

FOREST PLANNING

UNDER THE SUSTAINABLE FOREST DEVELOPMENT ACT, THE MINISTÈRE DES FORÊTS, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANNING FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES. THIS NEW APPROACH WILL ENSURE THAT THREE KEY FOREST MANAGEMENT CONCERNS ARE ADDRESSED, NAMELY ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT, INTEGRATED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND REGIONALIZATION.

THE CHANGES INTRODUCED BY THE NEW FOREST REGIME

→ The foundations of the forest regime are set out in the Sustainable Forest Development Act, which replaced the Forest Act on April 1, 2013. The new regime brings in some major changes, especially with respect to forest planning. Among other things, the general forest management plans and annual forest management plans are replaced by integrated forest management plans with tactical and operational components, prepared by the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs.

The plans are prepared by the Ministère in collaboration with the local land and resource management panels and the operations panel.



LOCAL INTEGRATED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PANELS

The aim of the new forest regime is to ensure that forest planning is based on integrated, regionalized management of land and resources. To do this, the Act provides for the creation of local integrated land and resource management panels, at which the interests and preoccupations of individuals and organizations concerned by forest management activities are heard and taken into account. The Ministère is involved in the panels' work, to ensure that its plans reflect local sustainable forest management goals.

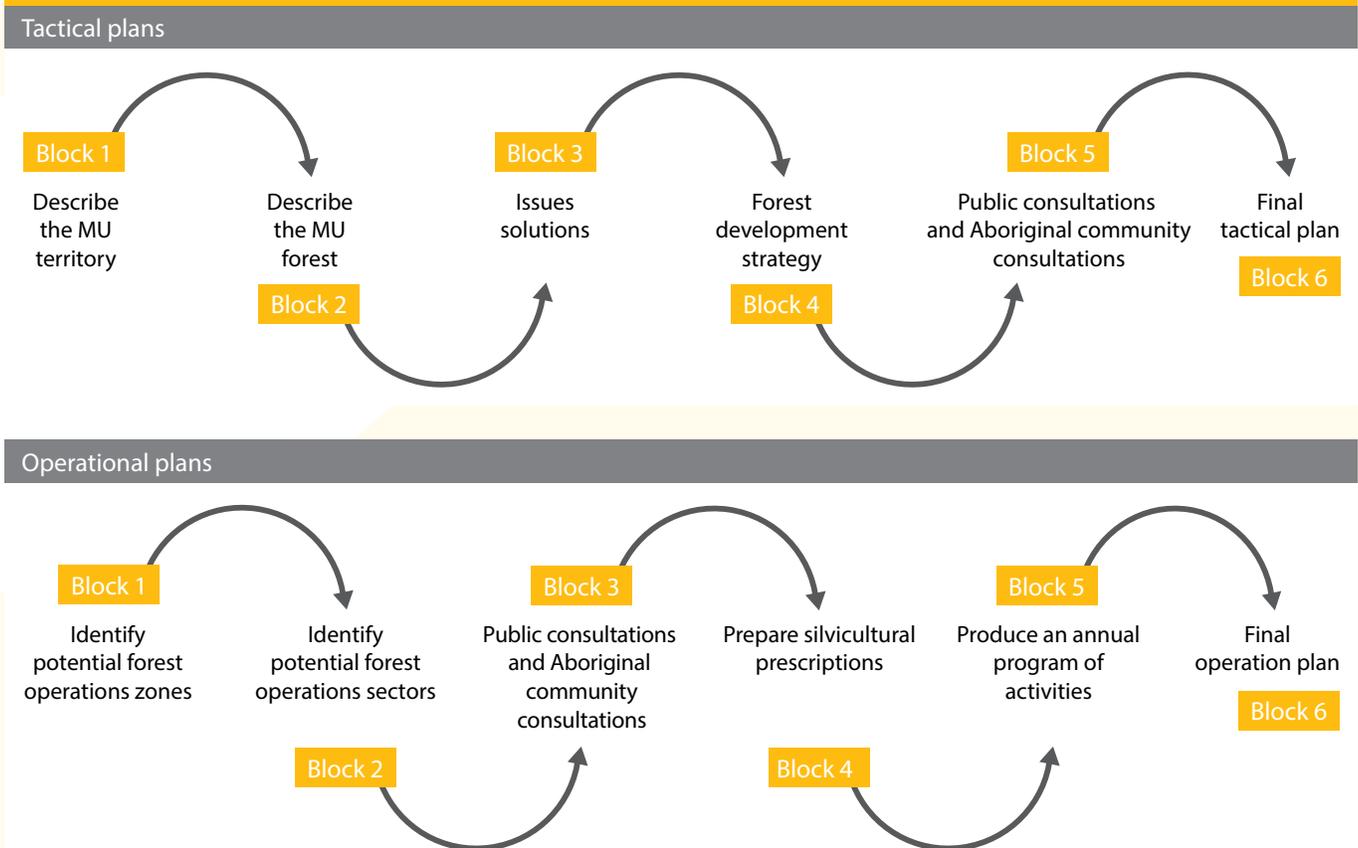
OPERATIONS PANEL

Operations panels have been set up to facilitate the organization of harvesting activities, and to help maintain forest certification obtained by supply guarantee holders. A panel is created for each area covered by a harvest agreement, and is composed of representatives from the Ministère, designated supply guarantee holders and the holders of permits to supply timber to a wood processing plant. The panels serve as forums for discussion at which the needs of forest certification applicants can be brought into line with the elements contained in the tactical and operational plans.

