

WOODWORKS

News from Tolko Manitoba Woodlands

April 2005

Field tour a highlight of regional FRAC meeting in Thompson

The Thompson meeting ran two days, from February 23rd to 24th. While the agenda covered many issues common across Tolko's license area, it also provided FRAC members with a more detailed look at operations in the Nelson River Forest Section.

Bruce Bodie, Tolko's Thompson area superintendent, told participants that Tolko harvests 300,000-350,000 cubic metres of wood from the Nelson River Forest Section annually. The company works with 3 main contractors. Wood is hauled to and stockpiled at 3 rail spurs (Pipun, Buckingham and Massan) for shipment to the mill. Tolko uses rail about 10 months each year.

Shayne Elliott, Tolko area supervisor, reviewed the methods Tolko employs in the Nelson River area to reduce both the area and impacts of bulldozing. FRAC members also heard what steps Tolko takes to minimize damage to the landscape during road building.

The group also received an update on forest renewal plans across the license area from Tolko's silviculture forester, Paul Chapman.

Tolko plans to plant 8.3 million trees this year. About 3,000 hectares will receive site preparation treatments.

Herbicide application will target areas that have not met provincial Free To Grow standards due to heavy hardwood competition.

Spraying will be done by helicopter in late August/early September, a method allowing much greater precision than with fixed-wing aircraft.

Local concerns were raised and potential solutions put forward. A trapper from the Thicket Portage area, for example, indicated that fuel drums and other debris had been left on his trapline. It was determined that a contractor to Tolko had left these materials behind. Follow-up actions were discussed.

FRAC members also had the chance to follow up on issues raised when Tolko was drafting its Sustainable Forest Management Plan last year. Members of the public advisory committee helping to draft the plan had asked the Manitoba government to answer five questions relating to Protected Areas, records of furbearing species, forestry roads, forest inventory and an updated Forest Act. John Dojack, acting director for the Manitoba Forestry Branch, Manitoba Conservation, was on hand to present the government's response.

The meeting wrapped up with a field tour of John Uhrina's contractor operation off the Buckingham Road south of Thompson.



Minutes of the February 23-24, 2005 FRAC meeting can be accessed at www.tolkomanitoba.com.

Community concerns heard at Annual Operating Plan meetings

Community use of logging roads was one of many issues that came up during meetings Tolko held in communities earlier this year to discuss its Annual Operating Plan.

The public meetings ran from late January through February in communities across Tolko's license area. The company provided information about its harvesting and renewal plans covering June 1st, 2005 through May 31st, 2006. Tolko must submit its 2005-2006 AOP to Manitoba Conservation by March 28th, 2005.

These timelines reflect the shift Tolko has made to its operating year, which now runs June 1st to May 31st.

As at AOP meetings in previous years, Tolko's proposed closure of roads it is no longer using generated a lot of discussion. Tolko wants to minimize its liability on these roads, but recognizes that communities have to come to rely on them. The company continues to work with the communities and with Manitoba Conservation to reach solutions that meet everyone's needs.

Community safety issues associated with log hauling, potential contracting opportunities, and environmental safeguards when harvesting near water bodies were also on residents' minds. Following the formal part of each meeting, Tolko's harvest planners invited people to ask questions and to take a closer look at the planning maps tacked to the walls.

Once Manitoba Conservation has approved the 2005-2006 AOP, Tolko will post it at www.tolkomanitoba.com. Copies will also be provided to libraries and band/community council offices.

*Interested in seeing Tolko's
2005-2006 Annual
Operating Plan map online?
Check www.tolkomanitoba.com
around June 1, 2005. For best
results, use a high-speed Internet
connection if possible.*

Sherridon and Snow Lake FRACs air community issues

Interested citizens in Sherridon and Tolko jointly set up a local forest resources advisory committee in the last year. The committee has met three times to air issues related to Tolko's operations in the area, and to try to work out mutually satisfactory approaches. Members of Tolko's other local

FRAC, in Snow Lake, continue to get together 2-3 times a year. A member of the Snow Lake FRAC also sits on Tolko's regional FRAC. The regional FRAC typically meets three times a year, with at least one of those meetings featuring a field tour.

