

**Foothills Landscape Management Forum
Berland Smoky Access Plan**

The Foothills Landscape Management Forum (FLMF) Integrated Industry Access Plan (IIAP) was developed with the support of the Foothills Research Institute (formerly the Foothills Model Forest). With a focus on Integrated Land Management, both forest and energy sector companies participated in this effort. Alberta Government staff from Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and Energy provided support, advice, and local expertise.

This Plan was developed as a model of collaboration between different resource users. Over 2 years has been spent on this coordinated effort and we wish to have this process validated beyond that of the endorsement letter dated June 23, 2006. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Foothills Landscape Management Forum



Wayne Thorp
Director

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foothills Landscape Management Forum (FLMF) mandate is to facilitate the implementation of proposals for integrated landscape management and conservation actions for the Little Smoky and A la Peche caribou herds in west central Alberta. The FLMF operates under the umbrella of the Foothills Research Institute (FRI). The first initiative of the FLMF was the Integrated Industry Access Plan (IIAP), which has been condensed from its original form and renamed the Berland Smoky Access Plan.

Increasing road access in the ranges of these two caribou herds is needed to support allocated resource extraction and associated economic and social benefits. In November of 2005, the FLMF (previously called the Caribou Landscape Management Association - CLMA) submitted an Integrated Industrial Access Plan (IIAP) for consideration by government. The government endorsed the IIAP as a guiding tool on June 23, 2006, which reinforced the need to integrate and coordinate the access requirements of the forest and oil and gas sectors, and to develop a monitoring and reclamation plan.

The FLMF believes that upfront road planning will reduce the road footprint resulting from the current “plan as you go” approach. Minimizing the footprint from long-term access through a coordinated approach will benefit the caribou herds, other species and the environment. This approach will reduce road construction, maintenance, and reclamation costs.

The Berland Smoky Access Plan identifies the “backbone” of permanent all weather access requirements for the energy and forest industrial sectors within the caribou ranges. The Plan represents the needs of the forest companies and a majority of the oil and gas companies with operations in the area.

The current members of the FLMF are:

- ANC Timber Limited (ANC)
- Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada (Grande Cache)
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL)
- Canadian Forest Products Limited (Canfor)
- ConocoPhillips Canada Resources Limited (ConocoPhillips)
- Devon Canada Corporation (Devon)
- Encana Corporation (Encana)
- Foothills Forest Products Incorporated (FFP)
- Hinton Wood Products, a division of West Fraser Mills Limited (HWP)
- Husky Oil Operations Limited (Husky)
- Suncor Energy Incorporated (Suncor)
- Talisman Energy Incorporated (Talisman)
- TransCanada Pipelines Limited (TransCanada)
- Shell Canada Limited (Shell)

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PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The primary purpose of the Berland Smoky Access Plan (hereinafter referred to as the Plan) is to identify the “backbone” of industrial road corridors for accessing resources in the Little Smoky and A la Peche caribou ranges. Primary corridors, both existing and planned, have been established (Map 1).

The primary corridors identified in the Plan will normally be permanent, all weather roads. In fact, 85% of the corridors already exist as permanent, all weather roads. However, a new road may not be initially constructed to the standard of permanent, all weather. The Plan is intended to provide guidance on the location of primary corridors regardless of road standard. The specific industry applications for LOC’s will outline the need and necessity of each route. The level and type of activity (e.g. sour gas development, safety concerns and anticipated traffic volumes) will dictate the right of way width and road standard.

The Plan will guide integrated industrial development and government reviews for approval regarding development of energy and forestry resources. It is assumed that this approach minimizes industrial impact on caribou habitat because secondary access roads are temporary while permanent, all weather roads are shared by the energy and forest companies when they are developing their respective resources.

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OBJECTIVE

The primary objective for the Plan is to reduce the industrial footprint by:

1. Improved coordination, integration and management of access on the landscape, by all users from cradle to grave;
2. Identification of opportunities to reduce the long-term access footprint (e.g. reduced right-of-way (ROW) widths and reduced access duplication, reduce the number of access routes into the caribou ranges, reduce the number of main corridors within the ranges when compared with the “plan as you go” approach);
3. Proactive determination of acceptable road corridors within the planning area;
4. Provide recommendations for operational policy relating to integrated access management in caribou ranges;
5. Minimize the impact of access on caribou and caribou habitat and other identified resource values;
6. Provide an improved level of certainty for future development opportunities;
7. Equitable sharing of access development, maintenance and reclamation costs by all industry sectors;
8. Joint road monitoring, reporting and maintenance by all industry sectors and through similar initiatives such as the Foothills Stream Crossing Program.

