

## Drinking Water Protection and Private Managed Forest Land

### Backgrounder

In 2019, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (the ministry) conducted a review of the Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL) Program. The review was one of several policy reforms announced as part of the Coast Forest Sector Revitalization Initiative.

The Province advises that one of the primary goals of the initiative is to restore public confidence in forest management and that the feedback provided by British Columbians through this engagement will help to inform the government's consideration of future policy options.

The review examined how well the PMFL Program is meeting its goals to:

- encourage private landowners to manage their lands for long-term forest production, and
- encourage sustainable forest management practices, including the protection of key public environmental values.

British Columbians in all regions of the province were invited to participate in the PMFL Program review engagement process. The ministry provided background information including how managed forest land is regulated, a history of the PMFL Program, benefits of the program and information regarding the engagement process and methods to participate. The *What We Heard Summary Report* was released in August 2019.

While the summary indicates that PMFL owners indicated general support for the current program and that owners are satisfied that key public environmental values are sufficient, local governments indicated that regulations and practices do not protect the environmental values and in particular watersheds should be better protected.

The following is feedback submitted to the review by the Village of Cumberland relating to watersheds:

### Public Environmental Values and Management Objectives

The management objectives that apply to Private Managed Forest Lands should take into account greater consideration of the cumulative effects of harvesting in watersheds – especially those in proximity to a community drinking water supply.

Management objectives should change to include increased oversight from the province and other agencies, in particular in regards to fish habitat and riparian areas, and improvement of monitoring and reporting programs.

Penalties should be increased for contraventions of *Private Managed Forest Land Act* guidelines.

Management objectives should be put in place that require replanting of a broader variety of species including deciduous and nitrogen building species, including varieties resistant to wildfire and specific to replacing lost wildlife habitat.

### **Regulatory Framework for Environmental Values**

The *Private Managed Forest Land Act* regulations should require consultation/collaboration with adjacent local governments and First Nations.

The regulations that apply to Private Managed Forest Lands should better protect drinking water quality by increasing riparian zone regulations around non-productive and fish bearing streams.

Future regulatory changes should take into account adaptive harvesting and operating practices which account for climate change and heavy rainfalls and erosion, including replanting schemes and road building.

Enhanced regulations excluding the use of herbicides on Private Managed Forest Lands should be put in place, especially where the lands are located in watersheds or where there is active recreation.

Increased access to waste wood on private forest lands to decrease burning of slash piles should be required.

### **Links**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/forest-tenures/private-managed-forest-land/program-review>

<https://www.mfcouncil.ca/legislation-policy/protecting-key-environmental-values/>