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July 8, 2021

By Email: katie@wildernesscommittee.org

Re: Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC) Request for Review of Issues Resolution Decision

Dear Ms. Krellove,

I would like to thank you and the other members of the CFSC for taking the time to participate in the Issue Resolution meeting of June 29th, 2021, regarding your request for Regional Director Issue Resolution for the 2021-2031 Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Bancroft-Minden Forest.

The purpose of this Regional Director Issue Resolution process is to review the District Manager's decision as set out in her issue resolution decision letter of June 4th, 2021 (the "District Manager's Decision").

In making my decision, I have carefully reviewed and considered the following:

- The requirements of the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994* (CFSA)¹ the Forest Management Planning Manual (FMPM)², and applicable Ministry approved forest management guides;³
- The documentation in the Bancroft-Minden draft FMP;
- The information presented in your submission of June 18th, 2021 discussed at the June 29th, 2021 meeting;
- Views and comments provided from the Plan Author, Local Citizens Committee (LCC), Indigenous representatives and other participants in the July 29th meeting, as well as additional views and comments which were provided to the Ministry and all the participants following the meeting;
- the District Manager's Decision; and

¹ Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/94c25>

² Forest Management Planning Manual: <https://files.ontario.ca/forest-management-planning-manual.pdf>

³ Approved forest management guides: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/forest-management-guides>

- Other relevant high-level policies and strategies, such as the Old Growth Policy for Ontario's Crown Forests⁴ and Crown land use policies included in the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas⁵

After careful review of the information listed above, I concur with the District Manager's Decision (supported by statements from the LCC's representative on the Planning Team, and the Hiawatha First Nation representative at the Issue Resolution meeting), that this FMP was developed in accordance with the current legislation and policies for forest management planning in Ontario, including requirements for public consultation and related to old growth Crown forest. Also, in reviewing the District Manager's Decision, I was encouraged to see that several issues raised in your May 6th, 2021 submission resulted in modifications to the draft FMP.

You indicated, that the CFSC does not feel that the District Manager's Decision adequately addressed the issues and concerns for the conservation of old growth and related non-timber values of the Catchacoma Forest, and identified five issues that overlapped in some respects, while proposing three resolutions. My decision is organized in response to your three proposed resolutions.

The Ministry is committed to having old growth conditions and values continue in Ontario's Crown forest in order to conserve biodiversity at levels that maintain or restore ecological processes, while allowing for sustainable development now and in the future. As a result, I direct the Planning Team and my staff to implement the direction specified below to enhance old growth considerations in the FMP. This direction is also intended to contribute to constructive and cooperative dialogue and to assist the District and the Sustainable Forest Licensee in the implementation of this FMP.

1. CFSC's proposed moratorium on all logging in the Catchacoma Forest (blocks 2749, 3710 and 1711*) for a minimum of 5 years but ideally 10 years

Decision

- i. The District Manager's Decision provided for a 1-year delay on harvesting of Blocks 2749 and 3710 in order to allow additional research and values collection work. The District Manager's Decision also stated that Block 2749 will be available for harvest and Block 3710 will remain a contingency block.

I generally agree with the rationale behind this approach, but I am directing that the FMP be revised to change the harvest category for Block 2749 from regular harvest block to contingency block.

In accordance with the FMPM, an administrative amendment to the FMP will be required before forest operations may proceed in these contingency harvest blocks.

⁴ Old Growth Policy for Ontario's Crown Forests: <https://docs.ontario.ca/documents/2830/policy-oldgrowth-eng-aoda.pdf>

⁵ Crown Land Use Policy Atlas:

<http://www.gisapplication.lrc.gov.on.ca/CLUPA/Index.html?site=CLUPA&viewer=CLUPA&locale=en-US>

Before such an amendment request is submitted, the conditions precedent as identified under # 2 below must be satisfied.

- ii. Other aspects of the District Manager's Decision related to Block 2749: I agree with the District Manager's Decision that any harvesting of Block 2749 would be under the selection system where appropriate, and not the irregular shelterwood system as previously shown on the operations maps.

*Block 1711 is not included in the draft FMP, and therefore my Decision does not address it.

