

Foothills Forest Communications Plan

Introduction

A nation-wide public opinion poll commissioned by Forestry Canada in 1991 showed that 49 percent of Canadians believe that overcutting and mismanagement are the greatest threats to Canada's forests. This is up from 31 percent in 1989. These same people also believe that research is very critical (58%) or somewhat critical (35%) to improve the understanding of forest ecosystems and to develop technologies for forest management and new, innovative products.

The Foothills Forest Proposal submitted to Forestry Canada in February of 1992 outlined Technology Transfer and Public Awareness/Education initiatives on a variety of levels. The Steering Committee recognized the Model Forest Program as a means of accelerating the research and development of forest management practices and also as a means of communicating this information to various audiences. One of the strengths of the proposal submitted was the recognition of and commitment to the collection and dissemination of data and results to interested persons and groups locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.

In order to effectively meet this commitment, it is essential that technology transfer is pursued in an organized and focussed manner with specific objectives and criteria for measuring success. Every person involved with Foothills Forest whether as a Board Member, Committee Member, partner or researcher should be aware of this Communications Plan and should be prepared to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of associated activities. There are many talented individuals who have much to offer by sharing their experiences and expertise with other partners and with the public.

Reductions in available funding from all sources have necessitated careful development of a plan which will guide the allocation of time and financial resources as effectively as possible. The advertising program originally proposed has been eliminated, demonstration projects have been eliminated, the public newsletter has been scaled back to 4 issues a year instead of 6 and plans to establish an interpretive program within a separate facility have been abandoned. Rather than viewing these changes as impediments, it is hoped that all Foothills Forest Partners will view them as opportunities to share information and resources and to work together to achieve a smaller set of feasible objectives.

Overall Strategy

The purpose of the Overall Strategy is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the many policy areas covered in the Plan. The following goals make up the Overall Strategy and will be carried forth through the goals and objectives in the rest of the Plan.

- *Provide a framework for the delivery of technology transfer and public awareness/education initiatives related to Foothills Forest.*
- *Optimize the effects achieved for the time and the funds expended.*
- *Develop an improved awareness of the value and uses of forest resources by members of specific target audiences within the time frame of Foothills Forest.*

Planning and Coordination

Proponents of approved Foothills Forest activities will be required to identify their communications requirements with estimated timelines for including in the Foothills Forest Business Plan. This plan will be approved by the Project Steering Committee and the Board of Directors. The Technology Transfer Officer will be responsible for coordinating the communications initiatives.

Target Audiences

The Foothills Forest Business Plan identifies four main target audiences that will help to ensure the success of the program. They are:

1. The local community, its leaders and educators.
2. Foothills Forest partners.
3. Provincial interest groups identified for their role in resource management.
4. National and provincial businesses, governments and social leaders.

Initially, efforts will be aimed at informing the public in the local area about sustainable development and integrated resource management and the significance of the forest resource base to the area communities. Opportunities for providing information to residents of large urban centres will also be investigated. As the research begins to achieve results, the focus will expand to include professional development through transfer of the new technologies to persons involved in the management of forest resources and presentation of information to national and international audiences.

Communications Tools with Associated Goals and Objectives

Public Newsletter

The newsletter will deliver a message of resource integration and sustainability and will highlight the impact of Foothills Forest on the local communities. Recurring themes will be the commitment of the persons involved to sustainable development and opportunities for public involvement.

The public newsletter will be published in June, September, December and March of each year. Distribution will be by bulk mailing to all private addresses in Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Robb, Cadomin and Brule. Opportunities to increase circulation by using local businesses and Provincial Information Centres will be investigated.

Audience - The local community, i.e. residents of Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Robb, Cadomin and Brule.

The Model Forest Program is a significant federal initiative which was awarded to Foothills Forest as a result of the persistent and thorough work of a dedicated steering committee. Area residents should be aware of the amount of direct funding and contributions in kind which have been generated by this program. They should also share in the sense of pride which comes from being one of only 10 sites selected nationwide from 50 applications.

Objectives

- 1.1 Residents of the local community will be aware of the mission and values of Foothills Forest.
- 1.2 Residents of the local community will support the mission and values and will participate in Foothills Forest activities.

Goal 1: Ensure that all persons living within or adjacent to Foothills Forest are aware of its mission and values and of the activities taking place within their communities.