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AREA OVERVIEW/ RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The target area encompasses a tract of land in west-central Alberta in the foothills region of the Rocky Mountains totaling approximately 5000 (4954) square kilometers. It is situated east of the town of Grande Cache and has the Willmore Wilderness Park along its west boundary and extends east, near to Highway 43. It has vast resource values including scenic landscapes, timber, energy (gas and oil), wildlife and water.

The timber resource is comprised predominately of lodgepole pine, and has been allocated to the following five companies, three of whom have Forest Management Areas (FMA):

- Ainsworth Lumber Co. Ltd. – Deciduous Timber Allocation (DTA G150003)
- ANC Timber Ltd. – FMA holder
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd. – FMA holder
- Foothills Forest Products Inc. – Coniferous Quota
- Hinton Wood Products, a division of West Fraser Mills Ltd. – FMA holder
- Tolko Industries Ltd. – Deciduous Timber Allocation (DTA G150002)

Their initial and ongoing investment in processing facilities is based on full access to timber lands. Some companies have deferred harvesting in the caribou ranges in the short term, while awaiting direction and advice on the conservation of caribou habitat and population recovery from the West Central Caribou Landscape Planning Team (WCCLPT). Industry eventually must access this area to support their investment and the sustainability of the respective resource-based communities. Additionally, forest companies are currently developing plans to deal with the immediate “green attack” of mountain pine beetle. An infestation of mountain pine beetle has the potential to significantly impact their operations and the economic and social health of the associated resource-based communities.

Similarly, the energy sector has purchased dispositions from government within the area and has invested extensively in the exploration of the energy resource. Their investment in exploration continues, as well as in the infrastructure that transports and processes known energy reserves. In order to access resources that have been allocated by the government, more roads are required. However, both industrial sectors recognize that in order to access the land they must ensure their impact on other resources is minimized. While there are many other resource values in the area in addition to caribou, it has been identified as the most critical and is the focus of this effort.

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PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Development of the Plan has taken 2 years and there has been significant investment and cooperation from companies in the area (Appendix 1). The companies received direction from SRD and Energy and met on a regular basis, usually quarterly, with representatives from both ministries.

4.1 RESOURCE VALUES

The process considered issues related to road access development in the area for multiple resource values including caribou, grizzly bear, and stream classification for fish (with emphasis on bull trout and arctic grayling) and aquatic habitat.

4.2 PRINCIPLES

The following principles were developed and agreed upon early in the process to represent the interests and values of the various participants involved in development, approval and implementation of the Plan. The principles provided guidance in the development of the Plan. When planned individual access routes deviate from these principles, strong rationale and justification must be provided.

- a) Industry, government and all other stakeholders will cooperate in development and implementation of the Plan.
- b) Roads will be constructed to the appropriate standard considering resource values to be conserved and anticipated level of use and safety.
- c) Pipeline and related linear corridor development will be coordinated with approved road corridors.
- d) The Plan will follow provincial legislation and policy direction and other legal requirements, and will link to related processes and plans (Appendix 2).
- e) The Plan will honour current resource commitments, provide fair access to resources and all industrial users will be treated equally.
- f) Improve land use management guidelines and technological practices for road planning, operations, and restoration.
- g) The Plan development process will provide an opportunity for industries and ASRD to participate directly in plan development, and other stakeholders to participate through a consultative process.
- h) A process will be developed to monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and to allow for the future review and update of the Plan to address changing conditions.
- i) Reclamation and rehabilitation of existing access that is no longer required will be of equal consideration in development of the Plan.
- j) Loop roads should not be considered in development of the Plan.
- k) A connector corridor between Grande Cache and Fox Creek / Whitecourt was considered on the direction of ASRD in the refinement of corridors in the summer of 2007.
- l) High value caribou habitat should be identified and every attempt made to reduce the access footprint in these areas.
- m) Direction contained in the Alberta Caribou Recovery Plan or new government policy may require that the Plan be amended.

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4.3 PREPARATION AND CONTENTS

The preparation of the Plan was conducted in stages as follows:

Stage 1 – Inventory of existing access

- a. Designate the geographic area that the Plan will cover.
- b. Identify and map existing roads.

