

MINUTES

Forest Genetics Council – Meeting September 16, 2009

Location: Cowichan Lake Research Station

Attending: Brian Barber, Judi Beck, Joe Leblanc, Tim Lee, Kerry McGourlick, Bruce McNicol, Gerry Still, Annette Van Niejenhuis, Gernot Zemanek

Regrets: Rob Guy, Scott King, Madeline Maley, Al McDonald, Larry Promnitz

Others: Jack Woods, Cheri Tayler, Darrell Wood

Guests: Melanie Boyce, Alvin Yanchuk, Barrie Phillips, Lee Charleson, Robb Bennett, David Kolotelo, Jodi Krakowski, Leslie MacAuley, David Reid, Diane Douglas, Darrell Wood

Action Items

Responsibility	Action
Program Manager	Post email addresses on the FGC website for Kerry and Gernot. Chair and establish a sub-committee to review and update SPU ranking and process, and report to FGC by late November. Prepare a paper on behalf of the FGC to submit to the Silviculture Strategy Review process. send FGC member a broad agenda for the December 16, 2009 FGC meeting
Brian and Jack	Report to FGC members on new budget allocations to the FIA Forest Genetic Conservation and Management program by October 15, 2009.
Program Financial Coordinator	Prepare a summary of spending by subprogram for the current fiscal year for discussion at an FGC conference call in late October.

Summary of Motions:

MOVED: (van Niejenhuis / MacNicol) to accept the September 16, 2009 FGC meeting agenda as presented. **CARRIED**

MOVED: (Leblanc / Lee) Minutes from the meetings held June 17, 2009 and July 6, 2009 are hereby approved. **CARRIED**

MOVED: (van Niejenhuis / Lee) To establish a sub-committee to review and update the SPU ranking criteria and process used for prioritizing tree improvement investments by mid November, 2009. **CARRIED**

Meeting called to order at 9:00 A.M. by Brian Barber (Co-Chair)

Welcome and introduction of new Council members:

- Kerry McGourlick, RPF, Chief Forester, Western Forest Products Ltd. – Industry Co-Chair
- Gernot Zemanek, Roserim Forest Nursery - Interior Seed User – Representing Woodlot licensees and Community Forests

Review of agenda:

1. **MOVED:** (van Niejenhuis / MacNicol) to accept the September 16, 2009 FGC meeting agenda as presented. **CARRIED**

3. Opening address from A/Deputy Chief Forester, Melanie Boyce

Council members and guests were welcomed to the Cowichan Lake Research Station.

The provincial government's deficit is larger than was anticipated in February. The September 1, 2009 budget has reduced the MFR budget by a further \$70 million, representing a 10% overall reduction. Further reductions are scheduled for the next 2 fiscal years.

Forest genetics, tree seed management and tree improvement activities are considered core stewardship functions of the ministry and align with government goals of becoming leaders in growing trees to increase timber supply and sequester carbon. The Forest Genetics Council has a key role to play in recommendations to the Chief Forester.

The primary objectives of this meeting are to inform Councilors of FGC sub-programs and their business planning process; to develop a process Council will use to reaffirm its priorities and allocation recommendations to the Chief Forester; and to celebrate the history of CLRS and tree improvement in BC with your colleagues and retirees

Thank you to the Council members, guests and meeting organizers, Jack Woods and Diane Douglas for pulling this joint-meeting together in these difficult times.

4. Updates

- Jack Woods attended a meeting with Minister Pat Bell in which Sally Aitken of UBC presented information about climate modeling. There was a good discussion about forest genetics programs and Minister Bell expressed his support for tree improvement as an important component of the MFR silviculture strategy. Mr. Bell also said that FIA funding will continue, but budgets will be reduced. Jack recognized the role that Tree Improvement Branch and Research Branch staff at the Kalamalka Forestry Centre, particularly Greg O'Neill, Mike Carlson, Nick Ukrainetz, David Reid, and Chris Walsh played in showing Minister Bell the value of forest genetics programs.
- Kerry McGourlick reported on the situation with the Western Forest Products Saanich seed orchards. Financial difficulties have forced WFP to reduce staff at their orchard site. They are currently seeking a solution with other forest companies and with Jack Woods. Kerry also stated that he is pleased to join the FGC as the Industry Co-chair.

5. Approval of June 17 and July 6, 2009 minutes and action items

2. **MOVED:** (Leblanc / Lee) Minutes from the meetings held June 17, 2009 and July 6, 2009 are hereby approved. **CARRIED**

