



Forest Operating Plan Standard

Saskatchewan Environmental Code

March 2026

Forest Operating Plan Standard

Plan Submission and Review

Information Note

The provisions within this standard represent the minimum requirements for operating plan approval. In cases where a rationale or additional information is required to convey the full proposal, licence holders shall include that information as part of the operating plan. This includes instances where the licence holder chooses to submit reporting requirements related to their Aquatic Habitat Protection and Temporary Work Camp permits.

- 1-1**
- (1) Every operating plan prepared in accordance with the Saskatchewan Environmental Code (the code), shall be submitted to the minister:
 - (a) on or before November 30 for the upcoming year of proposed forest operations, for the holder of a forest management agreement or an area-based term supply licence;
 - (b) on or before August 31 within the same year of proposed forest operations, for all holders of a volume based term supply licence or forest product permit for the harvest of a cumulative annual volume greater than 250 cubic metres;
 - (c) on or before October 31 within the same year of proposed forest operations, for the holder of a forest product permit for the harvest of a cumulative annual volume less than or equal to 250 cubic metres; or
 - (d) at a different date than the dates set out in clauses (a) to (c), proposed pursuant to the Act and authorized by the minister.
 - (2) With the exception of operating plans submitted for the harvest of a cumulative annual volume less than or equal to 250 cubic metres, all operating plans submitted to the minister shall be signed by a qualified person as defined in the Act.
 - (3) Unless indicated otherwise, operating plans shall be submitted to the minister in a digital format, including:
 - (a) text;
 - (b) tables;
 - (c) geo-referenced portable document format maps; and
 - (d) ESRI-compatible Geographic Information System (GIS) vector files with explicit attributes and definitions.
 - (4) Licence holders shall submit the entire content of their operating plan as specified in their licence.
 - (5) Once an operating plan is submitted to the minister for approval, additional changes to the base document and maps can only be accepted under the following conditions:
 - (a) consensus on the proposed changes is established during the joint review process; and
 - (b) a record of the consensus is provided to the minister along with the required changes to the operating plan.
 - (6) Only the changes made in accordance with subsection (5) are required to be submitted for inclusion with the previously sent content of an operating plan.

Information Note

At the request of the Forest Service Branch, a licence holder may be required to provide certain information from the operating plan in a specific format and/or according to alternative timelines to enable the Forest Service Branch to review the operating plan's content and provide the licence holder with feedback more effectively.

- (7) For operating plan amendments, licence holders shall submit the following information for review by the minister:
 - (a) a description of the specific changes proposed to the approved operating plan; and
 - (b) where applicable, support documentation to assist with the approval of the proposed amendments, such as:
 - (i) revised maps;
 - (ii) updated tables; and
 - (iii) additional First Nation, Métis and stakeholder:
 - (A) engagements; and
 - (B) commitments.

Information Note

Operating plan amendments may trigger the duty of the Crown to consult with First Nations and Métis communities and may be approved based on that time frame.

- (8) Any deviation to the utilization specifications that have been approved in accordance with the Forest Management Planning Standard shall be included in an operating plan.

**Operating Plan Content
Licence Specific Requirements**

Information Note

A variance to any of the provisions outlined in this standard may be approved, providing that the variance is requested and supported by a rationale.

- 1-2 (1) The holder of a forest management agreement or area-based term supply licence shall submit an operating plan that addresses all the informational requirements set out in sections 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, 1-6 and 1-7.
- (2) The holder of a volume based term supply licence or forest product permit that has been granted licenses for a cumulative annual volume greater than or equal to 50,000 cubic metres shall submit an operating plan that addresses the informational requirements set out in the following provisions:
 - (a) clause 1-3(1)(c);
 - (b) clauses 1-3(1)(d) to (f);
 - (c) paragraph 1-3(1)(g)(i)(A) and subclause 1-3(g)(ii);
 - (d) subclause 1-3(1)(h)(i), paragraph 1-3(h)(ii)(B), and subclauses 1-3(h)(iii) to (iv);
 - (e) clauses 1-3(1)(k) to (n);
 - (f) subsections 1-3(2) to (7);
 - (g) section 1-4;
 - (h) section 1-6; and
 - (i) subclauses 1-7(c)(ii) to (xiii).
- (3) The holder of a volume based term supply licence or forest product permit who has been granted licences for a cumulative annual volume of greater than 250 cubic metres and less than 50,000 cubic metres shall submit an operating plan that addresses the informational requirements set out in the following provisions:
 - (a) clause 1-3(1)(c) to (e);
 - (b) paragraph 1-3(1)(g)(i)(A) and subclause 1-3(1)(g)(ii);
 - (c) subclause 1-3(h)(i), subparagraph 1-3(h)(ii)(B), and subclause 1-3(h)(iii);
 - (d) subsections 1-3(2) to (7);

- (e) clauses 1-4(a), (b), (e), (f), (g) and (h);
 - (f) section 1-6; and
 - (g) clauses 1-7(c)(ii) to (xiii).
- (4) For the harvest of a cumulative annual volume of less than 250 cubic metres, a person shall obtain a forest product permit with conditions related to the proposed activities as approved by the minister.

