PRINCE ALBERT MODEL FOREST ECOSYSTEM BASED, INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Todd Olexson B.Sc. Hon. LUEST; B.Sc. Geography
Integrated Land Use Planner, Prince Albert Model Forest Association/Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management
Box 3003, 800 Central Avenue, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan S6V 6G1

Abstract - The Prince Albert Model Forest (PAMF) partners recognized the need for an integrating, ecosystem-based plan for the model forest area. Work began in February of 1998 on the Prince Albert Model Forest Ecosystem Based, Integrated Resource Management Plan. The plan was presented to the PAMF Board of Directors in March of 2000. The approval and support of this plan demonstrate the effectiveness of land use planning, the benefits of cooperative management over multiple jurisdictions and the advantages of working with interest groups, area residents, resource users, and Aboriginal people.

Introduction

In 1992, Natural Resources Canada began accepting proposals for the Model Forest Program. The intent of the program was to build partnerships to work toward the sustainable management of forests. The Prince Albert Model Forest Association proposal was successful. The first phase of the model forest program occurred from 1992-1997. After this period the program was assessed and renewed for a second phase 1997-2002.

The Prince Albert Model Forest (PAMF) is a nonprofit partnership of industry, local communities, First Nations, Federal and Provincial resource management agencies, and professional groups who are committed to the sustainability of Saskatchewan’s forests through research, education and integrated use of the forests resources.

There are presently 10 partners in the PAMF: Canadian Forest Service; Canadian Institute of Forestry; Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations; Lac La Ronge Indian Band; Montreal Lake Cree Nation; Parks Canada, Prince Albert National Park; Prince Albert Grand Council; Resort Village of Candle Lake; Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management; Weyerhaeuser, Saskatchewan Timberlands.

The goals of the PAMF are Sustainable Forest Management, Integrated Resource Management and Technology Transfer. These goals have been generally interpreted as Forests Forever, Forests for all Uses and Information to Forest Users respectively.

Objectives

To build a plan with a high level of involvement from the public, resource users, Aboriginal people and local residents. The PAMF partnership recognizes the value of local/traditional knowledge in resource management. The plan uses both scientific and traditional/local knowledge in the decision-making process.

To produce a plan which is mutually beneficial to all model forest partners and the public. The Prince Albert Model Forest Association does not have jurisdiction over the land. For the plan to be approved by the many jurisdictions it must be beneficial. To base management decisions in the PAMF area on the principles of ecosystem based/integrated resource management to help ensure social,
economic and environmental sustainability.

To adopt the principles of adaptive management to ensure that the best decisions are constantly being made. As we continue to learn more about our environment, we will apply up-to-date information to our decision-making processes.

Public Involvement

There is a growing trend across our Nation toward increased public involvement in resource management. This is because the value of public input in decision-making has been recognized. To be a true steward of our forests we must involve land users, public; stakeholders and aboriginal people in the decision-making process. Our public has been demanding increased opportunities for involvement. The courts have ruled in favor of consultation with First Nations, and defining their rights to consultation. Involving people, and consulting with them is part of being a good manager and a good steward.

The Prince Albert Model Forest Ecosystem Based, Integrated Resource Management Plan was developed by the model forest partnership through a working group of the model forest. The model forest partners make up all major jurisdictions and interests in the area. Through the model forest partnership, the groups and organizations have developed strong working relations, understanding of each partners mandate, and the ability to work effectively together on resource management projects.

To facilitate further input into the planning process two rounds of public consultation were held. As well, the model forest working group, which lead the development of the plan, was open to all interested agencies and organizations. The model forest chose to plan for the area with a high level of public consultation throughout the process. All groups and organizations were provided with opportunities to identify their concerns and provide options to address them, before drafting of the model forest plan. As well, the plan was developed to include all comments the model forest received through the first round of public consultation. Once drafted, the plan was taken to the partners and the public to show how each concern was dealt with and to ensure that it was acceptable to all parties.

Planning Process

The Prince Albert Model Forest Ecosystem Based, Integrated Resource Management Plan uses a broad six step process.

