



Speaking Notes

Forest Information Management Workshop

Airport Hilton

Richmond

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Tim Sheldan

ADM – Operations Division

Opening

- Thanks Peter.
- Good morning.
- I'd like to start by thanking the Steering Committee for inviting me and for their efforts in organizing what I think is a very important workshop.
- The Steering Committee is a good example of the kind of collaboration that we need to successfully tackle aspects of the information management challenges facing our sector. With representatives from industry, the Ministry and BC Timber Sales spearheading the workshop, you can expect the next two days to be well worthwhile.
- Those people are:
 - Pete Partee, Western Forest Products
 - Dan Battistella, Weyerhaeuser
 - Mark Todd, Canfor
 - Gail Brewer, BC Timber Sales
 - Gloria Wills, Ministry of Forests & Range
- The agenda looks very interesting and I think all of you will benefit from hearing a range of presentations and perspectives by people from industry, the Integrated Land Management Bureau and different parts of the Forest Service.
- I'm also sure that Alex Ferguson, Deputy Commissioner of the Oil and Gas Commission, and Tanner Elton from the

BC Forest Safety Council will provide you with plenty of food for thought.

Context

- Off the top, let me say that I am not a technical expert on many of things you will cover over the next two days, but I don't think you expect me to be.
- I do, however, have a very strong appreciation for the importance of having effective technology and systems that provide reliable data and information to support business, operations and decision making.
- Every day, I encounter situations that require information or data that I can trust in order to make a decision, provide direction or better understand an issue or situation.
- In lots of the information we manage, the focus is on the Forest Service. However, we deal with a significant volume of information and data that relate to the entire sector.
- That's why it is important to have had forest companies, government and consulting firms come together over more than a decade to take on the challenges of information management. I am pleased to see this collaboration continue because we likely need this more today than we ever have.
- There have been a number of workshops over the years and the increasing importance of this work is evident in the fact that this two-day event has well over 100 participants.

- To me, information management and storage are fundamental to our business. Without adequate and accurate information, proper storage and utilization, none of us could forward with new business strategies and meet our targets.
- In all my time with Forest Service, there has been a strong emphasis on having good data and effective processes for gathering it and managing it.
- It seems to me that the emphasis on data and information has become more acute in recent years. When we combine this heightened interest with incredible advances in technology, especially in the past decade or so, it is clear why we need to bring together people from across the sector that have common interests and challenges.

Impact of Technology & Systems

- “The system is down!” or “I’ve just lost four hours of worth of work!”
- In most of our offices, these can be unsettling refrains and clearly unproductive, to say the least. We rely heavily on computers and sometimes may not like our dependency on various information systems, but the reality is that these touch our lives on all fronts.
- Computer and information systems are so much a part of how we live and work that we rarely think about them until there is a problem.

- Our reliance on information management and technology continues to increase in today's business environment, in ways we never envisioned a few years ago, let alone 10 years ago.
- Reliable systems, technology and information are a big part of being competitive and having a competitive edge, whether we're talking about an individual company or the entire forest sector.
- In fact, today's business environment seems to be fully dependent on information management and technology, regardless of whether we're talking about the private sector, government or non-profit sector.
- When was the last time you recall a document being created on a typewriter. I think we still have one of those on the Executive floor of the ministry, but I have no idea if it is used or for what. Remember the days of 'word processors'!!
- While we were using email a decade ago, I doubt if many of us envisioned how it would impact the way we work.
- I know there are challenges, even frustrations, with the volume of email. Clearly, we need to learn more about managing email, but we would be lost without it in today's business world. It is very much a part of our information management toolkit.
- Here's an example of how information and systems have impacted us in an unexpected way in just a few years.
[Hold up your BlackBerry]

- While this device is common place today and, in fact, without it (given my travel schedule and long hours) I'd be quite unproductive, it was launched less than a decade ago – in 1999 to be precise.
- When a couple of students at the University of Waterloo started a company called 'Research in Motion' in 1984, few people had any idea of where their ideas would eventually take us.
- Now, it seems that the folks at RIM are constantly coming out with advances in the BlackBerry technology. Where will it go next?
- These are just a couple of examples of the influence and importance of technology and information management on the way we work.
- Increasingly, these and other technologies allow us to manage data and information 'just in time', which is critical in today's markets. These advances enable quicker approvals and authorizations for plan amendments.
- In the past few years, technology and systems have helped the Forest Service move to more consistent business rules and processes across all districts.
- This is part of our overall initiative to become an even more effective organization, and an increasingly desirable workplace.

- While there is still much to do, we've made good headway on the data gathering and management fronts. Technology is helping us reduce paperwork and the effort required for data entry. The job isn't over, but we're moving in the right direction.
- Ultimately, all of us want reliable data and information that help us make good decisions on a timely basis.
- This information may be in the form of a map or forest inventory. Regardless of the type of data or information, systems and infrastructure are essential tools to support how we manage information and make decisions.
- With high quality and timely information, we will do a better job of managing and protecting forest and range resources.
- The entire sector, for example, benefits from comprehensive information now available to support certification efforts and things like effectiveness evaluation and monitoring.
- All the organizations represented here have a role to play in more effectively using technologies with things like electronic business and submissions.
- Getting to where we are today with information management in the forest sector has only been possible through the combined efforts and collaboration of people like you.

