

## Summary of the 2021 Independent Forest Audit Findings

Four (4) Independent Forest Audits (IFAs) were completed in 2021 using the 2021 Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol (IFAPP).

The four (4) 2021 audits are:

- Algoma Forest – managed by Clergue Forest Management Inc. under Sustainable Forest Licence # 542257.
- French-Severn Forest – managed by Westwind Forest Stewardship Inc. (a not-for-profit community-based forest management company) under Sustainable Forest Licence #542411.
- Lakehead Forest – managed by Greenmantle Forest Inc. under Sustainable Forest License # 542460
- Temagami Management Unit – which is a Crown unit managed by the North Bay District of the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry.

Changes to the 2021 IFAPP over the 2020 IFAPP included:

- The IFAPP has been updated to reflect Ontario Regulation 319/20 and related policy changes;
- Elimination of the trend analysis report; reliance on additional annual report requirements to assess the achievement of management objectives and forest sustainability;
- Elimination of the requirement to table final audit report before the legislature; continue to post on a publicly accessible website;
- Replacement of the requirement for an action plan status report with a requirement to report on progress towards the completion of actions in management unit annual reports;
- Provisions of the 2020 FMPM, Forest Information Manual (FIM), and Forest Operations and Silviculture Manual (FOSM);
- Clarifications around audit scope, risk assessment, sampling approach, and health and safety measures;
- Consideration of forest certification status and the results of certification assessments and/or annual audits in the auditor risk assessment; and
- Clarification around Principle 1 and 5 audit criteria in relation to forest certification and applicability to NDMNRF.

On all four (4) of the audits, **the auditors found that the management was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations, and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit**, and the Forests were being managed in compliance with the terms and conditions of their Sustainable Forest Licences.

As shown in Table 1 below, the audits identified a number of findings in all four (4) audits. All four (4) reports have been accepted by the Ministry. Detailed action plans to address the

findings presented in the audit reports are being prepared and will be posted on the Ontario government website alongside the audit reports.

Table 1. Summary of the 2021 Audit Findings and Best Practices for all four audits with respect to the eight IFA Principles

<b>IFA Principles</b>	<b># Findings</b>	<b>Percentage %*</b>	<b>Best Practice</b>
1 Commitment	1	3	1
2 Public consultation and Aboriginal involvement	0	0	0
3 Forest Management Planning	10	35	1
4 Plan assessment and implementation	10	35	1
5 System support	0	0	0
6 Monitoring	6	21	0
7 Achievement of management objectives and forest sustainability	1	3	0
8 Contractual Obligations	1	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3</b>

\*rounded to the nearest whole number.

The four (4) audits were awarded at a total cost of \$228,134.88 (including HST), or on average \$57,033.72 (as compared to 2020 which averaged out to \$71,660.83 (including HST), on three (3) audits.

### **Common Findings**

While most of the findings from the 2021 audits were unique to the Forest being audited, there were a few findings that were common to two or more reports. These common findings have been grouped below by IFA principles:

### **Best Practices**

Three audits (Algoma, French-Severn and Temagami Forests) identified unique forest management practices addressing; Species at Risk (West Virginia White Butterfly), an invasive species (Beech Bark Disease) and collaboration between forest managers, the Local Citizens Committee and affected Indigenous communities. While the Best Practices differ by topic, they do show that the management of these forests is maturing and that all parties are working collaboratively together for the sustainability of the forest.

### **Principle 3 - Forest Management Planning**

Two audits (Temagami Management Unit and Lakehead Forest) identified issues dealing with reliable access and road maintenance.

### **Principle 4 - Plan Assessment and Implementation**

Three out of four audits (Algoma, French-Severn, and the Lakehead Forests), identified that the operational standards for forest aggregate pits identified in their forest management plans were not consistently met.

### **Principle 6 - Monitoring**

Two audits (Algoma and Lakehead Forests) identified that the NDMNRF did not fulfil its Silviculture Effectiveness Monitoring (SEM) obligations

### **Additional FFTC Comments**

The FFTC noted that for the Temagami Management Unit, that seven findings (7) dealing with P3 - Forest Management Planning, were identified by the Audit Team with the most recent Forest Management Planning experience. The Committee commended the Team's efforts on their detailed review of how the Plan was prepared.

### **Management Unit Specific Findings**

#### ***Algoma Forest***

Concluding Statement:

The audit team concludes that the management of the Algoma Forest was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the Forest was managed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Sustainable Forest Licence # 542257 held by Clergue Forest Management Inc. The forest is being managed consistently with the principles of sustainable forest management, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol.

Findings:

- 1) The operational standards for forestry aggregate pits identified in the Forest Management Plan Manual and the 2020-2030 Forest Management Plan were not consistently met.
- 2) The Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry, Sault Ste Marie District Office did not process proposals to decommission roads for transfer to the Crown in a timely manner.
- 3) Conditions on operations within the Voyageur Trail Association Area of Concern were not fully adhered to despite training efforts by the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resource and Forestry District Office and Clergue Forest Management Inc. to address the issue with the implicated Forest Resource Licensee.
- 4) Annual Reports did not fully meet the requirements of the 2017 Forest Management Planning Manual.