Rationale:

The Crown land use policies included in the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas applicable to the area of the blocks 2749 and 3710 do not impose restrictions on commercial timber harvest in those areas, and do not support a long-term moratorium on harvest in those areas. However, in consideration of the information provided to the Ministry by CFSC⁶, and recognizing that additional research and work related to the identification of old growth values could be beneficial for addressing concerns related to these values, a delay of potential harvest in these block is appropriate. This will allow additional time for the Ministry to review information included in the reports provided by CFSC and produced by Ancient Forest Exploration & Research (AFER), consider the issue of old-growth identification and assessment in the Bancroft-Minden Forest (as described further under #2 below), and conduct field verification.

2. CFSC's proposal for a clear mechanism/process for any identified non-timber values to be incorporated into the MNR database

Decision

Directions: In order to support the consideration of non-timber values during FMP implementation I direct:

- i. The Ministry District office and the Bancroft-Minden Forest Company (BMFC)⁷ shall continue to use the protocols related to non-timber values described in the FMPM, FIM, technical specifications, as supplemented by the Regional Values Collection Strategy, during the 2021-2031 FMP implementation;
- ii. The Ministry will develop technical guidance for old growth verification and delineation based on a through literature review and considering AFER reports and data, input from sustainable forest licensees and other stakeholders;
- iii. The Plan Author shall develop and incorporate in the FMP silvicultural ground rules (SGR) that provide specific prescriptions in stands that are managed in the selection system for old growth values (i.e., tolerant hardwood and eastern hemlock). The new SGRs shall be included in FMP-4: Silviculture Ground Rules for the final FMP submission;

⁶ This information was described largely under *Issues 1: AFER Values Information Not Recognized*, and *2: Definition of Old Growth Disputed*, in CFSC's letter dated June 18, 2021.

⁷ BMFC is the holder of the sustainable forest licence issued for the Bancroft-Minden Forest under ss. 27(1) of the CFSA.

- iv. The Planning Team shall identify hemlock stands older than 130 years from the Operational Planning Inventory and create a map that portrays these areas. This map will be included in the final FMP to be considered for the old growth selection system SGR.

The directions set out above are conditions that must be satisfied prior to an amendment being requested to the FMP to allow forest operations to proceed in the contingency Blocks 2749 and 3710. Please see the attached Table: Rationale and Analysis.

Rationale:

These directions are intended to assist with addressing concerns related to non-timber old growth values in consideration of the information provided to the Ministry by CFSC⁸, and recognize that additional research and work in these areas could be beneficial.

3. CFSC request for a commitment from the Ministry to work with and share research data and resources with the CFSC

Decision

- i. I direct the Plan Author to include a summary of the components of the FMP that support climate change mitigation and adaptation into the Bancroft-Minden FMP Supplementary Documentation. This direction must be satisfied prior to an amendment being requested to the FMP to allow forest operations to proceed in the contingency blocks 2749 and 3710. Please see the attached Table: Rationale and Analysis.
- ii. I direct staff of the Ministry's Southern Region office (Regional Forest Analyst, Regional Forest Management Specialist) to work with the Ministry's Science & Research Branch in the provincial assessment of forest carbon stocks. This will enhance our overall knowledge and understanding of the effects of management on forest carbon stocks and inform the development of future forest management plans in the southern region.

Rationale:

Under Issue 3 in its request for a review of the District Manager's Decision, CFSC raised a concern that that Decision did not address the importance of leaving old-growth trees and forests for climate change mitigation in terms of carbon storage and sequestration. The CFSC submitted that studies should be undertaken to assess the carbon stored in the old growth trees of the Catchacoma Forest and that these should inform forest management practices related to that forest.

The Ministry recognizes climate change as a challenge requiring action and continues to improve the understanding of climate change and its effect on Ontario's Crown forests.

Including a summary of the FMP components related to climate change in a single document that will be part of the FMP Supplementary Documentation is intended to provide clear and

⁸ This information was described largely under *Issues 1: AFER Values Information Not Recognized*, and *2: Definition of Old Growth Disputed*, in CFSC's letter dated June 18, 2021.

transparent information related to how the Planning Team considered climate change in the development of the FMP.

