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**TO:** Regional District of Nanaimo Board      **MEETING:** July 23, 2019

**FROM:** Julie Pisani      **FILE:** 5280-22  
Drinking Water and Watershed  
Protection Program Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** Private Managed Forest Land Program Review

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Regional District of Nanaimo Board endorse the submission (Attachment 1) to the Private Managed Forest Land Program review.

### **SUMMARY**

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is directly affected by practices on private managed forest land, which comprises approximately 63% of the land in our region. This land is regulated by the Province under the Private Managed Forests Land (PMFL) Act. The Province is currently conducting a review of the PMFL program and the RDN has the opportunity to provide a formal written submission with comments on how the program could better protect public environmental values. A submission to the Minister of Forests Land Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development has been prepared for Board endorsement.

### **BACKGROUND**

Sixty three percent (63%) of land in the RDN including the member municipalities is Private Managed Forest Land. The upper watershed areas of our communities, which include drinking water source areas, are situated within the land base of private forestry. The Province of BC regulates Private Managed Forest Land under the Private Managed Forest Land Act. Currently, the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development is conducting a review of the Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL) Program, seeking to engage those most affected by forestry activities on private forest land to provide comments and share concerns. This Provincial review is one of several public engagements announced as part of the Coast Forest Sector Revitalization Initiative. The review of the PMFL program is limited to examining how well the program is meeting its goals to:

- Encourage private landowners to manage their lands for long-term forest production, and;
- Encourage sustainable forest management practices, including the protection of key public environmental values listed as:
  - Soil conservation, critical wildlife habitat, fish habitat, water quality and reforestation.

RDN Director Maureen Young and RDN staff Randy Alexander and Julie Pisani attended an information session hosted by Provincial representatives on Friday June 28, 2019 in Nanaimo to learn more about the review process in preparation for providing informed input to the Ministry. Additionally, RDN staff met with counterparts from our neighbouring Regional Districts: Cowichan Valley and Comox Valley to discuss their concerns and feedback for the PMFL program review; to explore opportunities for an aligned response based on commonly identified issues and shared suggestions.

Overall, the RDN experience in working with Private Managed Forest Landowners TimberWest and Island Timberlands (now both Mosaic Forest Management) through the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection (DWWP) program in recent years has been positive. They have demonstrated a willingness to partner and support educational and monitoring initiatives, such as school watershed field trips and surface water quality sampling as part of the RDN Community Watershed Monitoring network, where the private forestry companies have provided land access, safety equipment and some sponsorship funds. Representatives from Mosaic Forest Management also sit on the RDN DWWP Technical Advisory Committee which is a forum for information sharing and providing guidance on the collaborative implementation of DWWP program initiatives.

This Provincial review is an important opportunity to build on positive working relationships that the RDN has established with Private Managed Forest companies, in order to further enhance the transparency and accountability surrounding forestry practices on private lands within our communities. Improvements to the PMFL program based on community feedback would go a long way to further the forestry companies' social license and public trust needed to manage this resource responsibly for the long term. Increasing pressures to the forest land base, including climate change, warrant innovative solutions that reflect current and future conditions, so that sustainable management practices for protection of critical social and environmental values are achieved.

While it is understood that as Private Managed Forest Landowners are, through the Private Managed Forest Land Act and regulations, encouraged to manage for the five key public environmental values of soil conservation, critical wildlife habitat, fish habitat, water quality and reforestation, it is not clear how these objectives are managed for and what enforceability or accountability mechanisms exist. Further, the key objective of preserving hydrological function and water quantity appears to be missing and enhancements to information sharing and collaborative management agreements are recommended.

The key issues and solutions that have been identified in practice and in discussion include:

- **Accountability:** The PMFL program needs to have complete, comprehensive and enforceable management objectives to demonstrate that their practices are meeting the public's expectations.
- **Transparency:** Open and regular communication between PMFL landowners and local governments and communities including sharing information, data and reports needs to be enhanced.
- **Climate change and forest function:** PMFL management should reflect current and future climate reality and recognize healthy forests' role as a buffer for climate change impacts such as drought, fire, floods.
- **Compliance:** Formalized collaborative management agreements with local governments and water purveyors that include regular third-party environmental audits, hydrological assessments and mechanisms for adaptive management would build trust and enhance durability of positive working relationships.

- Interface between community & private forests: Resource lands play an important role in our region and should be maintained for resource purposes, consistent with community planning processes. Buffers for burning, logging and chemical use next to residential areas should preserve public perception, safety and minimize environmental risk. Access for recreation and infrastructure maintenance should be preserved.
- Reconciliation: Opportunities for reconciliation with and economic benefit for First Nations where their traditional territory overlaps with private forestry land.

The attached submission (Attachment 1) to the Minister provides greater details on these key issues and suggested solutions.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That the RDN Board endorse the submission (Attachment 1) to the Private Managed Forest Land Program review.
2. That the RDN Board provide amendments to the written submission or alternative direction to staff.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental Stewardship - Protect and enhance the natural environment, including land, water, and air quality for future generations.

Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL) encompasses a large portion of the lands within the RDN. By advocating that these lands are managed in a way that protects watershed values is aligned with the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 which includes an emphasis on: Environmental Stewardship, People and Partnerships, Growth Management and Climate Change. Providing comments during the Provincial review period for the Private Managed Forest Land program is critical to advancing the RDN's strategic priorities, primarily the key strategic goal listed above.



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July 8, 2019

Reviewed by:

- S. De Pol, Director, Water and Wastewater Services
- R. Alexander, General Manager, Regional and Community Utilities
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

- Letter: Comments on the Private Managed Forest Land Program Review