Plan Initiation: Is the step where a decision to enter into a planning exercise is made and a planning team is formed. The PAMF partnership recognized the need for a plan to integrate the partners and others activities, and to guide the sustainable management of the area.

Initiate Formal Public Involvement: In this step, land users and individuals with an interest in the planning area are identified and invited to participate in the planning processes by identifying concerns and suggesting possible solutions. Public involvement continues throughout the model forest planning process as described in the Public Involvement section of this document.

Collecting, Sharing and Analyzing of Information: Information will be collected by the planning team respecting both scientific and traditional knowledge. The model forest plan was largely based upon existing information. Information was collected from all of the partner organizations and would not have been available to any one partner outside of the model forest partnership. Existing plans that covered portions of the model forest area were collected and integrated into the plan. Information was shared with the public and the partners of the Prince Albert Model Forest as part of the planning process.

Formulating and Approving a Plan: In this step, a draft plan is compiled using the information gathered from the public, the partners and others. The plan is reviewed by the public and the model forest partners and if accepted it will be presented to the Board of Directors of the Prince Albert Model Forest for approval. The plan was presented to the Board of Directors in March 2000. Each of the 10 model forest partners has recommended the plan be approved.

Plan Implementation: The model forest has no legal authority over the lands designated as its area, therefore, the plan will be adopted and implemented by the partners. Each partner has agreed to adopt the plan as a guide to management in their own jurisdictions and has committed to implementing portions of the plan by identifying time frames (commitment dates). The plan identifies 138 separate actions to be carried out by the model forest and its partners. Of this number 98 have specific dates associated as to when implementation will occur. While implementation dates range over several years, a total of 79 actions have been identified for implementation within the first year (i.e. 2000-2001).

Plan Monitoring: The plan, following the principles of adaptive management, will accommodate changes, considering new circumstances, and knowledge. The plan
will be monitored to ensure it is effective and that it remains up-to-date. Each year the plan will be assessed on how the model forest and partners are performing the implementation. The annual assessments will be measured by the commitment dates for the various actions. Commitment dates met, or not been met, will be recorded in the annual assessment as a public document. Every five years the plan will undergo an evaluation to update the plan so that it may consider new knowledge, monitoring indicators, concerns and other changes. Public involvement will continue to play a key role in the annual assessments and five-year evaluations.

The model forest planning process was developed through a review of existing processes that have been used throughout Canada. The model forest process was designed so that it may be used as a model for planning elsewhere.

Individuals involvement in the model forest throughout the planning process largely remained static. It is critical to the planning process that changes to the membership of the core group leading plan development are minimized. Frequent membership changes can leave a project without direction, will increase the time required for the project and may result in the disbandment of the group.

Results

Outcomes of the PAMF plan include: increased trust among management agencies/jurisdictions in the model forest area; increased buy-in by partners and the public to the model forest and the plan; increased public and partner knowledge of the forest; an agreed upon guide to resource management decisions for the area; integration of the activities of multiple jurisdictions.

Impacts on resource management

This type of planning can have many impacts on resource management. These include: providing opportunity for input into the decision-making process; better decisions; increased number of options evaluated and discussed; less need for enforcement; increased buy-in; and, the ability to manage uses that are not possible without consultation and working as a partnership. In the PAMF area the plan will form an integrating policy document across all jurisdictions that enables the ecosystem to be managed in the best possible way.

Conclusions

The PAMF partnership, has developed a plan for the model forest area, involving all land users, Aboriginal people and interested public. The plan represents a significant step toward the PAMF goals of integrated resource management and sustainable forest management.

This plan is a model for ecosystem based/integrated resource management planning that can be used elsewhere. The methods tested in this process and experiences gained are being utilized in land use plans currently being developed within the province of Saskatchewan.

The consultation component of this process has been extensively documented and analyzed. This analysis, as well as feedback from participants, will provide further information on the process, increasing the knowledge available to all resource managers.

The value of the Prince Albert Model Forest partnership has been demonstrated. Commitment from all partners is needed to effectively develop, and implement a project like the model forest plan.

The plan will act as a guide for all resource management decisions in the Prince Albert Model Forest area, helping to ensure the best sustainable management, and stewardship occurs throughout all jurisdictions.