

2005 Burn Operators Forum

Proceedings

Monday, September 26, 2005

Houston BC



cleanairplan.ca

PREPARED BY:

Laurie Gallant, Footprint Environmental Strategies

info@cleanairplan.ca

(250) 847-1672

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1. Introductions:

Brian Atherton, Northwest Fire Centre – Bulkley	Armel Castellan, MoE
Janine Dougall, RDBN	Garth Ehalt, Houston Forest Products
Laurie Gallant, Footprint/AMS	Rob Krause, Northwest Fire Centre - Nadina
Cliff Manning, Lakes District Woodlot Association	Dan Metcalf – independent small sawmill operator
Aumir Nelson, CANFOR	Paul Scharwz, PIR
Ian Sharpe, MoE	Walter Tymkow, CANFOR
Richard Vossen, Babine Forest Products	Paul Wandler, Nadina Forest District
Ben Weinstein, MoE	

2. How did we do – 2004 report by Ben Weinstein and Discussion

Full presentation will be posted at cleanairplan.ca

- incredibly successful
- overview – bigger picture and overview; references to Plans
- emission breakdown for 2002 - major licensees resource mgmt debris burning 34%; small licensees 14%; together make up about 50% of all emissions
- definitions of PM10 and 2.5
- overall Plan goals and chapter 6 goals and indicators
- proactive response when AQ is deteriorating – note difference with provincially issued health advisory
- When will we have a potential episode day? Still air is the biggest signal.
- thresholds of 25 for PM10 and 15 for 2.5
- What is an episode? How do we measure concentrations?
- locally developed Forest District Burn Management Plans manage for sensitivity levels identified as low, medium, and high
- CVF (Custom Venting Forecasting) service introduced in 2004
- comparison to Environment Canada service – very specific to area not just Smithers and Burns Lake; 21 days of burning extra in Burns lake ventilation index zone alone and 18 extra days in Smithers
- Burn season air quality: 23 PED in BL and 18 in Houston – many attributable to burning but NO AQ episodes
- Only one AQ complaint; the complaint was not from a charter company. It was from a citizen in the Lakes District
- Burn Season Hourly Average 15.91- sometimes the AQI did peak above 50 but was not sustained over 24 hours i.e. in 2003 we had a 2 week long burn ban advisory

▪ **Action: Laurie to send link and password to Air Quality Online and to post on website**

- Ben showed chart showing BVL D continuous monitoring network
- 0-25 good, 25-50 fair, 50-100 poor, above 100 very poor;
- about to embark on a review of 70 stations throughout province; for example Quesnel has 4; for our whole airshed we only have 4; is this good enough?
- 2.5 versus 10; used to monitor only for pm 10 which is fine for crustal sources like road dust but 2.5 is better for combustion sources
- Is tree pollen an issue? Yes, some pollens are smaller than pm10; we need to keep this in mind when interpreting data but this is a spring issue not a fall issue
- How are monitoring station locations determined? Variety of factors; scientific requirements i.e. height, proximity to people but also willing host. I.e. Burns Lake more susceptible to road dust but Houston more prone to wood stoves from trailer park.
- Concern about numbers being skewed; important to see value of all locations i.e. average for airshed and profile for various sources. Good to have a diverse network that speaks to a number of different sources.

3. Improvements for the coming year and outreach efforts: open discussion

- more clients for CVF service and better access to information i.e. website, presentations.
- Link to AQ online.
- From PIR and Babine perspective current setup is great.
- information offered last year was excellent, liked having access ahead of time; sometimes conflicting sources between internet, Ben, conservation officers – trying to choose source that results in least amount of trouble.(Cliff)
- **Agreement: Timing of Annual Forum – closer to beginning of September – PIR usually starts by Sept 15**
- How do we maximize number of people using CVF service? Not just sunny days. How can this group help with outreach?
- PIR: contractors call Paul and ask if it's okay to burn; Cliff – 2/3 of members on e-mail can distribute information that way. Go through associations.
- Lakes District Woodlot Association every 2 months, Houston every 6 weeks; Cliff can e-mail out information.
- Can set up presentation for October including content time and location.
- **Action: Cliff and Ben to work out details of presentations and distributing information from this forum.**
- One page information sheet went out to “everyone” including the Burn Registration department
- **Action: Ben to follow up on partnership with Victoria to make sure our information went out with burn registration numbers – Cliff hasn't seen it.**
- Comment on dirty green piles at the edge of town for wildfire management i.e. within town limits can burn without burn registration number—this is in reference to category 2 piles. it is not necessary to obtain a registration number for category 2 piles but it is necessary to check the venting
- **ACTION: MoE to follow up with all fire chiefs to make sure they have CVF information to pass along (even if burn operator doesn't need a burn registration number or permit)**

- Can we create a ONE STOP SHOP so that operators don't have to phone more than one place before they burn?
- ACTION: Ian to check with regional manager Jim to see if one stop with Ben is acceptable.
- ACTION: append on information regarding air quality classifications to CV Forecast
- AGREEMENT: send out 4 week advance notice of annual burn operators meeting which will be held in early September each year; send out standard agenda as per this year's event and give participants a chance to add additional agenda items or delete items.
- AGREEMENT: important to get as many people as possible using CVF and operators can help with outreach; AMS will do presentations and set up webpage and do some media work;
- Is there a limit to scope of who should call for information? Is any size of fire too small? Agreement: MoE and AMS can set up general information in newspaper and radio; contact numbers at town and RD office
- from RD's perspective important to know who this applies to, keep it simple and indicate if this is regulated.
- Saturdays and Sundays are a problem because offices are closed; people are going to go ahead.
- AGREEMENT: two levels of education and service; use phone books and Ben has existing Hotline for after hours.

