenters Jane Cameron and Jennifer Russell and WFP certification coordinator Will Sloan, and then invited everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of the guests.

2.0 REVIEW OF LAST MEETING MINUTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Annemarie asked if there were any comments on the minutes of the June 4th meeting and reviewed action items requiring updates or immediate attention with members, and the results of the discussion are summarized in the table below, along with the addition or modification of three action items developed during the course of this meeting. For the benefit of new or recent members, Annemarie noted that she would be assuming all members had read their minutes and would not be taking additional time to go through them at the meeting, other than to deal with questions, changes and action items. Action items that were completed were dropped from the list and revised action items were retained as modified.

It was noted that most of the action items were ongoing in 2016, and that action items 174 and 181 would be completed with the September 11th field trip. She noted that action item 180 would be addressed during Jane's presentation.

ACTION ITEMS					
#	Item	Responsibility	Initiation Date	Target Date	Completion Date
140	Follow up on engaging youth in SFMP	Fred Robertson/Jon Flintoft/Kindry Mercer/A. Koch	June 27, 2013	Ongoing, in 2015-16	
163	Provide an update on the Pacific TSA Timber Supply Review	Jon Flintoft	September 11, 2014	Later in 2016	
173	Dedicate the April, 2016 meeting to a review of the 2015 annual report	Annemarie Koch	April 23, 2014	April 2016	
175	Dedicate a future meeting to a presentation on stumpage by a government and a WFP representative	Annemarie Koch	April 23, 2015	Sometime in 2016	
177	Review the wording for the target related to Target 2 of Indicator 3.1.1, number of slides treated so that it is clearer and more easily measured and tracked	Annemarie Koch/Jon Flintoft	April 23, 2015	For 2015 annual report	
178	Coordinate production of a local map of roads and recreational sites in the DFA	Kindry Mercer	June 4, 2015	Sometime in 2016	
182	Ensure there is water available at future meetings	Jon Flintoft	September 10, 2015	October 22, 2015	
182	Circulate link for comments on CSA standard review with meeting minutes	Annemarie Koch	September 10, 2015	September 17, 2015	
183	Send draft minutes regarding proposed changes to CSA standard to Jane	Annemarie Koch	September 10, 2015	September 13, 2015	

Annemarie asked Dale whether he had been able to identify an energy sector representative.

Dale noted he had tried for some time to get a representative for the sector but that the individuals he had asked had declined. It was agreed to see if an opportunity arises to engage someone from the sector to sit on the PAG and to, in the meantime, remove the action item from the list.

Annemarie added that, unless members of VINWAG wished to discuss any of these ongoing items, and unless there were any comments or changes, she would ask members to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were accepted as circulated.

3.0 PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS IN RELATION TO RECENT CHANGES TO THE FISHERIES ACT AND DFO'S HABITAT MANAGEMENT ROLE: JENNIFER RUSSELL, OPERATIONS MANAGER, PACIFICUS BIOLOGICAL SERVICES

Jen noted that much of the policy coming out of recent changes to the Fisheries Act was still evolving and that the impact on forestry professionals and others dealing with fisheries habitat management was still proceeding under 'trial and error.' She noted she would outline what was known now and talk about areas that were still evolving.

Jen reviewed how fisheries habitat used to be managed. She looked at areas like stream crossings, log dewatering and the management of harvesting in areas affecting fisheries habitat. She noted that much of this history of this management was reflected in the current regulations and legislation.

Jen reviewed policy changes since 1986, including the guiding principle of 'no net loss' and limiting impacts to the aquatic environment. She discussed the use of baseline studies and anticipated impacts of proposed developments, with impacts being addressed by adequate habitat compensation, e.g. replacement of eelgrass beds.

Jen reviewed the evolution of DFO policy development from 1987-2008, including the gradual increase in requirements for proponents which resulted in some benefits to the environment but created issues for industry, including inconsistencies and long approval processes. She noted that change was needed and that some streamlining resulted in the approval process following development of Best Management Practices and operating strategies, with the goal of balancing regulatory objectives with industry logistics, and reducing scope and time for reviews of low risk projects. She noted that these changes improved the process but more was required to create the balance that industry and the regulators were seeking.

Jen then moved on to the recent Fisheries Act changes that began after June 2012, followed by new Fisheries Protection Provisions in November 2013 that clarified how the changes needed to be implemented on the ground. She pointed to a period of transitional reviews that started in November 2013.

Jen noted that in December 2013, a website was provided to offer information on inquiries regarding habitat regulation, e.g. which projects require DFO oversight.

Jen reviewed some of the 'big ticket' changes, including Section 35 changes that narrowed impact to fish habitat generally to 'serious harm to fish that are part of a commercial, recreational or aboriginal fishery.'

Jen noted that under the old act all life stages of fish and shellfish were the subject of regulation, and under the new act the subject is 'fish that contribute to the sustainability and productivity of commercial, recreational and aboriginal fisheries.'

