

## Non-timber values take precedent over harvest levels in Canada's Yukon

Planners use software solution for options analysis to show trade-offs between various forest management regimes

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Kirk Price, Forest Inventory Analyst, Dept of Energy, Mines and Resources



There is perhaps no place in North America where the forests are as pristine as in Canada's Yukon.

In the far northern territory, the forests exist as they have for millennia - and as much as possible, people there want to keep it that way.

"Yukoners place a high value on this vast, relatively undisturbed wilderness resource and want careful resource planning so as not to tarnish these features," says Kirk Price, Forest Inventory Analyst, Forest Management Branch, Dept of Energy, Mines, and Resources

"Unlike most jurisdictions in North America where having timber available for harvesting is the primary focus of planning exercises, in the Yukon maintaining non-timber values is typically the focus of the plan."

### **Cooperative, community approach to forest management**

Forest values and goals - and creating forest management plans for preserving those values and achieving goals and objectives - vary greatly throughout the territory. These values and objectives, which include small scale forestry operations and fire wood and subsistence living, are largely determined at the community-level through Renewable Resource Councils (RRC).

Comprised of representation from First Nations (Native Canadians) and other community members, the RRCs provide direction for sustainable forest management in their respective areas - essentially providing the strategic direction for more detailed planning.

The RRCs submit strategic forest management plans to the Yukon government for review and implementation and the role of government during this process is to provide technical support.

"The Yukon is really only creating long-term forest management plans for the first time and for each territory within the Yukon, the situation is unique," Mr. Price says, adding that industry, government and other stakeholders have input into the formulation of plans along with the RRCs.

### **Software solution helps examine trade-offs**

For the past two years, Mr. Price has been using the RSPS to develop forest planning models that optimally address the values and objectives of all stakeholders and observe trade-offs between various forest management regimes. Models are created for each First Nation Traditional RRC territory and a larger landscape model is created as well.

"The biggest benefit of Remsoft software is its flexibility to create various models and assess forest management options. Since the Yukon is at the beginning stages of forest management, RRCs, First Nations, government, and industry, want to know the tradeoffs of decisions made today in terms of long term sustainability - questioning what if we decide to go in this direction and how does that impact these values?"

"Using RSPR we can model and analyze all the issues and present scenarios that illustrate the tradeoffs and opportunities," Mr. Price notes, adding that for one recent project he presented 70 different options from various stakeholders.

"It is great to go to meetings with all the stakeholders and not have to explain to them that their option could not be assessed because the modeling software was inadequate," he says.

### ***Spatial Considerations and Communications***

Among the more contentious planning issues in the Yukon are spatial issues. Forest planners and other land-use managers have detailed discussions concerning opening size, configurations and possible disturbances.

"Not surprisingly, large, highly-visible openings are generally not liked here but as planners we are presented with a dilemma because in the Yukon natural disturbances are large and occur over vast areas. Since ecosystem based management is likely to be applied, it supports larger openings but we will see how this plays out."

As the planners move towards the final stages of creating forest management plans for all of the Yukon Territory, communicating these plans and management activity schedules becomes increasingly important.

Mr. Price says over the next year, the Yukon government will be holding workshops with the RRCs and other planning teams to educate people on timber supply reviews and to further their understanding of management decisions.

Using the Remsoft Spatial Planning System he will be able to illustrate not only how management decisions were made but also show the effects of alternatives and illustrate, using digital maps, the near and long-term effects of the management plans.

For more information about the Yukon Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources visit <http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/Forestry/index.html>

