

Ref: 85845

December 1, 2005

To: MOFR Regional Executive Directors
MOFR District Managers
MOE Environmental Stewardship Managers
ILMB Regional Executive Directors

Re: **Guidelines to Facilitate the Completion and Integration of Marbled Murrelet
Wildlife Habitat Areas and Old Growth Management Areas**

Purpose

The purpose of the attached guidelines is to clarify existing policy and support and augment the letter that was released by government on January 30, 2004 titled "*Clarification and Interim Direction on Marbled Murrelet Conservation in British Columbia*". It is intended that these guidelines will facilitate the completion and integration of Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs) and Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) for Marbled Murrelet.

Operational Details to Support Current Direction

Government (Ministry of Environment, Integrated Land Management Bureau and the Ministry of Forests and Range) and industry stakeholders have been working diligently to implement the tools available under current policy for the protection of Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat. The attached document titled "*Guidelines to Facilitate the Completion and Integration of Marbled Murrelet Wildlife Habitat Areas and Old Growth Management Areas*" is intended to support and augment the January 2004 letter and provide a consistent basis for developing terms of reference for planning projects for landscape units or aggregates where the conservation of Marbled Murrelets is a high priority. The guidelines provide the operational level detail required to effectively integrate the establishment of WHAs and OGMAs, and are consistent with Forest Practices Code/Forest and Range Practices Act timber supply impact assumptions and policies.

We trust you will find these guidelines useful as you work collaboratively to meet government's current direction for the management of Marbled Murrelet habitat.



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Attachment: Guidelines to Facilitate the Completion and Integration of Marbled Murrelet
Wildlife Habitat Areas and Old Growth Management Areas

Guidelines to Facilitate the Completion and Integration of Marbled Murrelet Wildlife Habitat Areas and Old Growth Management Areas

These guidelines are intended to support and augment the *Letter of Clarification and Interim Direction on Marbled Murrelet Conservation in British Columbia*, January 30, 2004 and provide a consistent basis for developing terms of reference for planning projects for landscape units or aggregates where the conservation of Marbled Murrelets is a high priority.

The goal of the letter of clarification and these guidelines is to expedite the establishment of Marbled Murrelet Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) in a way that integrates effectively with the establishment of Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs), and is consistent with Forest Practices Code / *Forest and Range Practices Act* timber supply impact assumptions and policies.

Part I - General Guidelines

1. The agencies¹ and (where applicable) forest licensees are encouraged to address both OGMAs and Marbled Murrelet WHAs simultaneously through an integrated planning approach (see part II below).
2. Where it is not practical to undertake integrated planning projects to address Marbled Murrelet WHAs and OGMAs, the Ministry of Environment may take interim steps to establish WHAs prior to OGMA planning and establishment (see part III below).
3. Consistent with the Identified Wildlife Management Strategy and the Landscape Unit Planning Guide, the timber harvesting land base and non-contributing land base for Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) planning will be as defined in Timber Supply Review (TSR) 2, and for Old Growth Management Area (OGMA) planning will be as defined in the most recent completed TSR.
4. When planning for Marbled Murrelet through WHAs and OGMAs, the distribution in quality of suitable Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat that is conserved in WHAs and OGMAs should, to the extent possible, include the highest quality habitat.²

Part II. Guidelines for Integrated Planning for WHAs and OGMAs

Areas within the Timber Harvesting Land Base

1. The determination of the amount of OGMA which may be identified and established on the timber harvesting land base by biogeoclimatic variant will be as determined through

¹ For the purposes of these guidelines, "the agencies" means the Integrated Land Management Bureau and the Ministry of Environment.

² Suitable Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat is described in Table 3 of the Identified Wildlife Management Strategy Version 2004 species account for Marbled Murrelet.
http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/wld/identified/documents/Birds/b_marbledmurrelet.pdf

Landscape Unit Planning Guide procedures or as directed through an approved Land Use Plan or Land and Resource Management Plan.

2. Where the Landscape Unit Planning Guide procedures or an approved Land Use Plan or Land and Resource Management Plan indicates that, for a specific variant, OGMA establishment may occur on the timber harvesting land base, priority will be given to placing this OGMA area over currently suitable Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat³, except where this priority has been modified through agency agreement under item 3(i) below. OGMA on the timber harvesting land base will only be identified and established for other biodiversity benefits – such as connectivity or species composition – where the area of timber harvesting land base available for OGMA exceeds the area identified as suitable Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat.
3. The agencies and (where applicable) forest licensees may agree prior to undertaking WHA/OGMA planning for a given landscape unit or aggregated units to:
 - i) also give priority for OGMA placement on the timber harvesting land base to another value or values of importance within that area; and
 - ii) to transfer a specified portion of the timber harvesting land base available for OGMA in one variant for equivalent or better Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat and timber harvesting land base in another variant within the same landscape unit, where this is necessary to maximize Marbled Murrelet habitat conservation or address another important value or values.
4. The Ministry of Environment may also apply any portion of the 1% timber harvesting land base “budget” for IWMS towards establishing Marbled Murrelet WHAs, in excess of the area identified or established as OGMA.⁴