2013-2018 PLANNING MANUAL

The 2013-2018 Planning Manual, prepared by the Ministère, is used to produce tactical and operational integrated forest management plans. It serves as a guide for the Ministère's forestry engineer who is responsible for preparing the plans, and contains a series of activities that must be carried out. The activities are divided into blocks (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: DIAGRAM OF THE FOREST PLANNING PROCESS FOR 2013-2018





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TACTICAL PLANS

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A tactical plan covers a period of five years. It presents the goals for sustainable forest management, as well as the forest management strategy chosen to ensure achievement of those goals and compliance with the allowable cuts.

The first steps in the tactical section of the plan consist in describing the land and forests that make up the management unit. Using the principles of ecosystem-based management, differences between the natural forest and the existing forest are identified, and the related ecological issues in the management unit are established. The local integrated land and resource management panel then prepares an exhaustive list of social, economic and environmental concerns related to forest management, along with forest certification concerns. An approach by consensus is then used to convert the concerns into regional and local issues. The Ministère's planner works with the panel to propose management solutions that address these issues. For areas in respect of which certification has been obtained, the Ministère, when seeking solutions, also considers the certification-related needs of supply guarantee holders. All these discussions take place at the operations panel meetings.

Once this has been done, the planner is able to establish a management strategy for the unit. The partners agree on the choice of silvicultural options for the different management unit sectors, in order to achieve the goals that have been set. Land and forest conditions influence the choice of these options, and potential treatments will depend on existing vegetation, soil and bioclimatic conditions.

Lastly, the tactical plan containing the development strategy is sent for public consultation, led by the regional organizations responsible for setting up the integrated land and resource management panels. The Ministère also organizes consultations with the Aboriginal communities. After the consultations, the plan may be amended to reflect the comments received. It is made public as soon as it comes into force.

The tactical plan presents the goals for sustainable forest management, as well as the forest management strategy chosen to ensure achievement of those goals and compliance with the allowable cuts.

OPERATIONAL PLAN

The operational plan sets out the forest operations zones in which logging and other management activities (non-commercial silvicultural work and road work) may take place. The operational plan is dynamic, and is updated continuously to include new operations zones.

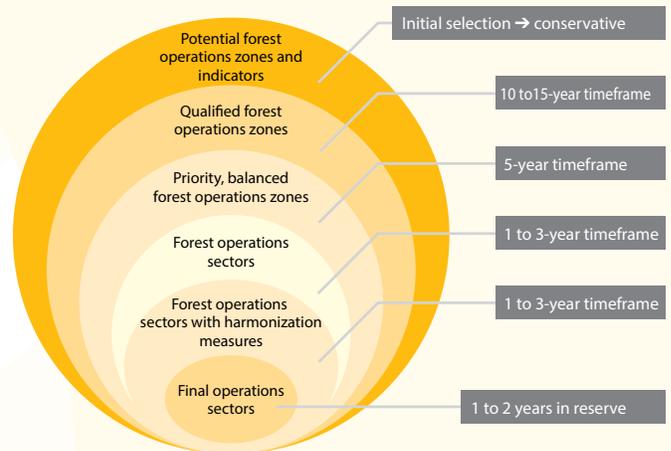
Forest operations zone: An area composed of a group of ecoforest polygons, in which forest operations may be carried out. The zone is used as a basis for delimiting forest operations sectors.

Potential forest operations sector: An area located within a forest operations zone, in which operations sectors are established.

Forest operations sector: An area in which a single silvicultural treatment is carried out during a given year, located within a single management unit, covering no more than 250 hectares and comprising one or more polygons.

The planner begins by identifying all the areas suitable for application of the management strategy presented in the tactical plan. These are known as potential forest operations zones, and are established on a 10 to 15-year timeframe. The planner then uses different indicators (compliance with the strategy, volume by species, operational cost, etc.) to select smaller zones within these potential areas, which will be planned on a 1 to 3-year timeframe. Members of the integrated land and resource management panel and the operations panel may be involved in this process if they so wish. To support these selections, supply guarantee holders identify the locations of any roads and infrastructures required to provide access. The entire exercise must be respectful of the potential operations sectors and management strategy, as well as any agreements and other measures agreed upon with the integrated land and resource management panels.

The operational plan sets out the forest operations zones in which logging and other development activities may take place.



Consultations are then organized for both the general public and the Aboriginal communities, in the same way as for the tactical plan.

Once the consultations are complete, the harmonization measures are applied to the zones in question. The planner then works with the timber marketing board to identify the sectors from which timber will be sold on the open market. Lastly, the planner gathers information (inventory, photo-interpretation, etc.) and drafts the silvicultural prescriptions for each zone in which forest operations may take place.

The Ministère prepares a harvest agreement entrusting the supply guarantee holders with the task of producing an annual program of harvesting activities based on the previously-identified forest operations zones. The program should be designed to generate the anticipated volumes in compliance with the forest management strategy set out in the tactical plan, and with any provisions and measures agreed upon by the Ministère.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT PLANS

Where significant tracts of forest are damaged by natural disturbances such as forest fires, insect outbreaks or windthrows, the Ministère must prepare special management plans to ensure that the timber is salvaged and, where applicable, the damaged areas are restored to production. The plans do not necessarily need to comply with the Sustainable Forest Management Regulation or with the allowable annual cut. When a special plan comes into force, it automatically replaces any plan previously applicable to the area in question, and all contract and agreement holders in the area must comply with it.

For further information on the forest regime review by the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs, please visit the following website: mrn.gouv.qc.ca/forets