

2020 Sustainable Forest Management Newsletter

20 Year Forest Management Plan

The long-term Forest Management Plan process continues to be developed and defined by NFMC with Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development (Forestry Branch) and other members of the Planning Team. Essentially, we are re-visiting the signed Terms of Reference to strengthen areas that we feel require additional attention and forethought. Primarily this is driven by findings and lessons learned from other 20 Year FMP's that have been developed in the recent past. Central to that is recognition that the Nekoté Communities form part of the NFMC team, and the Nekoté Liaison is working to ensure the Nekoté Communities are present at the planning table. The Communications Plan component of the process is being created in a way that can respect the ongoing pandemic, and also have Indigenous Community participation created as they desire. We are looking forward to this continuing to be developed in 2021.

Certification

With the COVID 19 pandemic, the normal date for our audit was delayed and eventually, in November, CKP and NFMC underwent a virtual audit for the re-certification to the PEFC Chain of Custody, the CSA Z809 Sustainable Forest Management, and ISO 14001 Environmental Management System standards. The pandemic has created a lot of new experiences, and this was no different! SAI Global engaged the entire staff at our Woodlands operation virtually over the course of 5 days with a lot of conversation and digital information being exchanged. They also were able to speak with and interview contractors and operators from the field and discuss elements of importance to the audit process. The field portion of the audit wasn't able to be conducted virtually and we are all hoping that things will return to normal before next years audit! The audit results were good with one minor non-conformance in the Environmental Management System audit, one minor non-conformance in the Sustainable Forest Management audit, and two minor non-conformances in the Chain of Custody audit. We conducted the appropriate Root Cause Analysis and created Corrective Action Plans which were accepted by the SAI Global Auditing Team. Recognition to the NFMC and CKP staff that work hard all year ensuring we meet the requirements of the standards. Great job!

Forest Management Operating Plan

2021 is a Forest Management Operating Plan submission year. This is our 2 Year operating plan for activities coming up between April of 2021 and March of 2023. We are exploring how best to deliver on the Community Information Session component of that 2-year plan development. Likely we will be undertaking a combination of virtual meetings and video and webinar sessions to try and mimic our usual format of engagement with Communities on the FML

Renewal Programs

This year we planted 606,060 seedlings, largely north of Wanless to renew over 250 hectares of harvested area. The majority of our renewal effort was scarification in the Jack Pine Budworm Salvage Harvest in the Interlake region, with over 2,780 hectares of harvested area scarified to promote natural regeneration of Jack Pine. During harvesting, special care is taken to encourage as many Jack Pine cones to remain on site as possible. Our vegetation management program executed the treatment of 1933 hectares of plantations with glyphosate in order to help maintain softwood dominated forests on the landscape. In keeping with our renewal obligations to the Province of Manitoba, we completed Forest Renewal Assessments on 11833 ha of plantations that were a minimum age of 9 years. All surveys were completed using a photo interpretation of 7 cm resolution imagery and 10% of the total area received a complete ground validation survey.

Professional Development

Due to Covid-19, this year didn't allow for staff to participate in any in-person training. However, as most adjusted to the "new norm", opportunity for training was offered virtually. Any staff interested in any virtual training, were given the option to enroll.

Meetings and Communications

The pandemic really limited our public engagements in 2020. We were able to attend and present/discuss the Partnership and proposed forestry operations at a meeting of OCN Resource users organized by the OCN Natural Resource Council in February. We have maintained steady communication with OCN and the Natural Resource Council regarding local projects and general updates throughout 2020. There was much communication with the community of Cormorant through the year on a proposed new winter access route and harvesting operation that would have occurred this winter but has been delayed until next year due to reduced fibre demand. Since January we have been working at implementing a new software system (Trimble's Land Resource Manager) to maintain forestry related information and data. The system was activated in late November and it has been used to produce the first draft of the 2021 – 2023 Forest Management Operating Plan (FMOP) that was shared with the Neko'té liaison for distribution and discussion with the Neko'té communities. We have been discussing how we conduct the FMOP community information sessions with the limitations imposed by the pandemic and expect to be communicating this early in the new year.