- We needed this cooperation to do data clean-up and ensure we have data that has integrity and that we can trust.

Examples

- Effective systems and reliable data have many applications, some of which are not always top of mind.
- I expect everyone here knows that industry, the ministry and government have expended a huge amount of time, effort and money in dealing with the softwood lumber dispute with the U.S.
- For example, we have to respond annually to an exhaustive questionnaire form the U.S. Department of Commerce. The information provided in response to these questionnaires is used to establish tariffs, which means it is essential to have reliable and up-to-date information on a timely basis.
- We're also asked on a yearly basis to provide up-to-date information on tenures and licences. We have to provide data on the cut block sizes of BC Timber Sales and major licensees. Our Corporate data base makes this possible.
- For a recent questionnaire, we were asked for information about a specific company. Our corporate records information systems called the Administrative Records Classification System (or ARCS) and the Operational Records Classification System (or ORCS) were critical in compiling this information.

- The countervail duty process allows firms to ask for an exclusion from any tariff, on the basis that they did not use any Crown timber. There were hundreds of requests on this issue. Staff was able check the corporate data base and quickly verify the use of Crown timber by the company.
- On the Anti-Dumping file, selected firms were required to provide actual data on the stumpage they paid to the Province, sometimes by scale site and by species. With over a thousand scale sites, this is potentially a huge task.
- By using the corporate database and their skills, staff was able to produce a fully accurate report in a day and our Revenue branch was able to formally attest to the data in a letter to the company. One firm told the director of the Revenue branch that it would have taken weeks for them to do this.
- Also on the Anti-Dumping file, firms were asked to provide copies of identified invoices. Rather than head to their file vault (if they even had one), they simply logged on to the Harvest Billing System and printed off a true copy. The HBS runs 24/7 and has 7 years of invoices and line item detail available. To date, the ministry, industry and public has self served some 1.5 million such reports.
- While responding to many of these requests is demanding, the job is made much easier by having effective systems and data bases that provide reliable information in a timely manner, and having people who know how to use them. Without these things being in place, the above examples would be huge, time-consuming tasks.

- I'm not saying these examples were easy to carry out, but they were a lot easier because we have good information management processes.
- Obviously, government and the Forest Service have allocated a lot of resources – people, time and money – to systems and information management, as has industry.
- When we think about the softwood lumber file alone, it is clear that we need to consider information systems and management as an investment for today as well as the future.
- One way to optimize this investment is by bringing people together in a workshop such as this, where people can share and learn from each other.

Being Competitive

- To compete in the global economy, the B.C. forest sector needs to maximize the use of our current technologies and constantly look for new technologies. No one of us can do this on our own, which is one of the important reasons for coming together in a forum such as this.
- I am told that, while we are moving forward on the technology front, we are falling behind our competitors in countries such as Brazil, China, India and Russia.
- There are areas where B.C. has an advantage over these jurisdictions, but they are doing very well when it comes to using new and emerging technologies to gain a competitive edge. Wireless infrastructure in China and

India, for example, far exceeds what it is in North America. Their population size and density gives them an edge.

- The ability to move information quickly and easily to any place on the planet is critical factor to being competitive.
- Here in B.C., we obviously have competition in the forest sector and, in fact, there are companies represented here today who are competitors.
- However, when it comes to competing globally, there definitely is more we can do to cooperate on the technology and information management front in order to have a stronger industry.
- There also are cost benefits from cooperation and collaboration.

New Technology

- We need to explore and invest in emerging technologies, such as Radio Frequency Identification or RFiD for short. I don't understand the technology, but from what I have been told it is an automatic identification method that relies on storing and remotely retrieving information through used devices called RFiD tags or transponders.
- This technology is used with many toll highways and bridges, where a vehicle has a tag or transponder that is read electronically when going through a special entry lane. For frequent users, this saves time and the hassle of always having the right change on hand.

- There are many other applications – libraries, shipping companies, public transportation systems, ski resorts and more. There is also some use of tags in the cattle industry as a means of identifying a cow’s herd of origin.
- There are different variations of these devices and this certainly seems like a technology that could be used in the forest sector to tag trucks and logs. I would expect that it could have applications related to things like compliance, log theft and forest safety.
- For such applications, industry and government would have to come together to set common standards and address various issues. However, there could be many benefits and efficiencies from such technology, if we were to have generic standards.

Closing Thoughts

- This workshop is a good example of the principles of our Culture and Climate Change initiative with industry to help with transition to the FRPA management regime and move to greater professional reliance.
- That initiative is very much guided by the goal of increasing trust and understanding through collaboration and effective communication.
- The challenges and complexities of information management provide us with a great opportunity collectively to extend the principles of this initiative.

- Over the next two days, I strongly encourage you to take the opportunity to spend time with people who do not work in the same organization as you do.
- You will hear a great deal of interesting and useful information from presenters. Beyond that, however, this workshop is an excellent occasion to engage in dialogue with other people, to ask questions and to share knowledge from your experience.
- Good communication will be essential for connecting with others during the workshop, but it will be equally important to continue communicating when you go back to your day-to-day work environment.
- In the days ahead, I encourage you to extend and build upon the knowledge sharing that occurs here.
- Have a great two days and amid all the presentations and work – have some fun!!!

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