



A Highway 40 North Demonstration Project Update *Putting Natural Disturbance Research to Work*

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What Will This Project Produce?

The advantage of combining an operational plan with a Model Forest project is that the output serves multiple, complementary, objectives. The Hwy40 project is designed to deliver three main products:

1) An Operational Plan.

The project will develop a single, detailed, integrated disturbance plan for the next 10 years, and a more general projection of likely disturbance activities over the next 40 years. In other words, we will do our best to identify the timing, location, and extent of all forms of cultural disturbance for the entire 70,000 ha. However, the jurisdictional complexity in this case means that such a plan can only be realized through the delineation and submission of several individual plans, including harvesting, prescribed fire, and even access. In terms of harvesting plans, recall that the harvesting activities on the three forest management areas are “hard wired” into existing long-term plans (see Hwy40 update #2). Thus, each of these three companies needs to submit a formal operational plan to the province for approval through the normal channels to meet their legal obligations. Prescribed fire plans are submitted separately through Alberta SRD, as are access plans.

2) An FMF Project Report.

Developing and testing innovative, science-based techniques is meaningless without an open, critical review of the process to maximize exposure of the lessons learned. This is particularly true in this case given the variety of opinions on using natural patterns within sustainable forest management planning. The following represent some of the likely section headings in the final report:

Diary of events: What happened, what decisions were made, when, and why?

The reality of emulating natural patterns: A list of natural disturbance patterns that were considered in the plan, their natural range of variation (NRV), and to what degree and where the final plan was able to land within NRV. The report will also identify and fully describe the reasons for any departure from NRV.

Testing a new planning foundation: One of the fundamental premises of the project is that natural patterns provide viable solutions for many other ecological, economic, and social objectives. The degree to which this hypothesis is proven true will be reviewed in detail.

Indicators for planning: Plan options will be developed and chosen using various objective indicators or predictors. The choice of indicators and their links to post-disturbance monitoring will be described.

Cross-jurisdictional planning: This project represents a unique collaboration between several government agencies and companies. This level of collaboration will be a key tool for developing sustainable plans for many areas across Alberta. The success of this partnership will be examined.

Disturbance planning: Another potentially valuable SFM tool of the future will be moving beyond *harvest planning* to the more holistic *disturbance planning*, which considers the impacts and risks of all possible sources of cultural and natural disturbance. Integrating fire, harvesting, and energy sector development activities will be critical to the success of the plan, and well worth evaluating.

The process: A full explanation of the planning process we adopted, and how and where it differed from normal procedures. The report will also discuss milestones, timing, and any surprises.

3) Education and Communication Products.

Consistent with the idea of a demonstration project, communication and education products will be key long-term output of the project. We have developed a separate communications plan for the project that includes various educational tools such as signage and self-guided trails off Highway 40, tours, photos and video, presentations, pamphlets, and posters. Our target audience includes everyone from practitioners to the general public.

For more information on the Hwy40 North Demonstration project, please contact: Dr. David Andison, Bandalooop Landscape Ecosystem Services, Tel.: (604) 939 – 0830, Email: andison@bandalooop.ca, or visit www.fmf.ab.ca