Action items from past meetings

- CTAC and ITAC chairs, to seek representation on CTAC and ITAC from the BCTSDA and the Forest Nursery Association (ongoing) – CTAC and ITAC chairs (Tim Lee has invited FNABC to join ITAC)
- Brian to contact Dave Bodak regarding a non-voting FIA seat on Council (outstanding from April 30, 2009). – request made; under consideration
- Brian to request that Jim Snetsinger recruit an industry Co-Chair (completed)
- Genetic Resource Decision Support subprogram report is being prepared by Lee Charleson (MFR Tree Imp. Br.) and will be presented to Council in September (completed)
- FGC members to provide comments to Jack on the orchard discussion paper by June 29, 2009 (completed)
- Brian and Jack to meet with Jim Snetsinger regarding the orchard discussion paper on July 7, 2009 (completed)
- Consider edits to the Strategic Plan that relate to biofuels and C fixation and forward to Jack. (completed)
- Jack to put FGC member names and email addresses on the FGC website (completed)
Action – Jack will also have email addresses posted on the FGC website for Kerry and Gernot.
- A final draft of the discussion paper will be distributed to Council for final approval or comment during a conference call on July 6, 2009 - Jack (completed)
- Prepare a summary of information for prioritization and bring it to Council at the September 2009 meeting - Jack (completed)
- Send FGC members an MSWord version of the Strategic Plan - Jack (completed)
- Add words to the current Strategic Plan regarding bioenergy and carbon fixation, based on comments received from FGC members – Jack (completed)
- Resend note to Council members re: Environment Canada request for comments on ABS - Jack (completed)
- Send Council members broad agenda for the September 16, 2009 meeting - Jack (completed)

6. Update on Chief Forester Principles for Public and Private Seed Orchards

Based on the recommendations flowing from the report, *Public and Private Participation in BC's Seed Orchards: Issues and Options*, and on other policy related issues that have been developed in the past few years (allocation of limited scion; material transfer agreements), a set of "principles" are in preparation. These will provide a clear statement of MFR positions for FGC reference and for guidance to programs. These should be completed before the December, 2009 FGC meeting.

7. Provincial budget and FIA update

A new provincial budget allocation for the current fiscal year is expected to be announced within the next two weeks. It is hoped that savings from grants and contracts that did not receive Treasury Board approval earlier this year will accommodate any further overall reductions.

Action – Brian and Jack will report to FGC members on new budget allocations to the FIA Forest Genetic Conservation and Management program by October 15, 2009.

8. Process for prioritizing FGC program activities

Jack provided an overview of past business planning cycles and timelines (see Appendix 1). Previous protocols for program prioritization were also reviewed. Tree improvement, including primarily the Breeding, OTIP, SelectSeed, and Pest Management subprograms, account for a little over 80% of the total budget. Ranking is done at the Seed Planning Unit level to determine which SPUs have the highest value using a set of criteria that include:

- Net present value
- Breeding and operational (orchard) feasibility
- Adjacency impact
- Opportunities
- Uncertainty
- Seed transfer information needs.

Prioritization seed transfer and genecology research needs is now shifted to the Seed Transfer TAC.

It was agreed that this ranking process should be renewed and that climate change impacts should be considered in a new set of rankings.

3. **MOVED:** (van Niejenhuis / Lee) To establish a sub-committee to review and update the SPU ranking criteria and process used for prioritizing tree improvement investments by mid November, 2009. **CARRIED**

Action –Jack will chair and establish a sub-committee to review and update SPU ranking and process, and report to FGC by late November.

Subprogram chairs presented an overview of their subprogram process and expectations for the next fiscal year.

Tree breeding – Barrie Phillips

As the Manager, Forest Genetics in the Research Branch, Barrie is currently reviewing all activities of the Forest Genetics Section to see how they are aligned with current ministry priorities including silviculture (becoming a world leader in growing trees), climate change and carbon. He will be engaging key clients, in particular TIB and FGC, to ensure the section is considering key needs of those clients. Asking similar questions as the Chief Forester and Council such as, what are the objectives of the breeding program (volume or other traits) to better address questions related to “how much gain is enough”? It was suggested that the criteria used in the SPU ranking worksheet be re-evaluated, particularly in light of climate change. This year, due to the contract and budget restrictions, many tree breeding activities have not been able to go forward as planned. Biological windows were missed in many cases where we did get approval for maintenance work, and no measurements were approved. As a result, some test sites will be lost or severely compromised (we do not know the impact as of yet) and no new breeding values will be available this year.

Genetic Conservation– Dave Kolotelo

An overview of the Genetic Conservation TAC process and activities carried out under this TAC were presented. Dave expressed concern that the conservation work was not given sufficient priority by Council, despite it being profiled in annual reports and other documents. Dave also expressed concern about spending limitations in the current fiscal year that have prevented projects

from proceeding and placed key work such as the ClimateBC model at risk, even though budgets were allocated.

Dave pointed out that the following risks are the result of spending limitations on already allocated budgets:

- FGC viewed as unreliable funding agency
- Loss of world-class expertise or project influence
- Loss of credibility (GCTAC)
- Lip-service attention; good PR
- Loss of GRM credibility (GC was already playing catch-up)
- Lack of high level commitment to today's non - commercial native species
- Erosion of interest, commitment and morale
- Climate BC focused on other funding priorities

OTIP - Cheri Tayler

Business planning process for the OTIP subprogram involves the following steps:

- Creation of project eligibility lists by the CTAC and ITAC
- Development and release of a call for proposals (December)
- Receipt, review of proposals, and project ranking by review committees (February)
- FGC review and establishment of funding level and recommendation to Chief Forester (March)

2009/10 OTIP projects have largely proceeded as planned and have not been held up by limitations on grants. The process for developing 2010/11 proposals is underway now. This process operates smoothly and includes process for setting priorities, screening projects, and reporting. No significant changes are recommended.

