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Forest Stewardship Council Setting up Boreal Standards

By Helene Walsh

Setting Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Boreal Standards is well underway. The FSC Alberta regional group submitted their input to FSC Canada in September, as did many other groups and individuals. Canadian environmental groups also provided a combined input document on our vision for the Boreal Standards. All inputs can be viewed on the FSC Canada website.

Based on all these inputs, draft one of the Canadian Boreal Standards will be released in mid-December. Again, anyone is welcome to provide input to this document for a 60-day period.

The regional Alberta Steering Committee has also accepted the challenge of proposing how to satisfactorily resolve the issue of overlapping tenure with the petroleum industry. With FSC, it is the forest that is certified, not the forest company, and in many cases the impacts of the petroleum industry on the forest is significant. Therefore, resolving this will be a difficult but necessary task.

Active on the FSC Alberta Steering Committee are a balance of environmental, social, economic, and aboriginal groups, specifically Little Red River Cree Nation, Metis Nations, Metis Settlements, Alberta Pacific Forest Industries (Al-Pac), Canadian Forest Products (Canfor), Trappers and Ecotourism, Alberta Federation of Labour, Mennonite Central Committee, Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Albertans for a Wild Chinchaga, and Alberta Wilderness Association. As might be expected, we often do not all agree on the details of what the boreal standard should be. When that happens, we record the differences and submit all points of view.

A recent announcement by Mitsubishi regarding FSC is very encouraging: Mitsubishi Corporation (MC) Chairman Minoru Makihara has announced MC's policy of endorsing third party certification for all of its forest product operations. Supporting the FSC's principles, Makihara stated that it would seek FSC certification of such MC operations wherever practical.

"This is more than a simple statement of principle," Makihara said. "We are proceeding to seek FSC certification of the operations of Alberta Pacific Forest Industries, Inc."

Alberta environmental groups hope to work with Al-Pac to enable their FSC certification, and we appreciate their commitment.

