

Outcome Based Forestry Agreement 2012-2017

Report on Activities during 2017

Northern Region

--Round Pond Unit (T13R12) – Regeneration was sampled in September of 2017, with 48 milacre plots distributed throughout the clearcuts made five years before. There were tree seedlings tallied on all 48 plots, with each clearcut sampled having 5,000 to 8,000 seedlings per acre. The clearcut on C-128, along the west town line, had the most beech- 54% of all seedlings and the same for plot dominance. The field staff noted that the beech did not look all that healthy. The most desirable species, red spruce, yellow birch, and sugar maple, made up one-third of tallied stems and 24% of plot dominance. These species were found on 63% of all plots. The clearcuts to the north, on C-120, had beech, yellow birch, and sugar maple each with about 25% of plot dominance, and the three “desirable species” were tallied on 83% of plots here. No acreage of thinning/release was conducted during 2017 in the young aspen-over-spruce/fir stands, the “deeryard acceleration” part of the project, as markets for small fir deteriorated.

2018 and beyond: Five years is probably too short a period to determine the make-up of the future stand; discussions with those having long experience in managing Northern hardwoods have suggested ten years as a better window. If suitable markets and harvest technology are available, implementation of the “deeryard acceleration” thinning will be done on a larger scale in upcoming years.

Eastern Region

--Tunk-Donnell Unit (on T10 SD) – No activities were done in 2017 beyond monitoring the stand for regeneration and blueberry success. It is still too early to reach conclusions, though the regeneration is doing better than the blueberries.

2018 and beyond: The permanent plot remeasures are now on a five-year interval, and will next be remeasured in 2019. Success of blueberries and any desirable regeneration will continue to be monitored, with progress reported in the annual OBF reports. No additional harvests within the OBF area are anticipated during the 5-year agreement period.

Western Region

--Harvesting in 2017 completed treatment of the areas within the OBF project. Of the 242 acres harvested in 2017, 81% were initial commercial thinning, mostly in the younger stand not treated during the thinnings of 1996-2001. The remainder were second thinning of the stands treated 20 years before. Volume in 2017 was 3,405 cords, with weak markets resulting in 42% being lower-value studwood and 16% biomass. Spruce sawlogs were 32% of the total and white pine logs 4%. The windstorm of October 2017 did considerable damage to the second-thinning stands, but much less in the first-thinned and the low-density pine overstory.

2018 and beyond: The windthrow extent will be evaluated for advisability of salvage. Other than that, monitoring of the residual will be continued.

OUTCOME BASED FORESTRY – IMPACTS ON THE THREE PROJECTS (unchanged from 2016 report)

North: In the absence of OBF, the Bureau would not have made clearcuts larger than 20 acres, as by policy such clearcuts must have prior approval from the Director, and would need to show a clear silvicultural advantage over any other harvest practice. The regeneration surveys of the four OBF clearcuts versus the 2-4 acre patchcuts made one year earlier should be instructive in comparing the two practices.

East: OBF enabled the Bureau to practice low-density pine management on an otherwise average value mixedwood stand without the administrative requirements for large clearcuts.. I'm not sure that this practice would have met any of Chapter 20's four acceptable reasons for type 2 and type 3 clearcuts, in which case a variance would have been needed if not for OBF.

West: This project also featured low-density pine management, though in much different types of stands. Bureau staff were unsure whether or not the proposed harvests would meet the definition of a clearcut. With essentially all of the proposed overstory removal having been completed, it appears that all such harvests meet either the residual basal area for a partial harvest or regeneration requirements for overstory removal harvests. However, having these harvests done under OBF freed staff from having to conduct statistically valid sampling of residual BA and/or regeneration stocking.

CERTIFICATION

-Brief Summary of 2017 Surveillance Audits, conducted October 17-19: For both FSC and SFI, all pre-existing non-conformances (NCs) were closed. The Bureau has not received final reports from the auditors. At the closing meeting last October, two potential minor non-conformances were discussed. The first, from FSC, concerned the outdated language in our Chain-of-Custody policy that we provide to contractors. The document has been updated and sent to the lead FSC auditor. The second, from SFI, concerned the program review process. This had not been done in 2016 but was part of a regional managers' meeting shortly after the audit.

Until we have the reports from the auditors in hand, the positive input they provided at that closing meeting offers confidence that we will have no significant issues arising from the 2017 audits.

SILVICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Bureau's annual SAC field trip is usually held in August, on a Tuesday/Wednesday or Wednesday/Thursday, and will probably feature the Eastern Region in 2018. When we solicit committee member availability for suitable dates for an August 2018 trip, which should be sent out in late April or very early May, MFS will be copied. (This year we may send out those letters earlier, so that appropriately located lodging can be secured.)

The SAC field trip in August of 2017 visited the North Region, examining sites at Eagle Lake and Deboullie. Stops at Eagle Lake included precommercial thinnings done in 2016, and one stand PCT-ed in 1985 and ready for commercial harvest, possibly by clearcut as it's almost all fir and had significant snow damage from the previous winter. We visited several mixedwood stands, some recently treated, some in process of being prescribed, several with yellowjacket nests, and one recent 4-acre patchcut of modest quality hardwood.

On day 2 we looked at several types of harvests and history at Deboullie. The first stop was a 7-acre clearcut in hardwoods, harvested 5-6 years before. Within the considerable rubus there were abundant seedlings of sugar maple, yellow birch, beech, and some spruce. These seedlings looked sufficiently robust that they should readily grow above the competition. Some partial harvests and smaller patchcuts were visited, and the final stop was at a spruce-heavy stand PCT-ed in 1986 and commercially thinned early in 2017. This thinning was done appropriately, and the main questions concerned the stand's future.

If you have any questions concerning this, please let us know.