Seed Transfer - Lee Charleson

The Seed Transfer TAC (SSTAC) and the Genecology and Seed Transfer call for proposals was established in 2008. This is the first year of the call. The current procedure is similar to OTIP, in that the SSTAC develops a project eligibility list, a call for proposals is prepared based on the eligibility list, proposals are submitted by proponents, and a review committee screens and ranks proposals. This process starts in November and finishes with the FGC reviewing recommendations from the SSTAC and recommending a funding level to the provincial Chief Forester. This process will be improved upon in its second year. Genecology and seed transfer are priorities under FGC strategic objectives and MFR climate change initiatives. No significant changes to this subprogram are recommended

Extension and Communication - Diane Douglas

The Extension and Communication subprogram focuses on the opportunistic development of publications, workshops, tours, and meetings to meet the needs of people working within the forest genetics community and stakeholders who do not directly do forest genetics work. The Extension TAC meets once or twice a year to develop and approve a list of projects. This project list and a budget are reviewed by the FGC. Some funds are set aside to address opportunities that arise during the year. The existing process used by ETAC works, and no changes are recommended.

Seed and Cone Pest Management – Robb Bennett

The pest management subprogram is directed at priority research and operational support projects for the management of seed and cone pests in seed orchards. The Pest Management TAC recommends projects, and final spending is reviewed and approved by the FGC. This process has worked well, but in the current fiscal year, restrictions on grants have greatly set back progress and, in some cases, put at risk past investments. If these external restrictions on the planning process continue, the ability of this subprogram to contribute to FGC objectives will be severely constrained. The FGC was called upon to try to reduce MFR limitations on subprogram leaders as they try to implement projects approved by the FGC.

Decision Support – Lee Charleson

The Genetic Resource Decision Support (GRDS) subprogram provides services in four areas; strategic planning analysis, resource information management systems, monitoring and evaluation, and training. A steering committee advises on projects and approves recommendations that go to the FGC. This subprogram has been constrained in 2009/10 by restrictions on contracts within the MFR. As a result all work to date has been done by MFR employees. There are a number of emerging issues, including silviculture strategies, forest reserves, climate-change, and carbon offsets. These will require adjustment of GRDS focus. A review of this subprogram is underway. Lee would like the steering committee to set goals, receive mid-year updates, etc. Due to contract constraints in the current fiscal year, GRDS funding was allocated to MFR-TIB salaries.

SelectSeed Ltd. – Jack Woods

SelectSeed Ltd. was set up by the FGC in 2000 to address shortfalls in interior seed orchard capacity. It is guided by a multi-year agreement with the MFR that sets out a business planning and approval process by which the SelectSeed Board and the FGC approve annual business plans and budgets. SelectSeed operates 14 seed orchards through contracts. Seed sales are beginning to displace FIA funding, and FIA funding input has dropped each year since 2002. The existing process of approvals works well, and, as it is set out by the multi-year agreement, it is difficult to modify. Therefore, no changes are recommended. The 2009 cone crop is larger than forecast, and revenues from seed sales are also expected to be above business plan forecasts. This will reduce the FIA funding request for 2010/11.

Action – Cheri or Darrell were asked to prepare a summary of spending by subprogram for the current fiscal year for discussion at an FGC conference call in late October.

9. FGC Annual Report for 2008/09

Jack presented a summary of projects and progress in the 2008/09 fiscal year. Most work proceeded as planned. The FGC Annual Report for 2008/09 is delayed due to other issues, but it will be completed in October.

10. Fall presentation to the Forest Investment Council

No FIC meeting is planned. Brian and Jack will watch for a future opportunity.

11. Other business and updates

Silviculture Discussion paper and review

Scott King, Bruce MacNicol and Joe Leblanc attended silviculture focus group meetings held in each region.

Action - Jack will prepare a paper on behalf of the FGC to submit to the review process.

Skimikin orchard property addition and fire

David Reid provided an overview of the 3,000 ha Notch Hill fire that burned near the Skimikin seed orchard complex. There was no damage to the seed orchards. David also apprised Council of the recent purchase of property adjoining the Skimikin site that will be used for Pli orchard development.

Action - Jack will send FGC member a broad agenda for the December 16, 2009 FGC meeting.

NEXT FGC MEETING – DECEMBER 16, 2009

Minutes prepared by Jack Woods and Cheri Tayler



J Woods

DRAFT

Appendix 1: Business Planning Process

Council will use the following planning process for development of the 2009/10 Business Plan

• October / November

- Prepare OTIP eligibility lists (Species committees and TACs)
- Issues

• December FGC meeting

- Issues and process reviewed

• January / February

- Species committees and TACs meet
- Breeders present programs and budgets
- OTIP and Genecology/Seed Transfer reviews
- Subprograms develop business plans
- Incremental project reviewed by Steering Committees
- Final FIC allocation

• March FGC meeting

- Budget development (all subprograms)
- Recommendation to MoFR and FIC

• April

- Implementation