British Columbia’s Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development is working with local First Nations and other interested parties to prepare for an update to the Fort St. John Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The LRMP, originally developed in 1997, is a set of strategic policies governing the management of Crown land and resources within the Peace Natural Resource District (which includes the Fort St. John Timber Supply Area seen in the map below). The LRMP identifies resource management zones and protected areas, and sets out objectives and strategies that govern how land and resources are managed.

This information sheet provides an introduction to the Fort St. John LRMP Update Project.

**What is the Fort St. John Land and Resource Management Plan?**

The Fort St. John LRMP is a sub-regional plan covering approximately 4.6 million hectares that was approved by the B.C. government in October 1997. The plan was produced though a four-year public process that involved members of the general public, a variety of interest groups and government agency representatives. The resulting LRMP provided broad social choices through land use zoning, and provided objectives and strategies for managing Crown land and resources (both surface and sub-surface).

**Why is the Fort St. John LRMP being updated?**

The LRMP Update Project follows from the B.C. government’s commitment to a modernized land use planning program. The LRMP update is a priority project under the umbrella of the provincial program. It is the mechanism used to set land use direction that, in turn, guides management decisions and activities.

» Since the completion of the Fort St. John LRMP of 1997, Northeast B.C. has experienced substantial growth in the natural resource sector, particularly in petroleum and natural gas development, with associated pressures on traditional land uses, communities and infrastructure. A growing economy and increasing demand by sectors such as forestry, mining, oil and gas, tourism and recreation are creating new pressures on the balance between social, economic and environmental objectives.

» There is increasing management complexity as a result of new factors affecting land use, such as concern for key species (moose, caribou, grizzly bear), water sustainability, clean energy, and climate change.

» Relations between the Province and First Nations have evolved over the past decade through strategic agreements that provide for government-to-government relationships, and the need to adjust land management practices to incorporate new land-related measures that respond to traditional ecological and cultural information.

» A number of independent regional initiatives have been undertaken to address priority issues, and an update to the LRMP will provide the platform for integration and implementation of results from these initiatives.

The timing of the LRMP update has also been influenced by an adjournment agreement between the Blueberry River First Nations and the Province of B.C. on pending litigation to allow for land use planning to address the effects of resource development in Blueberry River’s territory. This is also intended to provide the opportunity for Blueberry River and other interested Treaty 8 First Nations to work in partnership with the ministry in the design and delivery of an updated plan.
Who will be involved in updating the LRMP?

Updating the LRMP will require contributions from local communities, governments, industry, stakeholders and the general public to the development of future management direction.

A key feature will be enhanced government-to-government collaboration with First Nations including incorporating new land-related management approaches that reflect traditional ecological and cultural information.

What will the process look like?

The LRMP Update Project will be managed in two sequential phases.

PHASE 1 – SCOPING
A preliminary scoping phase is being undertaken between January and March 2019. During this phase, First Nations and interested parties from local governments, industry, stakeholders and the public are being invited to share their interests and concerns related to land use in the Fort St. John LRMP area, as well as their views about the topics and opportunities that an updated LRMP might address.

This information will be used to inform the scope of the update project, the form that public involvement might take and the technical components needed for planning.

Consulting firm Urban Systems has been retained to support the ministry in gathering community feedback through an online survey, interviews, and an open house.

The results of Phase 1 will be compiled by Urban Systems into a “What We Heard” report that will be publicly available in April 2019. The What We Heard report will be a thematic summary of input from local First Nations and interested parties, from local governments, industry, stakeholders and the public related to the LRMP Update Project.

PHASE 2 – TECHNICAL PLANNING
In spring 2019, the technical planning work to update the LRMP should begin. This work will integrate the advice received in the scoping phase with information from First Nations, technical experts and other sources. Involvement of interested parties from local governments, industry, stakeholders and the public will be key components. We anticipate that producing an updated land use plan will take up to two years, into spring 2021.

How to get involved

We are now in the scoping phase and all interested parties are invited to provide their interests and concerns related to land use in the Fort St. John LRMP area, as well as their views about the topics and opportunities that an updated LRMP might address, through one of the following methods. This information will be used to inform the scope of the LRMP update, the form that public involvement might take, and the technical components needed to support the planning process.

Visit the Engagement site: engage.gov.bc.ca/fortstjohn-land-resource-management-plan-review/
to:
» Complete a brief online survey
» Register to attend the public open house Feb. 20, 2019
» Sign-up for project updates
» Schedule an interview by contacting lrmpinfo@urbansystems.ca

Who do I contact for more information?

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