Jen noted that under the new Fisheries Act, there will be fewer authorizations required for log dumps and significant time reductions to commence certain projects, a move to self-assessment and an increased reliance on qualified professionals.

She noted that the new Act allows more flexibility for 'offsetting options' versus compensation. Jen noted that the new approach was not so stringent about 'like for like.'

Jen went on to review the downside of the changes, including uncertainty around interpretation of the Act by DFO and industry, e.g. what constitutes 'serious harm.' She added that there was currently a lack of operational direction, though this was improving. Jen noted there are still no defined timelines for reviews which is leading to confusion by reviewers and implications for First Nations input. She added that there were still confusing messages generally coming through from DFO on the matter of habitat regulation.

Jen noted that it was anticipated that large fines would be levied for Fisheries Act infractions. There was a discussion of how the interpretation of serious harm might play out, in the courts for example. Jen noted that interpretations of serious harm were becoming clearer as more project proposals were submitted.

Jen reviewed some of the outstanding questions like the ability to use existing streamlining tools like operational statements which have been replaced by 'measures to avoid harm.' Jen pointed to conflicting advice on the continued use of approved work practice. She noted there were significant requirements for project submissions, including a requirement for a higher level of accuracy. She noted that there is no longer a notification requirement from DFO. Jen reviewed some of the definitions, repeating that 'serious harm' continues to be defined through submissions. She added that 'Commercial, Recreational and Aboriginal (CRA)' includes all fish in B.C, and added that SARA listed species are also subject to the regulations.

She noted that since all fish in B.C. are CRA fish, whether they support a CRA fishery or not is redundant.

Jen noted that clarification would improve as more projects moved through the system and, possibly, through the courts.

Jen reviewed current information on the DFO website, including activities that don't require review, such as an existing log dump that does not increase the previous footprint. She reviewed what was required for reactivations of log dumps and new log dumps, bridge construction (e.g. all maintenance that protects fish and takes measures to avoid harm), culvert replacements and removals, and beaver dam removal (if done gradually).

Jen noted there was always risk associated with development and reviewed some of the risk management measures that could be taken, such as following prescribed mitigation where necessary.

Jen noted that she hoped that better guidance was on the way from DFO and through project development and case law on court challenges, and DFO's 2015 monitoring of marine handling sites. She recommended that the forest industry be first in line with respect to understanding specifics on consistent requirements. She stressed that proponents not cut corners on submissions, noting that DFO will hold up those who do.

Jen noted that the DFO reviews are extremely detailed and that proponents needed to be very clear on what they are doing. She pointed out that having professionals involved in the forest industry who are familiar with the role of qualified professionals in management would help this sector move forward more efficiently.

Jen noted there were emergency authorizations available through DFO as a result of the Fisheries Act changes, e.g. responding to storm damage. DFO has been responding to these requests quickly.

Jen noted that reviews go through the Pacific Referral Centre in Nanaimo. She said there were no DFO habitat people on the North Island anymore.

It was noted that the model would work better if DFO provides professionals who review the work of other professionals. There was a discussion of professional liability. It was noted it could come through the qualified professional and, potentially, the company.

There was a discussion of how much oversight there had been from DFO. Jen noted that she had never had DFO come out on site, even before the changes to the Fisheries Act.

There was a discussion of ways to define 'serious harm.' Paul suggested having a measurable scientific benchmark. It was noted that input from various sources, including political sources that define the needs of the day, might help generate this definition.

It was noted that cumulative effects are more an issue with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and not so much with DFO at this time.

Annemarie thanked Jen for her presentation.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CSA SFM STANDARD: JANE CAMERON, CSA TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jane noted that any draft revisions would only be accepted up to the end of September so there was a rather tight timeline for feedback from the public. She asked group facilitators to submit group comments via the website and invited individual members to send in their comments through the website as well, using the following link <http://publicreview.csa.ca/Home/Details/1712> Annemarie noted that anyone wishing to provide input this way would need to register first to access and comment on the draft revisions.

Jane then reviewed some highlights of the proposed changes, including a number of revised definitions, including the definition of afforestation, forest plantations, genetically modified organism, group organization and watershed. She noted that other groups had asked for definitions of 'water feature' and 'forest connectivity.'

Jane reviewed changes to the public participation requirements, including demonstrating that the participation process is open, inclusive and responsive. She noted that this section is more results-based, and that it would be up to the company to track how the process is kept open, for audit purposes.

Jane reviewed the basic operating rules for advisory groups, noting the addition of the involvement of experts. She noted that what was previously called 'content' was now the 'work of the advisory group.'

Jane noted that the communication within or between groups was being separated from communication with the public, which was now a separate section.

Jane reviewed the requirement to make the annual reporting and SFMP available to the public and demonstrating that all input is considered and responses are provided. She noted that, fundamentally, what the group does has to be made public.

Jane noted that new section requires that results of independent certification audits and audit reports be made public. She noted that CSA has recommended that the results be made public, in response to criticism from FSC that there isn't presently a clear requirement in the standard for this.