Evaluation

The success of this activity will be evaluated by conducting a survey in 1996/97 and comparing the results to the base line information collected at the start of the program. Also, personal contacts will be made to determine the attitudes of individuals.

InForM Newsletter

Re-established at the request of the Partners Advisory Committee, this newsletter provides a means for keeping a wide variety of partners up-to-date on the status of Foothills Forest activities. The information being provided is more technical and activity-specific in nature with a mailing list composed of partners, committee members, environmental groups and professional associations. It is expected that 15 issues will be produced annually. Information will also be made available to Forestry Canada for inclusion in the Model Forest Network newsletter.

Audience - Foothills Forest Partners, provincial interest groups, national and provincial businesses, governments and social leaders.

The Foothills Forest Business Plan identifies partners as an important target audience for the overall program. Increasing numbers of stakeholders have interest in the management of forest resources and it is important to inform these stakeholders regarding resource management issues so that they may effectively participate in the decision making process.

Objectives

2.1 Circulation of InForM newsletter will increase to 400 copies/ issue.

2.3 Partners will be aware of the various activities being carried on by Foothills Forest and the ways in which they can participate.

Evaluation

Partners will be requested to provide comments regarding the format and content of the InForM newsletter annually during the partners workshop. A survey during 1996/97 will provide an indication of the effectiveness of the newsletter in providing information regarding the Model Forest Program and Foothills Forest activities to the partners.

Tours

Persons wanting to view Foothills Forest and resource management activities will be taken out into the field, where possible, to see the work firsthand. A student will be hired to promote tours throughout the summer months and to ensure that they are well planned and well executed.

As another means of providing interested individuals with an opportunity to view resource management activities, the trails in Cache Percotte Forest will be inventoried and mapped. Interpretive signage and/or brochures will be developed and additional trails may be constructed to link existing pathways.

Goal 2: Provide the Partners of Foothills Forest with information regarding activities and opportunities for involvement.

Goal 3: Demonstrate ways in which Foothills Forest is working to develop an approach to sustainability and integrated resource management.

Audience - The local community as well as provincial, national and international interest groups.

Escorting groups of people into the field will provide physical proof of the impact and improvements in forest management activities. It will also help to show the complexity of integrating the wide variety of values associated with the forest into a comprehensive management strategy.

Objectives

- 3.1 Increase support for natural resource industries by demonstrating integrated resource management practices in use.
- 3.2 Provide participants with an appreciation for the progress being made in integrated resource management and for the complexity of the task.

Evaluation

Attendance at scheduled tours and the number of requests for special tours will be monitored. Comments regarding interpretive trail(s) will be invited. The attitudes of participants before and after the tours will be informally surveyed by inviting feedback from the participants.

Speakers' Bureau

As the various activities associated with Foothills Forest receive more publicity, more public interest will be generated. It is expected that many requests for presentations will need to be accommodated. Establishment of a speakers' bureau will allow collection of information regarding persons willing to speak on various aspects of integrated resource management. This activity will link the people seeking information with the people who have information. The base for the linkage will be geographic as well as scientific. For example, the Alberta Forest Technologists Association has offered to assist in promoting Foothills Forest. With their membership participating, presentations could be accommodated across the Province.

Information regarding persons willing to make presentations to various groups will be kept in a data file at the Foothills Forest office. Professional and technical organizations representing resource managers will be contacted and their members will be invited to participate as members of the Speakers' Bureau. In support of this initiative, information packages will be developed and kept on file at the Foothills Forest office for the use of speakers. These packages will include audio-visual, print and other support materials as the results of research activities become available so that speakers will have current information to present. Attempts will be made to accommodate all requests for presentations depending upon available resources.

Audiences - Professional and technical organizations, special interest groups, educational institutions.

The development of an active speakers' bureau will increase the base of support for Foothills Forest by providing information to audiences

Goal 4: Accommodate requests for presentation of information related to the activities taking place within Foothills Forest to the fullest extent possible.

throughout the province. It will also become a mechanism for encouraging the partners to become more involved.

Objectives

- 3.1 Establish a speakers' bureau with members from all parts of the province including the Foothills Forest partner groups.

Evaluation

Persons requesting presentations will be contacted personally following the event to learn whether the presentation met their expectations. Members of the Speakers Bureau will be contacted to learn whether the materials supplied by Foothills Forest were appropriate for their use.

Open Houses

The focus of this activity, at least initially, should be primarily on local audiences. One avenue for reaching the local population is through associations which have local membership such as the Alberta Teachers Association, particularly the Environmental and Outdoor Education Council and the Science Teachers Association. These types of groups could be very effective by creating a multiplier effect i.e. teach the teachers rather than the students and provide them with the tools to pass the information on to their classes. Give them access to professional advice and ideas for field trips and experiments, offer to participate in career days, science fairs, etc. Other special interest groups such as the Alberta Trappers Association could also be used to deliver information across the Province.

Audience - Residents of the communities within and adjacent to Foothills Forest and elsewhere in Alberta.

The support of the local community is essential in order for Foothills Forest to be truly successful. The public needs to be aware of the research being conducted and of the resource uses which are taking place. By attending local events and inviting the public to see the facilities and demonstrations, the profile of Foothills Forest will be elevated. With more people aware of the activities, there should be an increase in public participation which will lead to an improved sense of stewardship of the area resources.

Objectives

- 5.1 Make information and personnel associated with Foothills Forest available to members of the public who are interested in learning more about resource management.
- 5.2 Develop a display for use at open houses and exhibitions where Foothills Forest will be participating.

Evaluation

The number of persons attending events and the number of requests for information will indicate the level of interest on the part of the target audiences. Questionnaires may also be used to invite comments.

Goal 5: Provide information on Foothills Forest activities to local residents and to other persons.

Peer Review

One aspect of the Foothills Forest "willed future" as identified in the Business Plan, is to be recognized as a leader in applying information technology to integrated resource management. This will depend on providing credible, accessible information to resource managers as well as to the public. Resource management professionals will be invited to review and comment on proposed and ongoing activities as a means of ensuring that they are scientifically valid and that the research is being carried out effectively.

Researchers presenting data collected as part of a Foothills Forest project will be required to give credit to the Model Forest Program in their materials. They will also be required to collect and supply a photographic record of their research.

Audience - Provincial interest groups identified for their role in resource management.

The results of research and development activities associated with Foothills Forest will have a strong influence on forest sector policy and forestry professionals. By providing opportunities for other resource managers to review current and proposed projects, support for the projects will be obtained.

Objectives

- 6.1 One meeting of the Canadian Institute of Forestry and the Alberta Registered Professional Foresters Association will be hosted annually at the Forest Technology School.

Evaluation

Attendance and audience feedback will be monitored. In the final year of Foothills Forest, resource managers will be included as a separate set of respondents in an survey of knowledge and attitudes related to Foothills Forest.

Technology Transfer

As a sponsoring partner of Foothills Forest, the Forest Technology School has an extremely important role to play in the development of the Model Forest. With a successful history of more than 30 years of instruction, workshop presentation and conference hosting, the staff and facilities will form the basis of the technology transfer program.

Cross training between the Forest Technology School and the University of Alberta is presently taking place during the annual 4 week spring camp based at the school. FTS personnel are providing instruction in soil science, regeneration surveys, and entomology/pathology. The GIS lab is available for the training of U of A students. The Foothills Forest Proposal indicates that the possibility of a joint venture curriculum influenced by Model Forest projects will be developed to link with accreditation reviews and professional/technical career pathing across Canada.

Goal 6: Provide opportunities for resource managers from all parts of Alberta to review and comment on the research activities being conducted within Foothills Forest.

Goal 7: Cooperate with personnel at the Forest Technology School and other educational institutions to develop and present instructional materials and processes which are consistent with Model Forest objectives.

At a local level, support will be given to the activities of the Junior Forest Wardens in Edson and Hinton to provide integrated resource management information to a younger audience.

Audience - Provincial interest groups and Foothills Forest partners as well as local youth.

Objectives

- 7.1 Work with Forest Technology School instructors to install and develop a computer system capable of producing interactive computer-based programs which incorporate moving video footage.
- 7.2 Cooperate with Forest Technology School instructors in development of a training exercise where students from the Forest Technology Diploma Program provide forestry instruction to students at Harry Collinge High School.
- 7.3 Design and implement training programs which make use of the Geographic Information System lab established as part of Foothills Forest.
- 7.4 Foothills Forest will cooperate with the Forest Technology School and other educational institutions in providing continuing education in forestry.
- 7.5 Support the activities of the Junior Forest Wardens in Edson and Hinton.

Evaluation

Course and workshop attendance as well as the comments supplied by participants on evaluation forms will provide feedback regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Annual Report

This report will be used as a concise summary of the activities of Foothills Forest for interested individuals or agencies. It will also contain financial audit information required to meet the Provincial regulations for non-profit corporations. An audit of the financial status of Foothills Forest will be completed by an independent accountant and information regarding the contributions, both financial and in-kind, from other sources and from active partners will be included.

Audience - Foothills Forest partners, National and provincial businesses, governments and social leaders.

This document will be one means by which Foothills Forest reports to its stakeholders, particularly the sponsors and project partners. Another very appropriate use would be as part of a request for funding. The agency being solicited would have a comprehensive statement of the status of Foothills Forest and the types of activities ongoing.

Goal 8: Provide a concise report of the financial status and research activities being conducted by Foothills Forest.

Objectives

- 8.1 Demonstrate to Foothills Forest Partners and other outside agencies the activities being carried out and the level of commitment, both financial and in-kind, being contributed to Foothills Forest.

Evaluation

Requests for distribution and comments from readers, sponsors and project partners will be monitored.

Signs

The initial intent of this activity was to install large signs at each of the main entrances to Foothills Forest. During discussions with the Project Steering Committee, the appearance of the collection of signs along Highway 16 east of the Park gate was discussed. The suggestion was made that it may be more effective to have small signs at all the entrances to Foothills Forest and provide larger displays at existing rest areas which would incorporate more detailed information and a receptacle for pamphlets. The travelling public would be made aware of interpretive facilities, the location of the Foothills Forest office, and the telephone number to call for additional information.

Audiences - The local community and the travelling public.

Publicizing the boundaries and the information available will encourage people to visit Foothills Forest and to access the resources which already exist in the area.

Objectives

- 9.1 Mark the entrances to Foothills Forest so that persons travelling in the area will know that they have entered a Model Forest.
- 9.2 Place signs containing information related to Foothills Forest opportunities at locations used by the travelling public and local businesses.

Evaluation

Comments from members of the travelling public will be monitored by maintaining contact with persons working at local Tourist Information Centres.

Brochures

Brochures containing general information on the location and mandate of Foothills Forest will be produced and made available at Tourist Information Centres in the forest as well as those at other locations in Alberta. They will also be used as part of any display at conferences, trade fairs or other events.

Audiences - The local community and the travelling public.

Production of low-cost print materials which are readily available will encourage visitors and residents to spend time in Foothills Forest and will

Goal 9: Publicize the boundaries of Foothills Forest and the opportunities for learning more about integrated resource management.

Goal 10: Have information regarding the location and mandate of Foothills Forest available in a concise attractive format suitable for use by a wide range of audiences.

provide them with a some basic knowledge which they can develop further by visiting the areas listed.

Objectives

- 10.1 Produce a brochure which provides general information about Foothills Forest and the Model Forest Program.
- 10.2 Produce a series of brochures which present current resource management issues and relate them to activities taking place within Foothills Forest.
- 10.3 Translate brochures into French as appropriate.

Evaluation

The distribution and circulation of printed materials will give an indication of the effectiveness of the material and its suitability for particular audiences.

News Media

The 1993/94 budget has no funds designated for advertising. Use of the news media, however, can be an effective means of getting information out to the public at no cost. Short articles, suitable for a general audience will be written for the local papers. Opportunities for presenting Foothills Forest to a larger audience by way of non-local media such as the "Getting Green" spot on Edmonton television or other newspapers will be investigated.

Audiences - The local community.

By providing short, informative articles to the local newspapers, Foothills Forest should be able to provide information related to activities and resource management concepts at a relatively low cost.

Objectives

- 12.1 Develop and maintain media relations to enhance recognition of Foothills Forest by the local newspaper and radio media.
- 12.2 Provide short, informative articles describing Foothills Forest activities and resource management concepts to the local newspapers .

Evaluation

Public response and comments from Board members and committee members will provide information regarding the effectiveness the media used. A survey in the final year of the program will also assess the impact of this activity on the knowledge and values of local residents.

Goal 11: Use the news media as a means of presenting information related to Foothills Forest at a relatively low cost.

Ecotourism Products

This activity will involve the development of a range of products which will illustrate the potential for establishing a tourism industry based on the interpretation of habitat, resource management activities and natural features as well as wildlife viewing opportunities.

Audiences - The travelling public, the local community and special interest groups.

The publication of products which may be made available at a relatively low cost and which will encourage people to spend more time in Foothills Forest, thereby benefitting the local businesses, while promoting the Foothills Forest message of sustainable development and integrated resource management.

Objectives

- 12.1 Opportunities for co-operative ventures with Jasper National Park and others in coordinated public information initiatives will be identified.
- 12.2 Short field guides for specific audiences e.g. watchable wildlife component during spring and fall (shoulder) seasons, bird checklist, etc. be prepared.
- 12.3 Auto touring packages, possibly with a cassette tape, which would interpret the natural features and resource management activities near roadways, highlight wildlife viewing spots and detail habitat preservation/enhancement in conjunction with resource extraction will be developed.

Evaluation

Request for brochures and other tour packages will be monitored.

Evaluation

A variety of tracking and evaluation mechanisms will be employed to determine the influence and impact of communications activities on target audiences. A survey to be conducted during the final year of the program will assess the knowledge and attitudes of the target audiences and compare them to baseline data established by earlier surveys. Some additional evaluation tools to be used will include: monitoring of requests for information; media monitoring; personal communication with persons requesting presentations; and records and analysis of the distribution of communications materials.

Plan Implementation and Review

The Communications Plan will be reviewed in April of each year as part of the preparation of the annual report. Revisions will be made based on an analysis of the available information and discussions with the Board of Directors, the PSC and the PAC.

Goal 12: Improve opportunities for recreation, public use and appropriate ecotourism developments.

Table 1. Communications Plan Summary

Communication Tool	Goal	Audience	Evaluation
Public Newsletter	Ensure that all persons living within or adjacent to Foothills Forest are aware of its mission and values and of the activities taking place within their communities.	The local community i.e. residents of Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Robb, Cadomin and Brule	Survey in 1996/97. Attendance at public events.
InForM Newsletter	Provide the Partners of Foothills Forest with general information regarding activities and opportunities for involvement.	Foothills Forest Partners, provincial interest groups, national and provincial businesses, governments and social leaders.	Comments from partners. Survey in 1996/97.
Tours	Demonstrate ways in which Foothills Forest is working to develop an approach to sustainability and integrated resource management.	The local community. Provincial, national and international interest groups.	Attendance at scheduled tours. Number of requests for special tours will be monitored. Informal surveys .
Speakers' Bureau	Accommodate requests for presentation of information related to the activities taking place within Foothills Forest to the fullest extent possible.	Professional and technical organizations, special interest groups, educational institutions.	Personal contact with persons requesting presentations and with presenters.
Open Houses	Provide information regarding Foothills Forest activities to local residents and to other persons.	Residents of the local community and elsewhere in Alberta.	Monitoring of attendance and requests for information.
Peer Review	Provide opportunities for resource managers from all parts of Alberta to review and comment on the research activities being conducted within Foothills Forest.	Provincial interest groups.	Monitoring of attendance and evaluations following presentations.
Technology Transfer	Cooperate with personnel at the Forest Technology School and other educational institutions in the development and presentation of instructional materials and processes which are consistent with Model Forest objectives.	Provincial interest groups and Foothills Forest partners, Junior Forest Wardens in Edson and Hinton.	Monitoring of attendance. Evaluation forms.
Annual Report	Provide a concise report of the financial status and research activities being conducted by Foothills Forest.	Foothills Forest partners, National and provincial businesses, governments and social leaders.	Requests for distribution and comments from readers, sponsors and project partners will be monitored.
Signs	Publicize the boundaries of Foothills Forest and the opportunities for learning more about integrated resource management.	The travelling public.	Public comments.
Brochures	Have information regarding the location and mandate of Foothills Forest available in a concise attractive format suitable for use by a wide range of audiences.	The local community and the travelling public.	Distribution and circulation of printed materials.
News Media	Use the news media as a means of presenting information related to Foothills Forest at no cost.	The local community.	Public response and comments from Board and Committee members. Survey in 1996/97.
Ecotourism Products	Improve opportunities for recreation, public use and appropriate ecotourism developments.	The travelling public, local community and special interest groups.	Requests for brochures and tour packages will be monitored.