



January 19th, 2018

The Honorable George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
By email: CitizenEngagement@gov.bc.ca
RE: Submission to Professional Reliance Review

Dear Minister Heyman:

My name is Fraser MacDonald, together with my family I own and operate Circle M Outfitters in Northern BC. I have grown up in the mountains of British Columbia and have done everything I can to make my passion for the backcountry of BC my livelihood. I have worked on all sides of the fence in the Professional Reliance system as a Forest Tech, Wildlife Biologist and more recently as an Outfitter and Trapper within the Mackenzie Timber Supply Area (TSA). Prior to being an Outfitter I used to be more patient and articulate, now after a decade of being misled, ignored and lied to by resource professionals, both within government and private industry, I do not see the point in beating around the bush. It's time for stakeholders to tell it like it is. While professional reliance is found in most natural resource sectors in BC, I will focus on forestry as it has by far the largest disturbance footprint in the province and therefore the largest impact to most stakeholders.

Outfitters and trappers rely on wilderness and wildlife, values which the citizens of BC also hold in high regard. The problem is that the majority of the citizens in BC do not make it outside the urban areas to see what is actually happening on the ground in this province. The public has been misled to believe that actions such as shutting down a well managed sustainable hunt will save wildlife populations, while in truth it is the irresponsible natural resource extraction practices that have gone on under professional reliance that have been detrimental to wildlife populations in the province. There is also a misconception that there are still lots of wild undisturbed areas in BC. That is not the case and as part of this review I challenge the BC Government to publish a map of the provincial Timber Harvesting Land Base (THLB) and overlay it with existing disturbance. I am sure the general public does not know how seriously close we are to having depleted what once was considered endless forest.

The argument of course is that forestry is the life blood of the BC economy and it is a renewable resource. I don't argue that and am not against a healthy forest industry, at least one that has the oversight of a higher level planning process that considers all values on the land base. However, high density, monoculture plantations are a far cry from a natural forest and the truth is with higher level planning those employed in the forest industry would have a much higher degree of long term job security. The freedom to extract timber on the landbase under professional reliance without higher level planning, only benefits the licensees in the short term, and it is the citizens of BC that will pay for it in the long term.

If the goal of professional reliance was to turn BC into one big tree farm at the expense of all other values then it can be considered a raging success. However, the professional reliance model has been sold to the public as a responsible method of land management that takes all values into account and manages public resources to the highest possible standards. In this respect the public has once again been misled and professional reliance has been a complete and total failure.

1. Please tell us what you think is working well with the current professional reliance model in B.C., and what is not.

I know I should be including a list of positive things about professional reliance, but from a stakeholder's perspective I cannot think of one good thing that has come of it. Here are a few examples of my personal (negative) experiences with professional reliance.

Individual RPF level:

- Perhaps the biggest problem is that even good ethical foresters (which I believe the majority of RPFs still are) cannot do good work within the current system. Under volume based tenures there are so many licensees operating on top of each other that there is no incentive to do good forestry and only the absolute bare minimum requirements are met.
 - For example, a forester may do a great job of responsibly developing a drainage only to have the next licensee come in and take what is left.
 - Stakeholders can come to agreements with one licensee only to have it rendered useless by the actions of another licensee that doesn't want to meaningfully participate with stakeholders.
- There is a new generation of RPFs that only know professional reliance and pine salvage. The result is that many of them treat all forestry like a pine salvage operation.

The current high level of public's mistrust in professional reliance is well founded:

- On areas of high stakeholder concern when I ask the RPF as a stakeholder to review the site plan prior to cutting permit application it never happens even when they promise they will. It's always after the permit has been issued.
 - This is very important as the site plan is the only legally binding document other than the FSP that a licensee must follow.
- Canfor promised they would not harvest timber around one of our cabins that has been there since the early 1900s. They then laid out a cutblock around this cabin leaving only a 25 meter buffer around it.
- Licensees and government both lied about doing helicopter flights during hunting season which displaced wildlife and disrupted our hunts and therefore directly impacted our livelihood.

- When issues arise, government staff and licenses work together for the interests of the licensees. As it currently stands stakeholders have no voice in government and are excluded from meetings such as TSA steering committees.
 - The result is that stakeholders have no meaningful part in the making of decisions that greatly affect their livelihood and the values they care about on the land base.