Is there a distribution list that we can standardize so that burn operators can coordinate efforts better; needs to include charter flight operators; anyone that shouldn't be included? Note: Licensees do this already. Laurie has a separate list for sending out invitations to forums and following up on action items.

- Is authorization given based on venting alone or total volume of piles?
- How should numbers be given and what does forecaster want? In past just the blocks have been given with rough volumes on a daily basis.
- Typical sequence is that operator/planner will call for forecast the day before, will finalize their plan, and then burn.
- Do we set limits on the number of piles that can be burned? Can be based on sensitive zones and corridors i.e. must protect lives and health of people and make decisions based on this; in the past 10 years Ian has only seen 2 instances of having to put a lid on how much can be burned.
- How much is too much? Very dependent on location and proximity to populations.
- Bug kill impact – volumes are about the same?
- Burns Lake has problem because of interface with highway; notice BL community forest not here today and they probably have a huge number.
- Action: Cliff can follow up with BL community forest on estimates for upcoming burn season.
- Action: Follow up with others not at this meeting that should have this information and be involved with regional efforts, including: Cheslatta, Tye Lake, Thatsa Timber, Fraser Lake Sawmills, BC Timber Sales – Gerry; salvage and non-renewable forest licences go through tenure side of Nadina Forest District; Marvin Strimbold 696-3607; Houston Community Salvage – Paul Murphy, Craig Stoltenberg. Agriculture side of things: Eugene Wittwer – BV Dairymen and Cattlemen – need presentations; private loggers?

BCTS can build CVF into their contract and pre-work meeting checklist for the environmental management system.

4. Report from burn operators and review of current system

- Each burn operator circled approximate locations on the Skeena Region Map for Environment Canada's Ventilation Forecast Zones
- Arnel is the new CV Forecaster as of September 2005 and works 6 days a week 1-5 pm except Saturdays during burning season. 847-7547
- Can contact Ben in the mornings. 1-866-362-4986
- Maps: Environment Canada Ventilation forecast Zones – Skeena Region
- If you are burning in Vanderhoof you can call Smithers or Prince George but his area is not covered by Environment Canada
- Brian Atherton – want to do more prescribed burning i.e. working with First Nations to increase berry harvesting potential; also will be looking at modifying fire suppression strategies. Will be seeing more smoke from these activities.
- **ACTION: Laurie and Brian to work together to make sure public education and media messages don't contradict each other.**
- **ACTION: Confirm status and scope of MoF Fire Management Plan under development - and coordinate efforts around this work; should be in time for spring burning season (focus on residential/ small scale open burning).**
- Funding for CVF: funding formula 65% licensee and 35% provincial government
- Ian is hoping that this program will in 3 or 4 years be self-sufficient so that Province is out of drivers' seat.
- This year we have 12 different companies contributing towards cost of CVF services. Cost-sharing is based on AAC. Cost in future may go up since at present we are paying for scientific technician and infrastructure costs are covered. To do this privately would be more expensive, but if we have more licensees paying then costs will still be relatively low.
- How many forecasts can be done in a day? If we expand geographic scope to Omineca Peace region, how will this affect quality and cost of service?
- Laurie reviewed structure of Airshed Management Society, current Board of Directors and her role as facilitator

5. Cross-reference with Clean Air Plan and District Level Burn Management Plans

- Report on implementation of Chapter 6: recommendations to District Level Burn Plans
- Highlights were given from Appendix F and Chapter 6
- **ACTION: Each chapter should have a summary of what has been done and when and put into Plan; decisions made etc to have an implementation history.**

6. Report on presentation to RDBN

- Paul Schwarz and Laurie Gallant attended RDBN board meeting on September 8
- Overall a positive learning experience and a good foundation for cooperative efforts in future
- feedback received included feeling that since PIR can burn 2000-5000 piles per year and RDBN only burns 3, they should pursue this option and burn to BMPs.
- Recognized that environmental and health impacts do occur.

- Lots of differences between industry and MSW wood waste burning piles. I.e. size of piles, geography, composition of woody materials. RDBN definitely has some unique challenges.
- Has MOE thought about adverse impacts of MoE not burning? Yes, MoE has provided funding to identify options for managing wood waste.
- RDBN currently does not have mandate to join airshed management planning process.
- **ACTION: Laurie to scan and PDF minutes from RDBN minutes and distribute; noted that we should preface minutes with note that these are part of a set of minutes and sensitivity to legal issues (confirm wording with Janine)**

7. Next Steps:

- **Action: new Nadina burn plan for website.**
- If anyone wants a small map Ben has copies here.
- To start the CVF service, please give a small map of where your blocks are for exact lats and longs and an excel spreadsheet detailing each block.
- Laurie mentioned that we have a general e-mail list for our bi-annual newsletter and she will add everyone's name to it unless she hears otherwise.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm. Next meeting: September 2006.