Information Note

The minister may provide the licence holder with applicable burn and blow-down categories, upon request by the licence holder.

Informational Requirements

- 1-3** (1) Subject to section 1-2, operating plans shall include:
- (a) a title page that:
 - (i) describes the operating years for which the plan applies;
 - (ii) identifies the licence to which the plan applies; and
 - (iii) contains the name, position and signature of the person submitting the plan;
 - (b) a consolidated summary of variances from the code, forest management plan, licence or harvest volume schedule and the rationale for the variances;
 - (c) an overview of the communications between the licence holder, indigenous communities, and other forest users, about the forest management activities proposed for the term of the operating plan;
 - (d) a description of the colour schemes used to distinguish locations of forest management activities in the field, including harvest block boundaries, riparian reserves, and roads;
 - (e) a designation of the person responsible for forest management activities within each harvest block or operating area where, in accordance with the terms of the licence, more than one person is responsible for forest management activities on the licence area;
 - (f) the proposed harvest blocks for the first year of the operating plan, to a maximum of 2 times the harvest volume schedule specified in the licence;
 - (g) road and surface water crossing activities as follows:
 - (i) a table that identifies proposed road construction for the first year of the operating plan summarized as follows:
 - (A) for each planning unit, the total kilometres of proposed construction for road classes 1 to 3 respectively, and for classes 1 to 3 combined; and
 - (B) for the licence area, the total kilometres of proposed construction for road classes 1 to 3 respectively, and for classes 1 to 3 combined;
 - (ii) existing and proposed construction, maintenance, and reclamation activities for roads and surface water crossings in accordance with sections 1-4, 1-6, and 1-7;
 - (h) a summary of proposed harvesting activities for the first year of the operating plan in the form of a table or tables that identify the following information for all blocks for the first year of the operating plan, including proposed fire/blowdown and insect and disease salvage activities, summarized by planning unit:
 - (i) the harvest block identification number;
 - (ii) for holders of:
 - (A) a forest management agreement or area-based term supply licence:
 - (I) the gross and net volumes in cubic metres to be harvested from each harvest block, including the source of data used to determine the volume estimate, with volumes summarized by hardwood vs. softwood;
 - (II) the total volume of hardwood and softwood combined for the licence; and
 - (III) where proposed, a rationale for harvest block volume estimates;
 - (B) the holder of a volume based term supply licence or forest product permit:

- (I) the volumes in cubic metres to be harvested from each harvest block, with volumes summarized by hardwood vs. softwood; and
 - (II) the total volume of hardwood and softwood combined for the licence;
 - (iii) the total licence area volume expressed in cubic metres to be harvested, with volumes summarized by hardwood vs. softwood and total volume of hardwood and softwood combined; and
 - (iv) the harvest distribution by species group and planning unit (VOIT Indicator) for proposed harvest in year one;
 - (i) a summary of proposed renewal treatments in tabular format that identify the following information for all blocks, portions of blocks, and roads, where renewal treatments are proposed, summarized as follows:
 - (i) the harvest block identification number;
 - (ii) year of harvest;
 - (iii) blocks and roads planned for initial treatment, including the types of renewal treatments proposed for the block and roads;
 - (iv) areas planned for retreatment, including the types of renewal treatments proposed;
 - (v) renewal treatments and retreatments to include planting by species and site preparation by type;
 - (vi) areas in which renewal treatments are proposed to be conducted beyond the normal three-year timeline from the date of harvest commencement; and
 - (vii) area, expressed in hectares of the proposed renewal treatments;
 - (j) with respect to proposed pesticide treatments for the purpose of renewal, and insect and disease, the following information:
 - (i) block number (where applicable);
 - (ii) specific purpose of the treatment;
 - (iii) pesticide name and labelling details;
 - (iv) application method and rate;
 - (v) protection of the environment; and
 - (vi) specific consultation processes related to the treatment;
 - (k) existing and planned road closure locations on the operating plan maps;
 - (l) with respect to insects and disease management:
 - (i) descriptions of where forest management activities will occur to address specific forest insect and disease concerns; and
 - (ii) locations of the proposed harvest blocks to manage insect and disease on maps;
 - (m) with respect to proposed research, map locations of proposed research or projects that will require forest management activities to be conducted within the licence area including operational trials of new technology, operating methods, prescribed burns, or introduction of non- native species, including the timing and purpose of the research trial or project;
 - (n) unless described in a forest management plan:
 - (i) map locations of visually sensitive areas, including roads or harvest blocks potentially affecting these areas; and
 - (ii) describe visual quality objectives for each visually sensitive area and description of how these objectives will be achieved.
- (2) With respect to harvest blocks that have not been completely harvested within three years of harvest commencement, the holder of a licence shall assign a new block number to any unharvested portion of a block that is planned for future harvest.
- (3) Overviews prepared pursuant to clause (1)(c) shall be supported by a searchable record of the communications, that:
- (a) is to be included as a confidential appendix to the operating plan; and
 - (b) contains the following information associated with concerns raised:
 - (i) the date when the communications took place;
 - (ii) the type of communications;