Members of Tolko's SFM Public Advisory Committee comment on public input process

After close to a year-and-a-half of hard work, the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Plan was certified as meeting the Canadian Standards Association sustainable forest management standard last October.

What this means is that Tolko now has a framework in place setting out goals it must meet respecting soil and water quality, maintaining biological diversity in the forest, its relationships with aboriginal people on its license area and many other key areas. The company will be "tested" by an independent auditor at least once a year from now on, to make sure it is meeting those goals.

The SFM plan does not replace provincial and federal laws governing Tolko's operations. The company must still comply with all such legislation. The SFM plan is more a way for Tolko to "set the bar" for itself in six key areas of its operations, and to continually work toward raising the bar higher.

Drafting the SFM Plan was a laborious process, and the help Tolko received from its SFM public advisory committee members was invaluable. This committee met 9 times over a period of about a year, putting in long days (each meeting typically took two full days) packed with technical,

operations and policy-oriented information. Sheldon McLeod, a Winnipeg consultant specializing in community involvement and sustainability issues, facilitated the meetings.

Tolko sent out a survey to the public advisory committee members before Christmas last year, asking them to provide feedback on how satisfied they were with their involvement. A similar survey was sent to people or groups that had wanted to be informed about the process, but not to sit on the committee.

Both surveys identified strengths of the SFM public input process to date, as well as ways for Tolko to improve on the way it gathers public input for its future planning.

One strength noted by committee members, for example, was that the number and variety of stakeholders allowed for many non-timber values to be brought into drafting the plan.

With respect to improvement, suggestions included working hard to keep the lines of communication open between Tolko staff and residents and interest groups, as well as perhaps establishing more FRACs in individual communities.

Ed Johanson, formerly a conservation officer with the Manitoba government and now retired, was one of the SFM public advisory committee members who met regularly to work on the plan. Johanson brought his long-standing knowledge and love of the north to the task.

"I want to see the forest managed better than the previous harvesters of our forests," Johanson said, explaining why he got involved. "It is time we were more conscious of the sustainability of our forest,

and making sure it's sustainable. We'd be harvesting the trees of these previous companies now, if they'd done the right thing."

Johanson felt that having mutually-agreed upon ground rules, as well as having McLeod guide the SFM plan development, contributed greatly to making the process an effective one. "I was very pleased with our facilitator, and his ability to get from the people involved their fair opinions on what we were trying to do."

With respect to an area for improvement to the process, Johanson said, "I would have liked to see it go to more involvement of the small communities where other uses of the forest are involved."

Tolko's SFM plan will now be reviewed internally once a year, together with a formal audit by an independent auditor every two years to make sure Tolko continues to meet the CSA standard for sustainable forest management.

Determination of provincial Protected Areas proceeding hand-in-hand with updated forest inventory

Protected Areas development is to follow in step with development of the updated provincial forest inventory, those attending Tolko's February 23-24 FRAC meeting in Thompson were told. John Dojack, acting director for the Manitoba Forestry Branch, Manitoba Conservation, said that inventory has proceeded first in the Duck/Porcupine Mountains, and will follow on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, then the Saskatchewan River area. Some volume sampling has been completed in the Saskatchewan River Forest Section, with more anticipated in the coming year.

There are presently several Areas of Special Interest (ASI) on Tolko's license area. These ASIs have been identified by the province as having potential to become formally designated Protected Areas. Tolko and other industrial users of land with ASIs on their operating area are not presently permitted to operate within those ASI boundaries. The government anticipates delineating boundaries for Protected Areas in the Saskatchewan River Forest Section in early 2006, Dojack said. Formalization of Protected Areas boundaries will enable companies such as Tolko, as well as those interests that use and enjoy non-timber values, to move ahead with long-term planning.

***Questions, concerns
or suggestions for Tolko?
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