

Responding to challenging times with science-based solutions

Chris Hollstedt, *JEM* Editor-in-Chief

Two years ago, in consultation with over 380 people throughout British Columbia, FORREX identified that new policy and regulatory frameworks were needed to accommodate, if not facilitate, an innovative, knowledge-based forest sector (Hollstedt 2000; available at www.forrex.org/publications/FORREXSeries/ss2.pdf). Today we have new results-based regulations and pending tenure reform that will enable innovation and learning in defined forest management areas. This is a time of unprecedented change in the history of forest and natural resource management in British Columbia. To manage this change, we need to understand the forces at work, including the economic, social, and environmental drivers, and develop knowledge-based solutions. We must have access to scientifically sound and usable information and experts. FORREX, with our partners, supports decision makers by providing information and expertise. We can work with decision makers to revise policies, management systems, and operational solutions that would help the sector achieve critical sustainability goals.

The changing regulatory framework in the province emphasizes decision making based on sound science and information, consistent with the current government's policy of science-based natural resource management. The revised standards of today will be monitored tomorrow, and adjusted over time—therefore, we need to ensure that these standards will be useful in achieving desired economic, environmental, and social conditions for generations to come.

Planning frameworks are also evolving. The “Working Forest” initiative of the B.C. Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management will take shape over the next year with input from industry, the scientific community, and the public. Meanwhile, the B.C. Ministry of Forests’ defined forest-area management initiative will create opportunities for enhanced and collaborative management of the province’s 71 forest management units. We can expect lively debate as new models emerge. What are the full implications of area- and result-based tenures? How will challenges and opportunities be addressed in co-operative tenure management versus traditional individual tenures? How will those managing and using resources from these forest management areas work together with First Nations and from a common knowledge base to make decisions that will ensure social, economic, and environmental sustainability? These are challenging questions—with its track record and current expertise, FORREX is well positioned to help provide some of the answers.

The aggressive environmental campaigns of the last decade raised the public’s awareness of forest practices and the expectation that a better way existed to manage our forests. The new Boreal Forest Campaign, the continued criticism of coastal forest practices, and commitments to international initiatives, such as the Kyoto Accord and the Convention on Biological Diversity, challenge our ability to demonstrate that forestry professionals, government, and industry are making decisions based on the best available information. The science and innovation community is working on policy, operational, and production research to address some of the issues raised by the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the establishment of criteria and indicators of sustainability under the Montreal Process, and the recently ratified Kyoto Accord. The underlying theme here is that we need to understand better how our policies, resource use, and management approaches affect the integrity of the natural environment, as well as our social and economic systems. An upcoming special issue of *JEM* will focus on strategies for integrating science at the policy, management, and operational levels. I invite you to contact *JEM*’s Managing Editor for more information on the Call for Papers.

JEM, along with other FORREX partners, products and services, links our clients to the best available science-based information. In helping our clients to interpret and use this information, we’re achieving our goal of supporting sustainability through innovative solutions.