



So what is Future Forest Ecosystems?

by Kristine Weese, Forest Practices Branch, BC Ministry of Forests and Range

The impacts of climate change on forestry are being addressed by the BC Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR) through a new initiative that will ensure British Columbia's forest and rangeland ecosystems remain resilient to ecosystem stress and continue to provide the basic services, products, and benefits society values and depends on.

Entitled the Future Forest Ecosystems Initiative (FFEI), its purpose is to adapt BC's forest management framework—i.e., the legislation and policy framework that governs forest management planning and practices—to a changing climate, so that it remains effective well into the future.

FFEI has its roots in a December 2005 symposium and workshop held in Prince George under the sponsorship of the province's Chief Forester, **Jim Snetsinger**. The session was attended by representatives from federal and provincial agencies, universities, First Nations, forest and range industries, environmental organizations, and consulting resource professionals. Participants shared their various perspectives on the changing ecological conditions in BC, and on how to adapt forest management accordingly.

The discussions and outcomes of the 2005 symposium/workshop were analyzed by a team of MOFR specialists in early 2006, and developed into a set of recommendations for moving forward. These were released by MOFR as a report entitled "Future Forest Ecosystems of BC: Draft Recommendations for Review and Comment." The report included 46 recommendations that are intended to help develop projects designed to:

1. increase understanding of ecological processes and changes over time (through research, forecasting, and monitoring); and
2. use that knowledge to adapt BC's forest management framework to changing ecological conditions (through policy evaluation and change).


The recommendations went through a broad consultation process over the summer and early fall of 2006, with the majority of feedback supporting FFEI as timely and important.

This past fall, the FFEI team has been working to address this feedback and to refine the overall direction of FFEI. Under the updated FFEI direction, MOFR will be working to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increase understanding of the functional constraints for key species and ecological processes to establish a baseline of information for forecasting and monitoring ecosystem changes
2. Forecast how a range of climate change scenarios might alter key species and ecological processes over time
3. Monitor key species and ecological processes to detect changes over time, and to determine the agents of change
4. Evaluate a range of existing and new approaches to forest management for their ability to maintain and enhance ecological resilience and ecosystem services, products, and benefits under changing ecological conditions
5. Find mechanisms to adapt the existing forest management framework to changing ecological conditions
6. Communicate knowledge gained from our work as well as the expected changes to the forest management framework

Between now and March 2007, the team will continue to refine FFEI direction, including laying out the scientific foundation and developing a list of projects that will support the implementation of these objectives. As well, within that time frame, MOFR will develop a 3–5 year implementation plan for FFEI, and will initiate preliminary project work to support long-term project implementation. Once FFEI direction is finalized and the implementation plan is completed, these products will be broadly communicated to our constituents and posted on the FFEI Web site (see address in sidebar).

To implement FFEI, MOFR will work in partnership with other agencies such as the BC Ministry of Environment and the Canadian Forest Service, as well as inter-agency and non-government organizations. The Forest Science Board and FORREX will likely play an important role in FFEI implementation by overseeing complementary forest science and extension work. Within government, FFEI will be implemented in collaboration with other closely related initiatives, such as the Climate Change Initiative, BC Wildland Fire Strategy, the Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, and the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program.

The scope of FFEI and the work involved will undoubtedly evolve. The MOFR expects projects under FFEI to be implemented over the next 3–5 years, with FFEI direction being incorporated into normal MOFR business within that time frame. 

More information

For more information on FFEI, please contact project manager **Kristine Weese**, Forest Practices Branch (Vernon), 250-558-1760 (Kristine.Weese@gov.bc.ca), or visit the FFEI Web site, http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts/Future_Forests/