Site/Block Level:

- It is up to the stakeholder to pursue the licensee and it is a very time consuming process depending on how many licensees the stakeholder has to communicate with. Many stakeholders do not have the time or capacity to effectively engage with licensees. Nor should they, it should be the job of the licensee to be open and transparent with stakeholders right from day 1 of any forest development plans.
 - Unfortunately, the result is that it is always a reactive process rather than a proactive joint planning process.
- Taking advantage of AAC partitions under pine salvage. For example if there is a 70% pine requirement it is not uncommon for licensees to lay a pine block out adjacent to a spruce stand and include the spruce stand in the block for the 30% spruce component. Much of the pine is then left in the block in giant waste piles. I do not believe this was the intention of the Chief Forester's AAC determination.
- Spruce Beetle. When visiting a supposed spruce beetle block with a licensee they failed to actually provide proof of any spruce beetle.
 - There are no 3rd party checks of spruce beetle and it is being treated just like pine salvage.
- My clients come from around the world and one of the things that everyone comments on is the enormous waste piles of merchantable timber that are left behind after harvest only to be burnt by licensees.
- Several times I have showed up at trailheads only to find a feller buncher at work on top of ancient traditional trails without even being notified of the proposed cutblock's existence.
- It is a regular occurrence to not be notified of logging activities and have traps destroyed.
 - I've even seen it happen when layout crews notice the traps, flag them and then the block is still harvested without any communication with the trapper.
 - This not only destroys the trap itself but decades of future revenue for that trapper.
- Unless pressed extremely hard and consistently licensees will only consult with stakeholders after all timber development in an area is done and cutting permits are issued. Obviously, this is not consultation, but notification as the work is already done and permitted.

- Often forest development work is being done by untrained junior staff that are following timber type lines on a map. An RPF then signs off on the site plan back in the office without ever stepping foot in the block.
- At one of our camps licensees move 100+ truck loads of wood by it each day for a good part of the year, yet they will not divert road despite it being only 25 yards away from our lodge where my family lives.
 - This remains unchanged despite there having been several logging truck accidents with 1km of our house.
- District managers do not even see site plans when signing off on the permit!
 - “The existence or content of a site plan is not a consideration during the issuance of a cutting permit or road tenure (BC Cutting Permit and Road Tenure Administration Manual).” Therefore, it is just assumed that the professional did an adequate job.
 - Under the Forest Act as long as the licensee met the bare minimum requirements, the District Manager has to sign off on the cutting permit
 - There have only been a handful of instances since the inception of professional reliance that a District Manager has actually not issued a cutting permit because it goes against public interests.

Landscape Level:

- The combination of professional reliance and volume based tenures has led to large scale deforestation, especially in the interior of BC.
 - Foresters are under extreme pressure to find volume and companies are operating on top of each other. The end result is that everything is harvested.
- Forest Stewardship Plans (FSP) are not the higher level planning tool that they are being made out to be, yet they are the only high level planning tool used by licensees and the only legally binding document other than a site plan. Public FSP reviews have proven to be lip service to stakeholders.
 - In regards to higher level planning the only spatial component that is ever displayed is the entire TSA for which the licensee wants to operate within, which becomes their Forest Development Unit (FDU). This gives the licensee freedom to operate anywhere at any time within the whole FDU.
 - Only bare minimum legal requirements for any other values are documented in FSPs. For instance, when asked what licensees are going to do to manage for grizzly bear habitat the response is “we are not legally required to manage for grizzly bears.”
 - As a stakeholder you do not even get to see how the licensee responds to your comments. Comments are only for the District Manger to consider when making his decision on FSP approval.

- The wording in FSPs is not friendly or in many cases even comprehensible to the general public, yet the public is supposed to put their faith in a document that no one can understand?
- When communicating with stakeholders, RPFs will generally just show the blocks that are to be immediately developed. Without showing the existing development and future proposed development to stakeholders it does not tell the whole story.
 - Cumulative Effects. Often 1 or 2 blocks on its own look like no big problem, but if all the information is shown it often becomes clear that those 1 or 2 blocks might be the last piece of timber left in valley.
 - As more and more development occurs, the value of remaining intact areas to stakeholders increases exponentially.
- Like it or not licensees are managing wildlife, not just timber and I would argue that the majority of the public would agree that it is not good enough to manage BC wildlife habitat to the bare minimum standard.
 - The vast majority of species are not even managed for in forest development activities.
 - With Northern Caribou UWR it is allowable to harvest 50% of the UWR to ensure that there is always the proper successional stage of pine lichen habitat available for caribou.
 - What has happened is that all the area around the UWRs and 50% of the UWRs get harvested leaving a small island of useless habitat for threatened caribou populations.
 - In many areas road densities have exceeded the threshold for many important species such as grizzly bear.
- Both government and licensees do everything possible to keep stakeholders divided. When dealing with them it is always on a 1 on 1 basis.
 - As long as stakeholders are divided industry and government will work together to achieve the wishes of licensees.