Staff of the Ministry's Southern Region office will continue to work with other Ministry divisions and other agencies on research and enhanced reporting. Future FMPs will be adapted to reflect this improved understanding over time to ensure the long-term health of Ontario's Crown forests.

For further information and analysis that supports my decisions and directions and provides additional information about the concerns identified in your letter of June 18th, 2021 please refer to the addendum Table 1: Rationale and Analysis.

This decision marks the end of the Issue Resolution process provided for under the FMPM.

Once the Plan Author makes the revisions to the draft FMP as specified in my decision above, the FMP will be submitted to the Ministry to be considered for final approval as described in Part A, Section 1.5 of the FMPM.

Thank you again for submitting your concerns.

Sincerely,



Sharon Rew,
Director - Southern Region
Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry

c: Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC)

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Table 1: Rationale and Analysis for Regional Director Stage Issue Resolution Decision submitted by the Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC): 2021-2031 Bancroft-Minden Forest Management Plan

This table was developed to complement the RD Decision by providing the analysis and rationale.

Issue	
Part A	
<p>1. AFER Values Information Not Recognized</p>	<p>Age discrepancies: As indicated in the District Manager’s Decision Appendix 1, the Planning Team used the Enhanced Forest Resource Inventory (eFRI) for the development of the Bancroft-Minden 2021-2031 forest Management Plan (FMP). This program gathers a range of ecological information, tree species composition, range, age and land use conditions. The new eFRI uses advanced technology and higher quality imagery, which increases the precision of the data.</p> <p>The CFSC disputes the precision of the stand age in the FRI, based on data from AFERS’s information and data from previous FRIs. The difference could be explained using distinct protocols for collecting this information. Please see below a description of the procedure for stand age from the 2007 Cruising Manual and the 2008 FRI Forest Information Technical Specifications (2nd paragraph), used for the Bancroft-Minden eFRI production.</p> <p><i>Stand Age</i> <i>Stand age represents the age of the main canopy. It is determined by recording the age of three typical dominant or co-dominant sample trees of the leading species and averaging them. The age of the second species in complex and single tier stands or the lead species in the second layer in two tiered stands is also measured but only one representative tree is used. Selected trees should be healthy, disease free, straight and with good form. The sample trees should have a piece of flagging tape completely around the tree at or above dbh and the age should be cored at dbh. Total age is recorded as the sum of the cored age plus the age correction factor for this species. A table of age correction factors by species will be supplied by OMNR prior to the commencement of cruising.</i></p> <p><i>Age (OAGE, UAGE)</i> <i>The age of a stand or layer is defined as the average age of the leading species of the dominant and co-dominant trees of the stand or layer across the delineated polygon. It is important to note that if a stand has been determined to be multi-tiered then an age for each layer in the attribute file is a mandatory requirement.</i></p> <p>As stated above the age of the polygon is based on the lead species in the field by the actual number of tallied trees found in 10 variable radius prism sweeps along a 200 metre transect. The transect is to be in a representative portion of an interpreter defined polygon. Photo interpretation then uses these field data sources to inform the assessment of other polygons. This is based on the</p>

appearance of the forest by trained interpreters, each of which must pass a field test, complete at least 1% of the calibration plots on a forest management unit and pass an interpretation course proctored by the Ministry. The field and interpreter course are 1 week in length each. All submitted work to the Ministry is audited where plots and polygons are randomly selected and assessed.

Concerns about the FRI being the source for old growth delineation:

The District Managers Decision to recognize 19 ha of Hemlock as old growth and to treat it as “known value” was based on:

- FIM, part B, Section 3.1.5
- Associated technical specifications,
- Landscape Guide
- Old Growth Forest Definitions for Ontario.
- The FRI is used for forest level decision. Before, harvest takes place in a stand, there are various field verifications that take place.
- Confirmation through site visit that no recent harvest occurred in the area.

Gathering and verification of the information about areas allocated for harvest is a continuous process that starts with the development of the FMP and continues with its implementation, and includes the following information and activities:

- Information such as species composition, tree diameters, wildlife habitat and tree quality are collected for the development of the silvicultural prescription (FOP) by a registered professional forester
- Based on the FOP, a certified tree marker will perform tree marking, which is another opportunity to identify values
- In addition, tree marking audits are carried out by both SFL and MNR staff
- This is complemented by the Ministry’s field-based values collection for values.