- 5) The Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry Sault Ste Marie District Office did not fully meet the Silviculture Effectiveness Monitoring Program direction.
- 6) The Forest Renewal Trust minimum balance was not maintained during the audit period.
- 7) Tree marking audits are not being completed by the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry District Office, despite the significance of tree marking on forest sustainability, forest health, forest renewal and the considerable expenditure of public funds on the activity.

#### Best Practice

The initiative provided by the Sault Ste. Marie District to better understand the specific habitat requirements of the West Virginia White Butterfly and apply that knowledge in Area of Concern prescription is commendable.

#### ***French-Severn Forest***

##### Concluding Statement:

The audit team concludes that management of the French-Severn Forest was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations, and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the Forest was managed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Sustainable Forest Licence (# 542411) held by Westwind Forest Stewardship Inc. The forest is being managed consistently with the principles of sustainable forest management, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol.

##### Findings:

- 1) Tree planting in pine shelterwood cuts completed during the 2020 season was found to have reduced levels of success.
- 2) The mandatory operational requirements for Forest Aggregate Pits were not fully implemented on all the sites viewed during the field audit.
- 3) The 2018-19 year-10 annual report was found to have numerous data accuracy issues.

#### Best Practice

The current method and implementation of treatment for Beech bark Disease is in-line with recent research and practices.

#### ***Lakehead Forest***

##### Concluding Statement:

The audit team concludes that the management of the Lakehead Forest was generally in

compliance with the legislation, regulations and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the Forest was managed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Sustainable Forest Licence # 542460 held by Greenmantle Forest Inc. The forest is being managed consistently with the principles of sustainable forest management, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol.

#### Findings:

- 1) The production process for the development of the Enhanced Forest Resource Inventory delayed the production of the forest management plan and resulted in additional time and expense to Greenmantle Forest Inc. and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry.
- 2) In the absence of reliable access, forestry and land use management objectives related to disturbance and renewal will not be fully achieved on the Black Bay Peninsula.
- 3) Forest Management Plan Administrative Amendments were not consistently approved by Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry District Office in accordance with the timeline in the Forest Management Planning Manual.
- 4) The Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry District and Regional Office did not fully implement a Silviculture Effectiveness Monitoring program.
- 5) The operational standards for forestry aggregate pits identified in the forest management plans were not consistently met.

#### *Temagami Forest*

#### Concluding Statement:

The audit team concludes that the management of the Temagami Management Unit was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations, and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry met its obligations. The forest is being managed consistently with the principle of sustainable forest management, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol.

#### Findings:

- 1) Some road signs on the forest, designed to protect public safety, are not compliant with the Occupational Health and Safety Act Section 24(1) and the Public Lands Act Section 59(4).
- 2) The 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan is missing the required elements and important discussions required to fully meet the 2017 Forest Management Planning Manual and the management strategy for the Plan.
- 3) Amendment information posted to the public Natural Resource Information Portal was found to be incomplete, missing amendment decision/approvals, and, in most instances, the same information repeated under different tabs.

- 4) The Social and Economic description in the forest management plan provided little value to the development of the management strategy for the Temagami Management Unit.
- 5) No alternative road corridors were presented for the Clement Road and Banting Chamber Road as required in the 2017 Forest Management Planning Manual.
- 6) The 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan does not adequately describe the degree to which the quality or quantity of habitat for species at risk could be affected by forest management operations, nor the potential implications of Species At Risk on forest management.
- 7) The 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan, is missing a forecast of expenditures for Renewal Support and associated discussion in the text to support the renewal program proposed in the FMP as required in the Forest Management Planning Manual.
- 8) The 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan text does not include a discussion or explanation for objectives that do not have targets or timing of assessment making it difficult to meaningfully assess objective achievement for those objectives and/or indicators.
- 9) Not all clearcut harvest blocks met the residual retention requirements, for species representation or size, as required in the Forest Management Guide for Conserving Biodiversity at the Stand and Site Scales.
- 10) Existing tree improvement assets were not included in the 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan.
- 11) There are discrepancies between the kilometers reported as constructed in the 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 Annual Reports and what was invoiced to the Provincial Roads Funding Program.
- 12) Poor grading practices are contributing to sediment flow into streams at water crossings.
- 13) The 2019-2020 annual report does not include a discussion on progress on Management Objective 8 (invasive species monitoring) as per the 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan.
- 14) The objective to reduce herbicide use in the 2019-2029 forest management plan does not propose a target and, as such, cannot address concerns raised by the public and affected Indigenous communities.

#### Best Practice

North Bay District Ministry of Northern Development Mines Natural Resources and Forestry staff, First Resources Management Group service provider staff, Temagami Local Citizens Committee, representatives of affected Indigenous communities, and forest industry partners have shown a high level of cooperation and commitment to quality forest management practices and, respectful regard for the other users on the Temagami Management Unit.