- (iii) when available, the names and contact information of the people involved in the communications; and
- (iv) the commitments made to address the concerns, together with:
 - (A) the actions taken to realize the commitments; and
 - (B) a reference to the physical locations associated with the concerns, such as:
 - (I) the operating area;
 - (II) the event;
 - (II) the harvest block; and
 - (iv) the segment of road.
- (4) For the purpose of clause (1)(c), the “**term of the operating plan**” refers the duration of forest operations associated with the areas where harvesting and silvicultural activities has been approved to take place.
- (5) Pursuant to paragraph (3)(b)(iv)(B), the record of communications shall also provide relevant spatial information related to the concerns addressed.
- (6) Pursuant to subsection (3), the record of communications shall be kept current throughout the operating year, with monthly updates submitted to the minister.
- (7) For the purpose of demonstrating that the licence holder has complied with *The Forest Resources Management Act*, *The Forest Resources Management Regulations*, and the code, every operating plan shall contain a description of the form and frequency of the licence holder’s:
 - (a) self-inspections associated with approved forest management activities; and
 - (b) reporting of:
 - (i) self-inspection results to be submitted the minister; and
 - (ii) measures taken to correct non-compliances.

Information Note

Once an operating plan is submitted to the minister for consideration, additional changes to the base document and maps can only be accepted if consensus has been reached during the joint review process.

Basic Map Features

- 1-4** Subject to subsections 1-2(2) and (3), maps shall include the following spatial features (layers):
- (a) surface water including lakes, rivers and streams identified on forest inventory maps;
 - (b) numbered provincial highways and roads, and municipal roads;
 - (c) existing licence holder class 1 and 2 roads with road names;
 - (d) proposed licence holder class 1 and 2 roads with road names represented by:
 - (i) one unique identifier outlining roads proposed for year one; and
 - (ii) one unique identifier outlining roads proposed for years two to five;
 - (e) permanent exclusions including Crown land committed to other land uses or under other dispositions, parks, representative areas, wilderness and conservation areas and Indian Reserves;
 - (f) when applicable:
 - (i) licence areas;
 - (ii) planning units; and
 - (iii) operating areas;
 - (g) mapsheet grids/boundaries; and
 - (h) annotations for each feature in the form of labels and legends.

Harvest Event Planning

Information Note

Harvest event plans will be reviewed and accepted by the Forest Service Branch. Approval to harvest will be provided at the harvest block level.

- 1-5 (1) Subject to subsection 1-2(1), the operating plan shall include:
 - (a) spatially defined boundaries of harvest events:
 - (i) established in accordance with the Forest Management Planning Standard or approved Forest Management Plan, with the ability to further refine event boundaries based on ecological, operational, social or economic constraints, providing that a rationale is included; and
 - (ii) illustrated on digital maps, with unique event identifiers, in accordance with section 1-7 required at the operating area/event scale and recommended at the planning unit/management unit scales;
 - (b) summary tables, presenting the following information for each proposed harvest event:
 - (i) a unique event identifier;
 - (ii) estimated duration of the event, expressed in years;
 - (iii) the amount of area associated with the event, expressed in hectares;
 - (iv) the list of year 1 blocks;
 - (v) the amount of hectares contained within each year 1 block; and
 - (vi) year of new road construction specific to the event commencement.
- (2) For the purpose of this section, 'forest operations' means all of the activities associated with the harvest of forest products within the event except renewal activities.
- (3) Once the licence holder opens an event, forest operations, beginning with road construction and ending with reclamation of roads specific to an event, shall be completed:
 - (a) for events ranging from 0 to 1,500 hectares in size, within ten years since the commencement of forest operations;
 - (b) for events ranging from 1,501 to 3,500 hectares in size, within 15 years since the commencement of forest operations; and
 - (c) for events larger than 3,500 hectares in size, within 20 years since the commencement of forest operations.
- (4) Subject to subclause (1)(a)(i), the guiding principles outlined in Table 1 should be considered when planning timber harvest events.
- (5) Licence holders that are required to submit harvest event plans may propose up to 2.2 times the allowable harvest volume schedule specified in the licence for the first year of the operating plan.