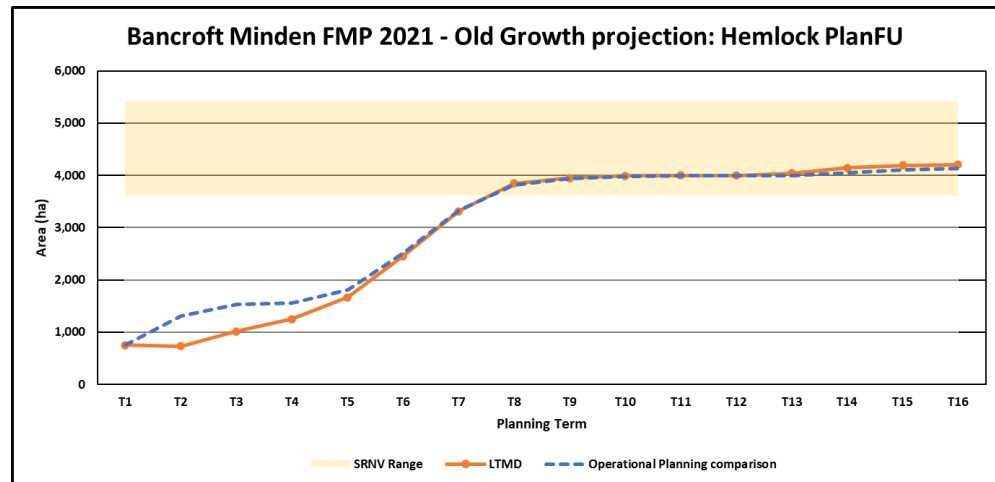
All these steps are an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the eFRI and to collect information on values. Consequently, under #2 in my decision above I am directing the District and BMFC to continue with the current protocols regarding values collection as described in the FMPM, FIM, technical specifications supplemented by Regional Values Collection Strategy during the 2021-2031 FMP implementation.

Please note that known values that can be geographically delineated and portrayed on the Values Maps are protected in the FMP through Operational Prescriptions and Conditions for Areas of Concern. The prescription could mean that the area is identified as a reserve (i.e., prohibition of operations), require modified operations (i.e., specific conditions or restrictions on operations), or allow regular operations (i.e., in accordance with the SGRs) individually or in combination. Modified operations may be regular operations with conditions (e.g., timing, equipment), or unique prescriptions that are developed to protect or manage specific values. Therefore, the recognition of areas as known values does not necessarily preclude harvest. For example, Hemlock stands characterized by multi-layered canopies (including supercanopy trees), high tree species diversity (including mid-tolerant), and an

	<p>abundance of large diameter living and dead trees, cavity trees, and downed woody debris are appropriate for a modified selection that emulates the gap phase processes dominant in old growth hemlock forest, described in the Tree Marking Guide. As my review of the FMP and information provided during the Issue Resolution process identified a gap in the FMP with respect to the inclusion of such SGR, I am directing the Planning team to include an old Growth SGRs for tolerant hardwood and hemlock stands in the final FMP for the 2021-2031 period under #2 in my decision above.</p>
<p>2. Definition of Old Growth Disputed</p>	<p><u>Old growth Definition:</u> CFSC’s letter of June 18 interprets the District Manager’s statement that “uneven-aged stands are not applicable to classify as old growth” as inconsistent with the Old Growth Forest Definitions for Ontario.</p> <p>The District Manager’s statement is in a reference to setting a target for old growth in uneven-aged stands.</p> <p>Old growth is addressed in the FMP differently for even aged forest units than for un-even aged forest units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even -aged forest units are addressed by developing management objectives based on Figure A-3 of the FMPM, and setting desirable levels and targets based on the (Simulated Ranges of Natural Variations) SRNV provided in the GL-SL Guide. • Un-even aged forest is addressed on an operational level as the eFRI provides approximate ages for selection forest units, however, due to the “all-aged” nature of these areas they (approximate ages) are not expected to be representative of actual forest conditions. The distribution of the basal area by tree size class is much more reliable. • Therefore, as mentioned above I am directing the Planning Team to include Old Growth SGRs for tolerant hardwood and hemlock stands, that will retain old growth characteristics as per the Tree Marking Guide, Section 4.2.5 under #2 in my decision above. • Additionally, in recognition of the fact that the age of an un-even stand is not necessarily representative of actual stand conditions, I directed the planning team to identify and portray all Hemlock stands with an age greater than 130 yr under #2 in my decision above. This will enable the Ministry’s District office and BMFC staff to focus on these stands as candidates for the old growth selection system SGR. <p><u>The Hemlock is a rare and endangered forest type:</u></p> <p>The Planning Team follows direction and protects species listed at risk in conformity with the Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA)⁹ and forest management guides. The listing of a species protected under the ESA involves the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) and the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Currently, eastern hemlock is not listed as a species at risk.</p> <p>However, the Planning Team gave special consideration to the Hemlock forest type, known in the FMP, as the Hemlock forest unit (HESH). In response to</p>