Areas within the Non-Contributing Land Base

5. Consistent with the December 2004 “section 7 notices” as they apply to Marbled Murrelet, the Ministry of Environment can proceed to identify Marbled Murrelet WHAs in the non-contributing land base to the extent required as per the Identified Wildlife Management Strategy Version 2004⁵. Identified Wildlife Management Strategy policy clearly outlines the use of the non-contributing land base as identified in TSR 2 to

³ Suitable Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat is described in Table 3 of the IWMS Version 2004 species account for Marbled Murrelet. http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/wld/identified/documents/Birds/b_marbledmurrelet.pdf

⁴ Where an OGMA is established on the timber harvesting land base and then overlapped by a WHA, the area of the WHA would only draw down the 1% timber harvesting land base “budget” for IWMS where any portion of the timber harvesting land base contained in the WHA exceeds the timber harvesting land base allocation for old growth management. If a WHA is established on the timber harvesting land base, and is later overlapped by an OGMA for which there is no timber harvesting land base allocation for old growth management, then the THLB area of the WHA will draw down the 1% budget. See Part III for additional details on establishing WHAs prior to OGMA.

⁵ IWMS Version 2004 Marbled Murrelet species account, page 10, section titled “Wildlife Habitat Area”.

establish WHAs for Marbled Murrelet. However, in doing so the Ministry of Environment will need to consider the opportunities for timber harvesting that may be evident in the non-contributing land base.

6. The identification and establishment of OGMA on the non-contributing land base is more flexible than on the timber harvesting land base. On the non-contributing land base, areas suitable for WHAs will be used for OGMA purposes where they also meet representation requirements and other OGMA planning goals. However, OGMA may also be established outside of WHAs where, and to the extent that, representation or other OGMA planning goals are better served. Any new information⁶ regarding operable forest land within the non-contributing land base will be considered in determining the location of any OGMA outside of WHAs.
7. Where OGMA established either in the timber harvesting land base or non-contributing land base capture current or potential Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat, the portion of the OGMA that contains Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat should be overlapped by either a WHA or a general wildlife measure to ensure that there is recognition of the Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat.

Part III – Guidelines for Establishing WHAs Prior to OGMA Planning

1. Although it is recommended that the agencies and (where applicable) forest licensees work to simultaneously identify and establish both WHAs and OGMA, it is acceptable to proceed with WHA establishment prior to OGMA planning, where operational priorities and the urgency for conservation so dictate.

Areas within the Timber Harvesting Land Base

2. Where WHA establishment precedes OGMA planning, 75% of the timber harvesting land base area available for OGMA establishment for each BEC variant, as estimated in the most recent information available from the Coast Region of the Integrated Land Management Bureau, will be available for immediate Marbled Murrelet WHA establishment on the timber harvesting land base within each BEC variant.⁷ This area would not be considered as part of the 1% timber harvesting land base “budget” for IWMS. Both Ministry of Environment and the Integrated Land Management Bureau will track any instances where OGMA capital is borrowed to ensure an accurate accounting of impacts.

⁶ Including TSR 3 information where it is available.

⁷ The policy limit of 75% is chosen to reflect the fact that experience indicates that the actual area available for OGMA establishment may vary significantly from the original area estimated in the non-spatial Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategy data set. If the actual area available for OGMA placement in the THLB is found to be less than the area used for WHA establishment, the WHA area that is in excess of the OGMA THLB target will be considered part of the 1% THLB “budget” for IWMS and where necessary WHAs will be withdrawn by the Ministry of Environment to ensure that the 1% policy limit is not exceeded.

3. The Ministry of Environment may also apply any portion of the 1% timber harvesting land base “budget” for IWMS to the establishment of Marbled Murrelet WHAs, in excess of the area available for OGMA as estimated in the non-spatial Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategy data set.

Areas within the Non-Contributing Land Base

4. As described for integrated planning above, the identification and establishment of OGMA on the non-contributing land base is more flexible than on the timber harvesting land base. On the non-contributing land base, areas suitable for WHAs will be used for OGMA purposes where they also meet representation requirements and other OGMA planning goals. However, OGMA will also be established outside of WHAs where, and to the extent that, representation or other OGMA planning goals are better served. Any new information⁸ regarding operable forest land within the non-contributing land base will be considered in determining the location of any OGMA outside of WHAs.

⁸ Including TSR 3 information where it is available.