

BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management

Volume 2 - Issue 2

Published by FORREX Forum for Research and Extension in Natural Resources

Abstract

Wildlife and habitat inventory for a results-based Forest Practices Code

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Two significant changes are occurring within the forest industry in British Columbia, both of which will necessitate a greater reliance on species and habitat monitoring and inventories. First, as British Columbia moves towards adopting the "New Era" principles of the provincial government, the Forest Practices Code will change from regulatory-based to "results-based." This means that forest companies will have to be monitored to ensure they meet the desired results outlined by the provincial government. Second, market pressures increasingly demand that forest companies be certified as "sustainable" under one of several certification schemes. All certification regimes require that companies be monitored to ensure biodiversity objectives within their sustainable forest management (SFM) plans are achieved. To meet these monitoring requirements, forest companies and the provincial government will need representative, feasible, reliable, and applicable indicators of wildlife and habitat values. Fortunately, British Columbia has several species and habitat inventories that can be used to develop indicators for both certification regimes and the results-based code implementation.

This paper reviews the available inventories in British Columbia and provides an overview of the usefulness of these inventories for monitoring within SFM planning and the results-based code. In general, criteria and indicators developed from the province's habitat inventories can be used immediately to monitor forest management practices; however, these habitat inventories need refined species-habitat models to be most useful. Although direct monitoring of wildlife is important for rare and endangered species and to determine the effects of forest management practices, species inventories are generally less useful for this purpose. Recommendations are provided to ensure the usefulness of inventories in monitoring compliance with the results-based code and meeting the needs of SFM planning.

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