⁹ Endangered Species Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/07e06>

concerns about this forest type, the Planning Team allocated a lower level of HESH planned harvest area than the available harvest area¹⁰. The results of this approach are shown below in a chart depicting the old growth projections for the HESH area (current levels and projections for the next 160 years) in the 2021-2031 FMP. The chart includes the projections of the amount of the HESH area based on the Long-Term Management Direction (orange line) in comparison to the projection based on the areas planned for harvest (blue line). The yellow area, labeled SRNV Range, indicates the range provided in the Landscape Guide as the desirable level for biodiversity of old growth Hemlock forest unit (HESH), established based on the pre-industrial conditions estimates, the current forest condition and landscape simulation models. T1- represents the amount of old growth HESH at the plan start (year 2021), T2- represents the amount of old growth HESH at the end of the FMP implementation (year 2031).



The chart shows that as a result of under allocating the HESH (only 58% of the available harvest area (AHA) was allocated) and avoiding the older stands, the projection of the old growth in the short term has improved. By the end of the 2021-2031 FMP, the amount of Hemlock old growth is expected to increase by 74%, from 752 ha to 1308 ha.

This chart demonstrates that the Planning Team took the appropriate measures to mitigate the deficit of old growth Hemlock in short and medium term.

3. Old growth and carbon storage not considered

Old growth as a management consideration: The Ministry is committed to updating policies related to climate change regularly when new information becomes available, including policies related to sustainable forest management.


¹⁰ Available Harvest Area: The area (in hectares) for each forest unit, as determined in the development of the long-term management direction, which serves as a limit for harvest area by forest unit, for the ten-year period of the forest management plan

Climate change was raised as an issue by the requesters during the preparation of the Bancroft-Minden FMP, during the Desired Forest and Benefit Meeting and was considered through the formal issue's resolution process. The District Manager's Decision described how climate change is considered in the FMP planning process.

In response to concerns raised about climate change by the requesters during the planning period for the FMP, I am directing the Plan Author to include a summary of the components that support climate change mitigation and adaptation into the Bancroft-Minden FMP supplementary documentation under #2 in my decision above. This will assist with providing clarity and transparency regarding how the Planning Team considered climate change in its forest management planning.

Assess carbon stored: CFSC also raised a concern that the Bancroft-Minden FMP should reflect that carbon storage may be a mitigation consideration. This type of consideration is done at the provincial level. The Ministry is regularly conducting large scale assessment of forest carbon stocks. Forest carbon is currently not among the required provincial management objectives, listed in the FMPM, Part A., Figure A-3, however, maintaining or increasing the amount of carbon stored in forests and wood products can provide for significant greenhouse gas emission mitigation benefits while also maintaining other environmental, social and economic services. The amount of carbon sequestered by forests can also play an important role in meeting the provincial and national greenhouse gas emission targets.