Stage 2 - Planned Access Corridors

- a. Road selection criteria and guidelines (Appendix 1).

Stage 3 – Corridor refinement, monitoring and reclamation plan

Stage 4 – Maintain an up-to-date inventory (dataset) (Appendix 1).

The objective of the FLMF is to have the “best available data,” at any given time, for resource managers and FLMF partners to use. Therefore, the data must be updated in a timely manner to accurately reflect reality on the landscape.

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PUBLIC INPUT

The development of this Plan incorporated the public input from existing industrial public input processes. In particular, each FMA holder has a public advisory committee who were advised on the development of this Plan. In addition, several information meetings were held with key stakeholders by the manager of the program as follows;

- Sturgeon Lake First Nation Chief and Council presentation September 14, 2005.
- Canfor Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting September 14, 2005
- Grande Cache Mayor and council presentation September 20, 2005.
- County of Yellowhead September 27, 2005
- MD of Greenview September 28, 2005
- Town of Hinton October 4, 2005
- Foothills Ojibwas October 4, 2005
- Hinton Wood Products FRAG Public Meeting, Oct 31, 2005

Specific stakeholder consultation on road proposals will be undertaken by industry to address matters related to specific routing and construction methods.

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PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. A corridor is defined as an “all weather primary trunk road” that provides access to several townships within a landscape area.
2. All corridors, general location within 1 kilometre, have been integrated and accepted by both the forest and energy sectors.
3. An investigation and route justification analysis of alternative route options has been completed.
4. Mitigation of impact on other resource values has been performed.
5. All roads comply with the Route Selection Criteria / Guidelines.
6. The Plan is maintained and updated to incorporate new information. All higher order plans, and changes to Government policy and regulation, will be incorporated into future revisions of the Plan.
7. All identified and approved route reclamation will be completed in a timely fashion.
8. Approvals are expedited if the applicant conforms to the approved corridors and Plan Guidelines.
9. All companies in the area follow the Plan (including new entrants).

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PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

As of September, 2007:

- 85 % of the proposed permanent road network already exists.
- 1 % of the permanent roads that are described are approved LOCs but have not yet been built.
- 14 % of the permanent roads that are described have not been approved or built.
- All companies belonging to the FLMF and operating in the area have shared sensitive information necessary to produce the Plan.
- All known resource information has been collated and utilized via a state-of-the-art GIS application (provided by Foothills Research Institute) and is updated on an ongoing basis.

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APPROVALS

There is no current regulatory framework under which integrated road plans such as the IIAP can be approved. However, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development - Public Lands and Forests Division (PLFD) and Fish and Wildlife Division (FWD) Assistant Deputy Ministers collectively reviewed and endorsed the IIAP on June 23, 2006 as a guiding tool. It is recognized that endorsement does not constitute approval of individual roads, only the general location of the corridor at a landscape level. When a road is proposed it will have to go through normal approval processes. However, it should require less review and time provided the road complies with the Plan. Road applications that comply with the Plan will not require additional justification and analysis of route options as this was already undertaken in the development of this Plan.

Approval of the Plan specifically provides industry with the ability to:

- Prepare detailed engineering, standards, and construction up to all weather roads standard in advance of actual disposition application. Site specific proposals for actual grade and water course crossing locations, and environmental protection requirements, shall be submitted for any disposition within the approved corridor. Industry will determine when the road is necessary based on integrated planning as well as the standard for resource extraction as a result of approved timber harvest and/or acquisition of mineral rights.
- At the time of disposition application, industry will be expected to provide details of required stakeholder consultation and/or notification.

All weather roads applied for that are not within the approved corridors will require an amendment to the Plan. The amended corridor will have to be submitted for approval with appropriate justification including information confirming consultation and suitability for use by other partners/industrial users in the area. Once industry has identified the need for access that adheres to the Plan as submitted or approved for amendment, the department will expedite the approval of the disposition.

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IMPLEMENTATION / PROCESS OF APPLICATION

The purpose is to ensure early dialogue and integration between sectors. Member and non-member energy companies should first contact the FMA holder or quota holder before submitting surface rights applications to government. This will initiate the coordination and integration process internally between forestry and energy sectors before the government reviews the application. The government will use this Plan to guide its regulatory decision-making with respect to applications for linear corridor development such as roads and pipelines. If any applications are received without this referral, the government should make it a condition in the application process. If FLMF member companies require changes to the Plan, the FLMF will work with that company to resolve any conflicts and track the changes on its databases and post the latest Plan on the FRI website.

