



New Rules Govern How Forestry Occurs on Our Territories Under EBM

For the first time in history, our leaders have successfully negotiated land and resource agreements government-to-government with the Province to increase our rightful authority to govern and manage our traditional lands. The Province and Coastal First Nations have committed to setting aside new protected areas that accommodate our Aboriginal Rights and Title and to managing our resources on the remaining land base using the principles of “ecosystem-based management”. We are committed to developing a thriving and diverse economy that is based on protecting ecosystem health and strengthening our cultures.

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is a land management approach that recognizes that people, communities and the land are inseparable. Our choices must consider the health of both the people and the land that sustains them. EBM has two goals: maintain ecosystem health and improve human well-being.

Under government-to-government agreements, Coastal First Nations have negotiated Land Use Objectives, a new set of rules about how and where forestry will take place on our traditional territories. Land Use Objectives legislate how our ecological and cultural values will be maintained and protected during forestry planning and operations, providing far greater protections than in the past. Careful planning and consideration of these specific values must occur before any trees are cut.

EBM Forestry — Logging Practices that Protect our Values Using the Best Available Science

From a Coastal First Nations perspective, EBM forestry is a great improvement over existing regulations and will lead to a more sustainable forestry on the coast compared to elsewhere in the province. Under EBM, forest companies must meet specific Land Use Objectives. Guidelines have been established for logging practices and are based on the best available science.





LEGISLATING PROTECTION OF OUR CULTURAL, AQUATIC AND BIODIVERSITY VALUES

The 15 legislated Land Use Objectives are grouped into First Nations Culture and Heritage, Aquatic Habitats and Biodiversity. They will:

Protect our First Nations culture and heritage by:

- ▶ Maintaining a supply of standing cedar in each logging cutblock for cultural use (e.g. monumental cedar)
- ▶ Protecting archaeological and historical artifacts (e.g. culturally modified trees)
- ▶ Ensuring there is a supply of our traditional resources (e.g. plant foods, medicinal plants)

Ensure that aquatic habitats function ecologically by:

- ▶ Ensuring sufficient water quality and quantity in fish-bearing streams and sensitive watersheds
- ▶ Protecting special aquatic features (e.g. wetlands and active floodplains)
- ▶ Keeping healthy and functioning forests near streams

Protect biodiversity by:

- ▶ Ensuring each forest type is adequately represented across the landscape, especially old growth
- ▶ Protecting endangered and threatened plant communities where they are present
- ▶ Keeping patches of trees standing within each cutblock to mimic natural stand dynamics
- ▶ Protecting grizzly bear habitat

FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLANS: ENSURING FOREST COMPANIES MEET OUR LAND USE OBJECTIVES

Forest companies are required by law to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan that describes the strategies a company will use to meet the Land Use Objectives. The Ministry of Forests and Range approves Forest Stewardship Plans and these plans become the legally binding document that holds the forest company accountable for what happens on the ground. For this reason, it is very important that each First Nation review the draft Forest Stewardship Plan for their territory and ensure that it adequately meets the intent of the Land Use Objectives.

The Forest Stewardship Plan must demonstrate that: there is a sufficient process for consulting with the First Nation and sharing information; field assessment and inventory procedures are in place for cultural features; a commitment exists to modify proposed activities in order to protect important cultural resources; decisions be made in consensus with First Nations; and First Nations will be compensated if an infringement to Aboriginal Right and Title occurs.

The Ministry of Forests and Range is responsible for enforcing compliance with Forest Stewardship Plans. If a First Nation has a concern, they should first discuss it with the forest company to ensure that the intent of the Land Use Objectives is mutually understood and that both parties are satisfied. If this does not resolve the issue, the First Nation can raise the complaint with the local provincial government district office. The Ministry of Forests and Range must consider and respond to complaints.



PROTECTING FISH AND OUR COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Many First Nations communities have witnessed declining fish stocks and the associated impacts on community well-being over the past 50 years. Several Land Use Objectives protect fish-related values by maintaining water quantity and quality and protecting forests next to aquatic features such as upland streams, wetlands and forested swamps.



At a stand level, buffers must be retained around features such as critical spawning or rearing habitat and active floodplains. Watersheds will be protected that are sensitive to logging or that contain important fish values. Water quantity must be maintained within an acceptable range for fish habitat by limiting the rate of harvesting within a cut-block.





Photo by Jens Wieting

PROTECTING CEDAR, OUR TREE OF LIFE

All along the coast, First Nations refer to cedar as the tree of life. It is as valuable to our people today as it was for our ancestors. Cedar meets both cultural and social needs, and the newly legislated Land Use Objectives will significantly protect cedar availability on the coast well into the future.

Land Use Objectives protect both individual cedar trees and stands of cedar trees. 'Monumental cedar' (used for canoes, poles, house logs and carvings) and culturally modified trees are both protected from logging in individual cut blocks. Stands of trees will be maintained or restored where cedar is a significant component of the forest.



Photo by Jens Wieting

The Haisla Nation is developing a long-term cedar strategy for their territory. This strategy will specify an adequate number of yellow and red cedar trees to be retained at various scales, from a stand of trees at a regional scale, to individual trees in each stand. The strategy will ensure that the diameter of the trees retained is sufficient to meet continued needs over time. Other First Nations developing their own cedar strategies have taken a different approach in developing their own cedar strategies, choosing to identify special places to be designated as cedar stewardship areas.



Turning Point Initiative Coastal First Nations

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The Coastal First Nations is an alliance of First Nations on British Columbia's North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. The Coastal First Nations include Wuikinuxv Nation, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xaixais, Holmalco, Gitga'at, Haisla, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate, and Council of the Haida Nation. More information on Government-to-Government Agreements and other Ecosystem-Based Management topics can be found on our website.