Kelly asked what defines 'publicly available.' Jane noted that ways of making the information public could include putting it on the website and making the information available on request.

Jane moved to changes to Criterion 1, noting there were no new discussion items. She noted that there were some changes to definitions, and to titles like Element 1.4 which now includes heritage as an area of significance. She noted that core indicators for this element now include protection of sites of special significance, including First Nations but also sites defined by the broader community as being of special significance.

Jane reviewed Criterion 2 and noted Element 2.2 has a new indicator 2.2.3, proportion of regeneration comprised of native species. She noted this was not really a new factor in B.C. where legislation requires this in any case.

Jane reviewed Criterion 3, noting soil and water have been separated. She pointed to two new discussion items, sensitive sites (shallow soils, wetlands, etc.) and soil mitigation and protection measures (including best management practices and seasonal timing of operations). There was a discussion of what was being mitigated, soil or the disturbance and it was agreed that it was the disturbance that was being mitigated.

She noted Element 3.2 was new, with water standing on its own and a new indicator 3.2.2, proportion of forest management activities, consistent with prescriptions to protect identified water features. Members did not state either way whether they felt there was a need to define water features.

Jane reviewed Criterion 4, noting Element 4.2 was the area where forest land conversion and the term forest plantation comes up.

Jane reviewed Criterion 5 pointing to significant vulnerabilities for community sustainability linked to forest and timber supply conditions over time. It was noted that employment is certainly an area of vulnerability for this region.

Jane reviewed new indicator 5.1.2, evidence of open and respectful communications with forest dependent businesses, forest users and local communities to integrate non timber forest resources into forest management planning.

Jane reviewed Element 5.2 noting 'investment' has been replaced by 'participation and support'. She noted that this meant that the company did not need to come up with a dollar amount but could list other benefits.

Jane reviewed Criterion 6, Society's responsibility, noting Aboriginal issues had been moved to Criterion 7. She noted that the wording changes were directed at more open communication with the public.

It was noted that the intent of Element 6.2 on safety was essentially the same.

Jane reviewed the rationale for moving the Aboriginal elements to a separate Criterion. She noted that the Aboriginal participants in the review process had recommended that the Aboriginal issues be placed under a separate Criterion.

She pointed to the new discussion item on development of working relationships with willing Aboriginal communities and/or people.

There was a discussion of how Aboriginal participation can be accommodated. Fred noted his concern for the use of the word 'willing' as it tends to put the onus on the Aboriginal community and not the company. He noted that it should be a shared onus for the company and PAG to work with the Aboriginal community.

Jane noted that the company has an absolute obligation to talk to the Aboriginal community to try to get agreement and to document efforts to reach agreement and to provide information and engage First Nations communities, in ways that First Nations feel are most useful, and respectful of what works for First Nations.

Ralph noted his concern for the use of the word 'willing.' There was a discussion of how to find what is important to First Nations and following up on that. It was noted that there are many First Nations in this region and that it was very difficult to seek agreement at one forum and that the best approach might just be to ensure that the information is freely available and that each First Nation is treated with respect. It was noted that the situation in B.C. is very different from the rest of Canada. Jane reminded everyone that it is a national standard and can't be that specific to regions like B.C.

It was noted that it does not work to lump together First Nations to represent individual nations.

Jane noted that 7.2.1 is new and covers evidence of efforts to promote capacity development and meaningful participation. She added that 7.2.3 is new but very similar to a previous indicator.

Dale asked where the changes originated. Jane noted that the Technical Advisory Committee had initiated and reviewed the proposed changes. She explained how the revisions are generated and prioritized. Jane noted that the committee would sit down in October and review the suggestions and recommendations on a priority basis, starting with the most contentious. She stressed that every single comment pertinent to the standard would be given consideration. She noted that thoughtful comments and broadly represented comments would be reviewed with care.

Fred asked that in future a reference chart showing changes from the previous standard would be very helpful.

It was noted that WFP Gold River would be the first to use the new standard.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF SEPTEMBER 11TH FIELD TRIP: JON FLINTOFT

Jon reviewed the itinerary for the field trip including a review of a block with some stumpage representatives, and then on to a Quatern block, a review of visuals on Quatsino Sound, followed by a stop at the Quatsino dryland sort.

Jon noted that WFP's corporate communications representative Zac Whyte would be participating in the field trip and added that he would be videotaping parts of the tour as part of a corporate communications piece on public advisory groups.

6.0 NEXT MEETING:

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on October 22, 2015. Annemarie reminded everyone that this meeting would be held jointly with members of the Nimpkish Woodlands Advisory Committee and that the topic would be a strategy for recruitment and retention of forestry workers on the North Island. She reminded members that the meeting would be held at Black Bear Resort and that dinner would be at 6:00 p.m. in order to allow a 6:30 p.m. meeting start.

Annemarie and Jon thanked everyone for coming and wished them a safe journey home.

When:	OCTOBER 22, 2015
Dinner:	6:00 p.m.
Meeting:	6:30 p.m.