This process also needs to apply to companies who currently are not part of the FLMF Plan to ensure both sectors are aware of the application and activity. All resource users developing roads within the Little Smoky and A la Peche caribou ranges will be required to incorporate the intent of the Plan in their planning process. Any companies that are not currently part of the FLMF will be encouraged to contact the FLMF should they propose any access development in the area.

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APPENDIX 1: Work Undertaken to Complete the Plan

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Plan will follow provincial legislation and policy direction and other legal requirements, and will link to related processes and plans including:

- Public Lands Act (disposition approval process);
- Water Act and Codes of Practice (road and pipeline watercourse crossings);
- Federal legislation (Fisheries Act, Navigable Waters Act);
- Detailed Forest Management Plans (DFMP);
- Existing Long-Term Industrial Access Plans;
- Northern East Slopes Integrated Resource Management Strategy (when available);
- Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan;
- West Central Alberta Caribou Steering Committee (WCACSC) 1996 Operating Guidelines;
- WCACSC Habitat Supply Subcommittee initiatives;
- Oil and Gas Access – Best Practices Within the West Central Caribou Range; and
- Landscape fire management initiatives.

Several data sets were used in the development of the Plan, from the process of corridor development to the creation of the reclamation plan (Table 1).

Table 1. Datasets used in the development of the IIAP as of September 30, 2007.

Dataset	Application	Source	Date
Roads	Foundation for building single roads dataset across multiple jurisdictions using a single classification scheme. Updated annually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HWP • ANC • Canfor • FFP • ASRD (Hinton, Edson, AltaLIS) • CNRL • ConocoPhillips • Husky • Devon • Talisman 	September, 2007
Pipelines	Mapping reference	DOE	February, 2007
Well sites	Mapping reference	DOE	February, 2007
Harvest operating units	Mapping reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HWP • ANC • Canfor 	2005
Terrain	Roads planning constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASRD 	2005
Caribou RSF	Roads planning constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASRD, Fish and Wildlife • University of Alberta 	Summer 2004 Winter 2005
Grizzly bear RSF	Roads planning constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRI Grizzly Bear Program 	August, 2005
Streams	Roads planning constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASRD • FRI Fish and Watershed program 	2005
SPOT Imagery	Mapping reference	ASRD	February, 2007

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Dataset	Application	Source	Date
AVI data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANC • Canfor • HWP • ASRD 	2005

The following information, knowledge and tools were considered when making corridor routing decisions:

- Higher-level plans (Integrated Resource Plans (IRP), Forest Management Plan (FMP), etc), if any exist for the IIAP area;
- Other wildlife
 - Wildlife zoning maps;
- Future operating schedule (to year if part of Development Plan window, to decade if part of FMP window);
- Caribou (from WCACSC and FWD)
 - Caribou habitat maps (WCACSC maps, RSF maps, etc)
 - Caribou location maps;
- Oil and Gas
 - Identify and map areas of future interest by oil and gas companies;
- Grizzly bear (from Foothills Model Forest)
 - Grizzly bear Resource Selection Function (RSF) maps, mortality risk maps, movement corridor maps; and
- Fish and aquatic habitat (from FWD)

Sensitive streams from FWD stream classification map.

An essential step to ensure that the objectives of the FLMF are met is to have a current and accurate inventory of all access disturbances. This was incorporated into the 2006/07 FLMF business plan, and has now been addressed with a consultant who is responsible for:

Maintaining a current inventory of access:

- Reviewing with ASRD ownership status;
- Confirming and tracking “as built” roads from companies, ASRD records (develop data standards and annual submission requirements);
- Acquiring disturbance layer from FMA holders and Government for the area (harvesting, road and linear disturbances from land use layer);
- Maintaining data tables for corridors and match to map products;
- Maintaining data tables for reclamation and match to map products;
- Maintaining a data set for access controls by category (i.e. gates, pulled bridges and culverts, barriers, etc.);
- Contacting all companies listed as owners for potential reclamation of roads (identify issues, concerns, timing of deactivation or reclamation);
- Tracking and reporting on roads that have been reclaimed or deactivated;
- Confirming LOC #'s and update data tables for all roads (corridors);
- Developing a monitoring and tracking program for road density (i.e. net disturbance); and
- Continual reviewing of ASRD records on deactivation plans, reclamation plans as per data and update datasets as necessary.

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The following companies participated in the development of the Plan:



