

INTRODUCTION TO LAND USE OBJECTIVES

Overview of Land Use Objectives (LUOs)

Land Use Objectives (LUOs) were established for the south central and north central/north coasts, in July 2007 and December 2007 respectively. For First Nations and their territories, this means that there are new rules in place about where and how forestry can take place.

Under the LUOs, a number of values are afforded better protection than under the previously existing forestry rules for the coast. The values covered by the LUOs include First Nations' cultural and heritage resources, aquatic resources such as fish habitat and sensitive water features, and landscape values such as wildlife habitat and old growth forests. Furthermore, the obligation to consult with First Nations to manage these values is embedded within the LUOs.

The LUOs were created based on the government-to-government land use agreements (Coastal First Nations Land and Resource Protocol Agreement and the KNT Agreement-in-Principle). The process of translating the agreements into LUOs involved collaboration between First Nations and provincial governments, as well as a public review period during which time stakeholders such as the forest industry and conservation groups submitted comments.

The LUOs were legally established by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands and are an initial step in implementing ecosystem-based management (EBM). The objectives are to be implemented throughout the north and central coast, which encompasses the traditional territories of Coastal First Nations and Nanwakolas Council Nations.

Land Use Objectives at a glance

There are 15 objectives, covering the following values:

- a. First Nations Culture and Heritage (5 objectives)
- b. Aquatic Habitats (6 objectives)
- c. Biodiversity (4 objectives)

a. First Nations Culture and Heritage

These objectives address Traditional Forest Resources, Traditional Heritage Resources, CMTs, Monumental Cedar, and retention of red cedar and yellow-cedar inside logging cutblocks. These objectives are meant to retain cedar for cultural uses, protect archaeological and historical artifacts, and maintain a supply of traditional resources (e.g. plant foods, medicinal plants).

b. Aquatic Habitats

The intent of these objectives are to maintain ecological functioning, water quality and quantity in fish-bearing streams, sensitive watersheds, and special aquatic features, as well as to maintain ecological function in riparian forests. Special features included in the objectives are forested swamps, wetlands, upland streams and active fluvial units.

c. Biodiversity

The four distinct Biodiversity Objectives are intended to protect values at both the landscape and the stand level. The landscape level biodiversity objective aims to ensure that all forest types are represented across the landscape, particularly to ensure that sufficient old-growth is represented in each forest type. Within the grizzly bear objective, critical habitat for grizzly bears is identified and maintained.

According to the red-listed and blue-listed plant communities objective, forest operations must maintain the presence of a number of endangered and threatened plant communities. Under the stand-level retention objective, standing trees (in groups or individually) are left standing within a cutblock to act as mini-refuges for wildlife and to help areas recover more quickly after logging.

Implementation of the land use objectives

The LUOs are effective immediately, however forestry companies have six months to revise their Forest Stewardship Plans to reflect the new objectives. As such, new plans and amendments to old plans for operations in the south central coast must now reflect the south central coast objectives. By May 2008, all plans for operations in the north central and north coasts must be amended to reflect the north central/north coast land use objectives, except for the grizzly bear habitat objective, which must be included in plans by March 2009. Due to the lag time between planning and on-the-ground operations, some operations may not reflect all of the land use objectives for the next year or more.

The objectives will further be refined through the Detailed Strategic Planning (DSP) process by identifying specific areas outside of conservancies containing values important to First Nations.

Once the Detailed Strategic Planning process is completed, another stage of EBM planning will occur that takes into consideration each First Nations' values, as well as regional implications. (For example, if one First Nation's territory contains an abundance of marbled murrelet habitat, or an abundance of a particular forest type that is not found anywhere else in the region, management implications at both the territorial and regional scale will have to be considered.)

This next stage of planning will result in a future set of land use objectives and/or legal policy to implement EBM fully by March 31st, 2009.