Assessment of forest carbon stocks in Ontario has been conducted since the early 2000s by Forest Carbon Program initiated at the Forest Research (Science and Research Branch (SRB)) specifically to address various objectives related to the effects of management on forest carbon stocks. One of the ongoing projects is to estimate the current and project the future carbon stocks in forests and harvested wood products originating from these forests. The estimates and projections are produced for individual Forest Management Units (FMUs) using data from the most recent Forest Management Plans (FMPs); for a more complete picture of possible outcomes, carbon estimates are also produced for harvest projections that are scaled down to reflect historical harvest rate for a given FMU. The results for individual FMUs are rolled up to produce estimates and projections for the managed forest in Ontario (formerly known as the Area of Undertaking). The latter estimates are included in the State of the Forest Reports and periodically published in the scientific literature. As an example, below is the preliminary version of a graph prepared for the State of Natural Resources Report 2021 showing decadal changes in carbon stocks in forest and harvested wood products from 2020 to 2100. As seen from the graph, provincial forest carbon stocks are projected to increase steadily; in other words, managed forest in Ontario will serve as a carbon sink throughout the 21st century.

	 <p>Carbon stock change per decade (million tonnes)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decade</th> <th>Managed Forests</th> <th>Wood Products</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2020-2030</td> <td>2</td> <td>18</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2030-2040</td> <td>13</td> <td>13</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2040-2050</td> <td>18</td> <td>9</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2050-2060</td> <td>21</td> <td>7</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2060-2070</td> <td>24</td> <td>6</td> <td>45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2070-2080</td> <td>23</td> <td>5</td> <td>44</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2080-2090</td> <td>22</td> <td>7</td> <td>45</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Details of the analysis and results for both individual FMUs and the managed forest overall have been presented in numerous publications; for example, see: <i>Chen, J., Ter-Mikaelian, M.T., Ng, P.Q. and Colombo, S.J., 2018. Ontario's managed forests and harvested wood products contribute to greenhouse gas mitigation from 2020 to 2100. The Forestry Chronicle, 43(3), pp.269-282.</i></p> <p><i>Ter-Mikaelian, M.T., Colombo, S.J. and Chen, J., 2013. Effects of harvesting on spatial and temporal diversity of carbon stocks in a boreal forest landscape. Ecology and evolution, 3(11), pp.3738-3750.</i></p> <p><i>Ter-Mikaelian, M.T., Colombo, S.J. and Chen, J., 2021. Harvest volumes and carbon stocks in boreal forests of Ontario, Canada. The Forestry Chronicle, 97(2), pp.1-11.</i></p> <p>I am satisfied that the Planning Team considered climate change during the preparation of the Bancroft-Minden FMP in accordance with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and the FMPM. However, under # 3 in my decision above, I directed my staff to work with the SRB and share the data from the Bancroft - Minden 2021 FMP so that this forest can participate and contribute to this provincial project.</p>	Decade	Managed Forests	Wood Products	Total	2020-2030	2	18	37	2030-2040	13	13	41	2040-2050	18	9	42	2050-2060	21	7	42	2060-2070	24	6	45	2070-2080	23	5	44	2080-2090	22	7	45
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2060-2070	24	6	45																														
2070-2080	23	5	44																														
2080-2090	22	7	45																														
4. One Year Moratorium Not Enough Time	<p>The Crown land use policies included in the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas applicable to the area of the blocks 2749 and 3710 do not impose restrictions on commercial timber harvest in those areas, and do not support a long-term moratorium on harvest in those areas. Additionally, these blocks are not protected under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Act although the Ministry is aware that a request to protect these areas under that Act has been made to Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. However, in consideration of the information provided to the Ministry by CFSC¹¹, and</p>																																

¹¹ This information was described largely under *Issues 1: AFER Values Information Not Recognized*, and *2: Definition of Old Growth Disputed*, in CFSC's letter dated June 18, 2021.

	<p>recognizing that additional research and work related to the identification of old growth values could be beneficial for addressing concerns related to these values, a delay of potential harvest in these block is appropriate. This will allow additional time for the Ministry to review information included in the reports provided by CFSC and produced by AFER, consider the issue of old-growth identification and assessment in the Bancroft-Minden Forest (as described under #2 in the decision letter), and conduct field verification.</p>
<p>5. Issues with Transparency in Issues Resolution Process</p>	<p>The Ministry is committed to and interested in improving being open and transparent. Therefore, the FMP documentation is made available to the public unless it is exempt under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). In recognition of your concern, the Ministry revised its process for this Issue Resolution request and required that all participants receive copies of all additional input as it was submitted. The Ministry will make sure to continue this approach in processing future issue resolution requests.</p>