Table 1 Harvest Event Planning – Guiding Principles

The natural forest pattern (NFP) approach is based on an estimate of the natural range of variation (NRV).

To implement an NFP approach, forest managers must plan forest harvest activities at three spatial scales: landscape, event, and harvest block.

When applying NFP harvesting, the objective is to plan harvest events that more closely resemble a natural, fire dominated landscape - by emulating the sizes, shapes and structures of wildfires at the event and block level, together with strategic planning of harvest operations to reduce forest fragmentation at the landscape level.

The key strategies used to achieve NFP through harvest event planning include:

- Strategically and deliberately plan for variation between and within events;
- Aggregate harvest blocks, and in certain cases harvest events, to ensure disturbance is concentrated rather than spread across the landscape;
- Minimize road networks, avoid constructing permanent roads and decrease the lifespan of temporary roads;
- Manage harvest entry and completion to reduce the length of time an event remains active on the landscape;
- Plan harvest events in a manner that reduces the likelihood of future re-entry;
- Design harvest events to create future contiguous patches of interior forest;
 - In fragmented forest areas, focus events in, and adjacent to, these disturbed areas to transition towards more contiguous patches of even-aged forests;
 - In contiguous forest areas, plan large events that recruit even-aged, interior forest into the future;
- Use ecological boundaries to delineate harvest events rather than administrative boundaries;
- Design block and event boundaries to emulate natural variability in landscape patterns and provide linkages between high value habitats; and
- Consider collaboration with adjacent licence holders to establish larger-scale events;
- Engage with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to balance social/cultural, economic and environmental values.

The key forest attributes that need to be maintained include:

- Age class distribution;
- Old and very old forest targets;
- Variability in event size;
- Variability in tree retention; and
- Connectivity of ecosystems and high value habitat.

Key Acknowledgement

Timber harvesting and the associated road networks are different than natural forest disturbances. Harvesting is a mechanical process that cannot replace some of the natural processes associated with wildfire, and due to other values, forest harvest events cannot replicate the size of large fires. In addition, there are no natural equivalents to linear infrastructure. To reduce these differences, harvest event planning aims to aggregate harvest blocks and events, minimize road networks to the greatest extent possible, and ensure timely road reclamation and forest renewal. A well managed forest can provide additional benefits such as reducing the economic and social risks associated with wildfire.

Map Layout Requirements

- 1-6** (1) Subject to subsections 1-2(2) and (3), mapping products shall display the following information:
- (a) title including main and subtitles and date of last revision;
 - (b) north arrow;
 - (c) map scale and scale bar;
 - (d) source data, including map projection and datum;
 - (e) legend that defines every symbol, line, and colour;
 - (f) licence holder's logo or name; and
 - (g) map file name.
- (2) All symbols and information presented shall be clearly distinguishable on the mapping products.

