



Auditor General's Overview

Management of our native forests and logging in particular is an issue that generates considerable public interest. During the course of this audit I have received submissions from many people, including Members of Parliament, conservation groups, and people currently or previously involved in the timber industry. Not surprisingly there are diverse views on how the forests are being managed and how they should be managed. However a common concern of all people we spoke to was ensuring the long term sustainability of our native forests.

The key framework for ensuring sustainable management of our native forests is the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013. The plan allows harvesting of native forests within constraints that are designed to ensure the long term sustainability of our forests while meeting the needs of our timber industry. The Department of Environment and Conservation has a key role in developing the Forest Management Plan and subsequent harvest planning processes.

The Forest Products Commission is tasked with harvesting our native forests and contracting for the sale and supply of forest products. It does this in accordance with harvest plans developed and approved by the Department.

The current Forest Management Plan expires on December 31, 2013 and a new 10 year plan is currently being developed. The planning process attempts to balance often divergent social, environmental and economic values and interests of the community. Because of these competing interests and values it is important that those tasked with managing our forests do so in accordance with the agreed Forest Management Plan in a transparent and accountable manner. This includes ensuring that required environmental standards are met.

Our audit found that the planning processes align with key sustainability assumptions of the Forest Management Plan. However there is a general lack of transparency and accountability when these plans are implemented in practice through harvesting and the subsequent sale and supply of timber. During the course of the audit we saw instances of waste and breaches of environmental standards in the forests that are not adequately followed up. We also found a large proportion of the Commission's sales lack transparency.

We acknowledge that the Commission faces a complex task in managing the sale and supply of timber from our native forests. However, it has more to do to earn public and industry confidence that its processes are achieving the outcomes our community expects.

Page last updated: June 26, 2013

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