Outland Youth Employment Program

NFMC took part in this year's Outland Youth Employment Program (OYEP) as the forestry educators to 18 youth from several Manitoba First Nation communities, including the Neko'té communities. The program employs youth for part of the summer to introduce them to hands on work in industries such as forestry and mining as well as work on employment skills and resume writing. NFMC lead programming on forestry field skills introducing them to the tools and protocols in forest surveying. Orienteering, plant identification and tree mensuration along with traditional Indigenous plant use were among the most popular activities. It was not all training however, the youth also put in hard days of work trimming bush in replanted cut blocks and even spent a day clearing trails at the Clearwater Lake Ski Club. Although some programming was cut short due to Covid-19 concerns, 2021 will include even more exposure to the forest industry here in The Pas and surrounding areas.

Volume Sampling Project

This past August, NFMC along with OCN Educational Services (E&T) and Kaskitaw Inc. took part in a forestry surveying project for the Government of Manitoba. Seven young adults from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, Mathias Colomb Cree Nation and Chemawawin Cree Nation were employed from August through October developing and fine-tuning essential forestry field skills. In-depth forest surveys were conducted throughout the Saskatchewan River and Highrock forest sections providing critical forest inventory data for Manitoba Forestry Branch. Through challenging access and terrain (not to mention carrying out heavy bags of tree ring samples through muskeg) the crews pushed through to make the project a success. We look forward to building off this project by working with these trained crews and training new individuals for future forestry employment opportunities.



Volume Sampling Crew 2020

Seedling Giveaway

This year with COVID-19 not allowing for close contact, on June 16th, 2020, NFMC set up a seedling giveaway in the parking lot of the Roy H. Johnston Arena. COVID-19 procedures were implemented that made the seedling giveaway a little different this year. We established a drive-thru for people, wore masks, and handed the seedlings out to people on trays. The trays were disinfected between use. We were very glad to not have to cancel our annual seedling giveaway, giving out 1000 seedlings total. We are confident those seedlings have established good roots in their new homes!



Sustainable Forest Management Committee – Year in Review

In 2020, the public advisory committee met three times. Due to adjustments with the COVID-19 Pandemic, the meeting scheduled in May was cancelled and the meeting in December was held virtually through the Microsoft Teams platform.

The first SFMC meeting of the year was held on February 20th. It took place at the CKP Administrative Office with 14 in attendance, three of whom were NFMC employees. It was agreed upon that NFMC would be updating the SFM plan and tidying up the language in the indicators to make it less redundant and more user friendly. CKP Harvesting Superintendent, Shayne Elliott and Harvesting Supervisor, Damien Gilberds gave a presentation on the current conditions of the Jackpine Budworm Interlake Salvage harvest. Then Nekoté Liaison, Floyd North gave an update on Nekoté's accomplishments and work reaching out to the Nekoté communities.

The SFM Committee met again on September 11th. The meeting was held at the Kikiwak Inn, Bignell Room on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. This space allowed for social distancing. Twelve people were in attendance, two of whom were NFMC employees. An SFM plan indicator review took place to address some of the changes NFMC proposes to make on the SFM indicators. A list of the changes requested and the discussion by the committee will be made available in the next SFM Annual Report. Retired Wildlife Biologist, Chris Smith did a presentation on Aquatic Invasive Species & Zebra Mussels. The meeting ended with a field tour at the mill of the plant effluent treatment system, settling basins, aerated lagoon, and the sludge land spreading pilot project.

On December 10th, the final meeting of the year was held virtually through the Microsoft Teams platform. Ten people attended the meeting, three of whom were NFMC employees. There were several presentations during this meeting, including a review of the most current ISO, CSA, and PEFC audit reports. As well as a review of the latest FMOP Annual Report and the 2019 SFM Annual Report. NFMC provided Indigenous Awareness Training and introducing the free online course by Coursera "Indigenous Canada". This is the first time the meeting has ever been held virtually and will likely be the norm for the next handful of meetings. A meeting is scheduled for January 14th 2021.