2. What changes, if any, are needed to maintain or improve public trust in the professional reliance model?

More Government oversight is needed, but is certainly not the entire answer. Governments change and only think in 4 year cycles. What is needed is a system that will protect the public's interest even when governments change. One thing we don't need is another pilot project.

A logical first step would be to remove the wording "unduly reduce the timber supply" from the Forest Act. This single section of the act put timber values above all other values and has created a 2 tier system of resource management where all other values run a very distant second behind timber extraction.

The only way to truly gain back public trust is to meaningfully include stakeholders in the forest development process so that other values are truly considered in the planning process right from the beginning stages.

This could take on several formats such as:

- Changing the name of TSAs to something such as Resource Management Areas to reflect the fact that there are other values besides timber on the land base.
- Get rid of Timber Supply Reviews (TSR), rather have Resource Supply Reviews that consider all values on the landscape. The TSR would be just one component of an inventory that considered all values.
- Reinstate 5 year forest development plans.
 - These were effective in giving stakeholders and government enough time to consider the proposed forest development.
 - Right now cutting permits are issued often within weeks.
 - Right now cutblocks are only looked at on a block by block basis, no work goes into seeing how they fit into the existing disturbance on the landscape and possibly mitigate cumulative effects.
 - These plans provide insurance to the thousands of BC families that rely on the forest industry for their livelihoods that the licensee actually has a long term achievable plan of where they will get their fiber from.
- Have roundtables for each TSA that include stakeholders, first nations, and forest licensees.
- Increase District Manager's authority, but also make their objectives clear that they must manage their respective TSA for all values, not just timber.
- Give the Forest Practices Board the necessary authority to enforce its decisions and administer penalties.
- Independent 3rd party reviews.
 - These would have to differ from the independent forest certifications many licensees get. These have all proven to not work to protect public interests.
 - 3rd party reviews should include stakeholders, right now they are generally conducted by foresters.

All of these things, when integrated, are part of a higher level planning process that would give forest professionals the proper guidance necessary to preserve other values on the land base while still extracting timber.

Government oversight is needed and the lack of it is a big reason why we are in the predicament we are now. Professionals had no higher level direction so everything was managed at the site level leading to disastrous cumulative effects for many species and other values the public holds in high regard.

One of the biggest problems for stakeholders is that Government branches like Forestry, Fish and Wildlife, Ecosystems, etc. are all operating as individual organizations. It just isn't possible to achieve proper integrated land management when all organizations are operating on their own.

To compound this problem each resource extraction industry plays by its own set of rules (through separate acts) even though they can operate on the same landbase. Examples include:

- There is an entirely different process to build a mining exploration road vs. a forestry road.
- With oil and gas stakeholders are held in much higher regard than forestry and mining.
- Mining notice to work permits allow great freedom for that permit holder and they are not even required to contact stakeholders.
- Many government orders such as Ungulate Winter Ranges (UWR) are set only for one industry. Even though they are operating on the same land base one industry has to abide by a different set of rules than the other.

3. Do you have any other observations or recommendations you would like to make about this review?

Professional Reliance within the Fish and Wildlife Branch of BC Government:

The problems with professional reliance extend well beyond private industry. There are similar issues with professional reliance within government. In my own experience as a biologist and then as an outfitter and trapper (both industries that are governed by the Wildlife Act) I have encountered many instances when professional reliance has not worked. For instance, the Wildlife Act gives Regional Managers and Wildlife Biologists a great amount of discretionary power and most wildlife management decisions rest solely on the judgment of one individual's professional opinion.

Therefore, it is up entirely up to them to use this power responsibly and be accountable for their decisions, yet there is no system in place to hold them accountable for their decisions. Environmental Appeals are governed by the Wildlife Act which in turn gives managers the discretion to form their own judgments, even when those judgments goes against the science that professionals are supposed to follow.

To compound this problem, there are few if any clearly defined objectives for wildlife management in BC. Without clearly defined objectives it leaves the door open for personal bias and opinion in wildlife management decisions, which is unfortunately the case in many Regions of BC.

Suggestions:

- Stakeholder roundtable for each Region
- Independent third party reviews of Fish and Wildlife staff reports, surveys and Regional Managers decisions.
- Clearly defined wildlife management objectives for each region set by First Nations and stakeholders.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fraser MacDonald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Fraser" written in a smaller, more legible script than the last name "MacDonald", which is written in a larger, more stylized cursive.

Fraser MacDonald

Circle M Outfitters