

File: 12555-00

January 30, 2004

To: MOF District Managers
MOF Regional Managers
MWLAP Environmental Stewardship Managers
MSRM Regional Directors

Re: **Clarification and Interim Direction on Marbled Murrelet Conservation in British Columbia**

Purpose of this letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide clarification and interim direction to assist with the short-term management of Marbled Murrelet.

Background

The Marbled Murrelet is nationally listed as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and is protected under the federal Migratory Birds Convention Act. Provincially, the species is red-listed and is managed as Identified Wildlife under the Forest Practices Code. The Identified Wildlife provisions will also apply under the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) when it comes into effect.

Over the last two years, the provincial ministries and the national Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team (MMRT) have collaborated on a conservation assessment of the Marble Murrelet. Parts A¹ and C² the assessment have recently been published, and Part B³ has been released by the MMRT. These documents incorporate the latest science on this species and represent the consensus of the multi-stakeholder MMRT, which has members from government, industry,



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¹ Burger, A.E. 2002. Conservation assessment of Marbled Murrelets in British Columbia: a review of the biology, populations, habitat associations and conservation. Tech. Rep. Ser. No. 387. CWS, Pacific and Yukon Region, British Columbia.

² Steventon, J.D., G.D. Sutherland, and P. Arcese. 2003. Policy implications of an assessment of long-term risks to Marbled Murrelet populations in British Columbia. Res. Br., B.C. Min. For., Victoria, B.C. Exten. Note 66. <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/pubs/Docs/En/En66.htm>

³ Canadian Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team. 2003. Marbled Murrelet Conservation Assessment 2003, Part B: Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team Advisory Document on Conservation and Management. Canadian Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team Working Document No. 1.

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academia, and ENGOS. The conservation assessment documents will be used by the MMRT in preparing a Recovery Strategy for the species as required under the federal Species At Risk Act. The completed Recovery Strategy is expected by March 2004.

The conclusions and recommendations contained in Parts B and C of the Conservation Assessment have not been adopted as government policy.

Current Direction

Until there is a new government decision on the management of Marbled Murrelet, government agencies (MSRM, MOF and MWLAP) will continue to work with industry to protect nesting habitat for the Marbled Murrelet through existing policy regarding Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHA) impacts; i.e., establishment of Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs), use of a portion of the IWMS one percent timber supply impact budget on the Timber Harvesting Land Base, and establishment of other WHAs on the non-contributing land base. Part B of the Conservation Assessment can be consulted for information on the suitable size and characteristics (shape, habitat suitability) of individual WHAs, but the amount of habitat to be established as WHAs remains as directed by existing policy. This direction applies to all areas where WHA establishment is taking place.

Consistent with the Landscape Unit Planning Guide, it is recognized that there may be some landscape units where a portion of the old-growth objectives may be captured from the timber harvesting land base. This would provide the opportunity to establish OGMAs on the timber harvesting land base that address the joint priorities of conservation of biological diversity and protection of Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat. These OGMAs would not be counted against the one percent IWMS timber supply impact budget as they are covered by the biodiversity impact budget. In these landscape units, MSRM establishment of OGMAs covering suitable nesting habitat should proceed as quickly as possible, based on field and map work to be conducted by government staff and forest licensees.

Forest licensees are encouraged to continue working with agency staff to propose WHAs and OGMAs in accordance with the current policy direction. It is also recognized that, under FRPA, licensees may wish to consult the Marbled Murrelet account in Identified Wildlife Management Strategy Version 2004⁴ for guidance on crafting results and strategies to address FRPA wildlife objectives.

Strategic Land Use Planning Tables

Three of the Marbled Murrelet Conservation Regions identified by the Conservation Assessment – the Central Mainland Coast, the Northern Mainland Coast and Queen Charlotte Islands) – fall under strategic land use planning exercises. Current policy direction on Marbled Murrelet habitat (as per the above) applies to these areas as well; however, it is not intended to impede, delay, or constrain negotiations or recommendations of the three coastal strategic plans.

⁴ Expected to be available by March 2004.

Future Expected Direction

In the next few months, government is expected to consider new direction on the overall amount and distribution of WHAs, and other areas maintained for Marbled Murrelet habitat. This direction will be based on two components: (a) an options package being developed for the three Marbled Murrelet Conservation Areas that do not fall under strategic land use planning processes, and (b) recommendations (if any) from the strategic land use planning tables. The options package will be developed from an assessment of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of several scenarios for Marbled Murrelet conservation, and will incorporate findings from the Conservation Assessment and the Recovery Strategy (if available).

Roles of the Ministries

MWLAP – Lead the process of WHA establishment under current policy; collaborate in partnerships with industry, MOF, and MSRM in identifying potential WHAs and OGMA's to protect murrelet habitat; provide biological information and advice on case studies, population viability assessments, and options analyses.

MSRM – Lead the options analysis process for the three Marbled Murrelet Conservation Regions that do not fall under strategic land use planning processes; collaborate in planning and OGMA's; establish OGMA's; provide forest inventory information and GIS capability for regional and coast-wide analysis of nesting habitat suitability; advise planning tables of the current direction.

MOF – Coordinate case studies; provide advice to the industry-led case study; collaborate in planning and establishment of WHAs and OGMA's; estimate timber supply, economic, and operational implications of Marbled Murrelet habitat options; through the Forest Science Program, provide biological advice and information on case studies, population viability assessments, and options analyses; advise forest licensees of the current direction.



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