

## Province Releases Working Forest Discussion Paper

On January 22, 2003, Sustainable Resource Management Minister, Stan Hagen released the Province's Working Forest Discussion Paper. The proposal reflects the government's New Era commitment to *"Establish a working forest land base to provide greater stability for working families, and to enhance long-term forestry management and planning."*

The following provides an overview of the key elements of interest to local governments.

### Working Forest Designation

The government has defined the working forest as all Crown forest land in the province that is outside of protected areas and parks - some 45 million hectares. The boundaries of the working forest would be defined by other existing boundaries such as municipal, private and treaty settlement lands. The paper notes the provincial government's intent to "discuss further with local governments whether or not all or part of the relatively small area of Crown forest land located within municipal boundaries should be included in the Working Forest designation."

### Working Forest Policy Goals

Four central goals are identified within the discussion paper.

1. *To maintain and increase the economic and social benefits that flow from the working Forest.*

The discussion paper acknowledges that other economic activities, such as tourism, range, and sub-surface resources uses, also depend on access to land and forest resources within the working forests. It states "(T)hese other resource sectors will continue to coexist with the forest industry and each other, and may at times even dominate on portions of the Working Forest land base."

2. *To identify and provide additional certainty about those lands within the Working Forest which have a specific priority for:*

- enhanced forest management and investments;
- mining, and oil and gas investments;
- tourism management and invest-

- ments;
- agriculture (range) management and investments;
- First Nations interests;
- wildlife and biodiversity;
- water protection;
- recreation; and
- other specific uses (eg. Carbon credits, linear utility corridors, and communications sites.)

3. *To assure that land-use decisions affecting the Working Forest are supported by a consistent and transparent process that addresses forest and all identified values.*

The concept of "highest and best" use will continue to apply to the working forest land base taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental values.

4. *To assure that society's environmental goals are achieved in the Working Forest.* The paper states that conservation of old growth and other concepts such as ecosystem-based management and the retention of high-conservation value forests are consistent with the policy goals of the working forest.

### Land Use Plans and the Working Forest

Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) and Regional Plans will continue to proceed to assist in improving certainty about the land base within the Working Forest. Basically these plans will provide the detail necessary to determine the range and intensity of forestry use within the working forest.

### Administering the Working Forest

The following decision-making structure has been proposed:

- *Land and Water BC retain delegated authority to issue various tenures under*

*Land Act for non-forestry related land-use activities.*

- *Minister of Sustainable Resource Management or senior regional ministry officials will have authority for decisions to withdraw land from the Working Forest for conversion to private land, provided the decision has relatively low potential for affecting key values.*
- *Minister of Sustainable Resource Management or senior regional ministry officials will have authority for the establishment of land use objectives that will affect the level of resource access within the Working Forest for the forest industry and other users.*
- *Cabinet will make decisions for land-base withdrawals from the Working Forest for protected areas purposes or for other withdrawals that have a significant potential effect on the commercial forestry land base or other key values.*
- *Legislature will continue to have final and formal decision-making role when legislation is used to withdraw land from the Working Forest designation, such as for legislated protected areas or treaty settlement lands.*

### Timeline for Discussion

The deadline for comments on the proposal is **March 14, 2003**. It is expected that the policy framework will be finalized by spring 2003, with implementation by the end of 2003.

Any comments or suggestions for revision can be forwarded to:

### Working Forest Initiative Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

PO Box 9352 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9M1  
Fax: 250-953-3481

### Website:

<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/workingforest>