Map Production

- 1-7** Subject to subsections 1-2(1), (2) and (3), a holder of a licence shall include the following maps and information in the operating plan with distinct identifiers for each map feature, including standardized and consistent use of colour-coding and symbols:
- (a) with respect to the licence area map (scale 1:200,000 to 1:300,000 or at a different scale approved by the minister):
 - (i) Caribou Habitat Management Areas or other habitat areas designated within a recovery plan for species at risk;
 - (ii) existing and proposed harvest blocks:
 - (A) proposed blocks in year one; and
 - (B) proposed blocks in years two to five;
 - (iii) fires within the last 10 years;
 - (iv) existing class 1 roads, class 2 roads, and designated highways; and
 - (v) proposed licence holder class 1 and 2 roads represented by unique identifiers outlining the roads proposed for:
 - (A) year one; and
 - (B) years two to five;
 - (b) with respect to maps at an intermediate scale (Scale 1:50,000 to 1:100,000):
 - (i) excluding subsection (a)(i), the same as features outlined for licence area map;
 - (ii) existing licence holder class 3 roads; and
 - (iii) proposed licence holder class 3 roads represented by:
 - (A) one unique identifier outlining the roads proposed for year one; and
 - (B) one unique identifier outlining roads proposed for years two to five;
 - (iv) block numbers for all existing and proposed harvest blocks; and
 - (vi) unique identifiers outlining the blocks proposed for:
 - (A) year one; and
 - (B) years two to five;
 - (c) with respect to large scale maps (Scale 1:10,000 to 1:15,000):
 - (i) the same features as outlined for the intermediate scale map;
 - (ii) forest inventory stand boundaries and labels;
 - (iii) merchantable and non-merchantable stands;
 - (iv) block boundaries and labels for proposed harvest blocks;
 - (v) year of harvest for existing blocks;
 - (vi) existing and proposed surface water crossings, by type;
 - (vii) existing and proposed road closures, by type;
 - (viii) proposed road reclamation, represented by unique identifiers in year one, for class 1, 2 and 3 roads;
 - (ix) existing class 4 roads, represented by unique identifiers in year one, proposed to remain open;

- (x) reclaimed roads and reclaimed surface water crossings, by road class and surface water crossing type, only for the previous operating year's reclamation activities;
 - (xi) visually sensitive areas;
 - (xii) proposed research or other projects; and
 - (xiii) insect and disease management areas;
- (d) with respect to maps illustrating renewal (Scale 1:15,000), locations of renewal treatments and re-treatments proposed in year one, including:
- (i) existing class 1 and 2 roads;
 - (ii) existing harvest blocks with block number labels;
 - (iii) harvest year;
 - (iv) existing surface water crossings; and
 - (v) planned renewal treatment areas and appropriate treatment symbology for:
 - (A) site preparation; and
 - (B) planting;
 - (vi) stand tending activities, including but not limited to:
 - (A) pre-commercial thinning;
 - (B) tending of shrubs competition;
 - (C) herbicide treatment; and
 - (D) pesticide treatment.

Glossary of Terms

Act

The Forest Resources Management Act.

Forest management activity

Activities respecting:

- (1) the harvesting, renewal or scaling of timber; or
- (2) the construction, operation, use, maintenance, closure or reclamation of surface water crossings and roads.

Gross volume

The total volume including retention determined based on the Saskatchewan Forest Vegetation Inventory (SFVI) or another alternative estimate.

Harvest volume schedule (Synonymous with Annual Allowable Cut)

The maximum sustainable timber volume that can be harvested each year, as determined or approved by the minister.

Information sharing

Providing and receiving information to identify and address issues through interest-based engagement with direct participation of stakeholder, First Nations and Metis communities.

Net volume

The volume remaining after required retention is subtracted from the gross volume based on SFVI or another alternative estimate.

Operating year

The period from April 1 to the following March 31.

Planning Unit

For the purpose of this standard, a planning unit is generally a consolidation of operating areas defined at an intermediate level of planning between the licence area and the operating area. Where there is an existing forest management plan, the planning unit is to be considered as the planning unit as defined in the Forest Management Planning Standard.

Road

Any right of way or road allowance associated with forest management activities, in accordance with the Forest Operations Standard.

Road closure

The restriction of vehicle travel on the road surface by the installation of a gate, berm or other barrier.

Road reclamation

The alteration of the road and roadside landings to prevent vehicle travel, prevent sedimentation by stabilizing ditches and slopes where required, and provide for the establishment of regenerating tree species and the reclamation of surface water crossings.

Salvage operations

The harvesting of timber that is:

- (1) directed by the minister pursuant to section 41, 48 or 50 of the Act;
- (2) identified by the holder of the licence as damaged or likely to be damaged by natural causes, such as fire, wind, flood, insects and disease in an operating plan approved by the minister; or
- (3) where the removal or disturbance of the timber is incidental to an approved activity.

Surface water

Water that is above the surface of land and in a river, stream, lake, creek, spring, wetland, or other water course or waterbody, whether the water is there permanently or intermittently.

Surface water crossing reclamation

The removal of a surface water crossing structure, the re-establishment of the natural channel location and width, bed depth, and bank slopes, including stabilization of slopes where required to mitigate sedimentation and maintenance of surface and subsurface water flow.

Timber

Any trees or parts of trees from Crown land, whether standing, fallen, cut, alive or dead.

Wetland

A bog, fen, marsh, shallow open water, or swamp as described in the Canadian Wetland Classification System (1997).