Report on Workshop Discussions

A) Resource Management Policies and Guidelines

by

William Straight¹

Our workshop session offered a very good opportunity to get an appreciation of the understanding people have of Ministry policies and guidelines. We focussed on the moose guidelines hoping that these would bring out the principles and the problems that are being encountered. We developed a series of questions concerning guidelines as an aid in organizing our discussions. For example: Are guidelines mandatory or are they optional? Are they flexible and if so how flexible? Is it understood how guidelines are developed? What are the problems in implementing the guidelines? Is there an alternative? What is the role of the forest industry?

I was pleased to see real acceptance of what the Ministry is trying to do in developing things like the moose guidelines. We found that there was some misunderstanding or varying interpretations about how the guidelines are to be applied. It became quite clear that people want some flexibility. They want to be able to make local decisions based on the local situation. There was also concern expressed about the need for an appeal process to cover the situation where a forester and a biologist or any other combination of managers did not think the guidelines applied to their situation or were not able to agree on a course of action. It was pretty well agreed that the system needs some method to rationalize conflicting views when they arise.

Concern was also expressed about the need to allow adequate time for planning within the guidelines and how inappropriate it is to come out at the last minute in the planning process and ask companies to make major changes in management prescriptions.

It became apparent in our discussions that many people are unaware of how these guidelines are developed. In fact quite a few, both in industry and the Ministry, are not sure how many guidelines have been developed! Although there is a defined and evolving process for preparing guidelines we clearly have to do a better job of communicating this to the managers in the field.

We discussed difficulties in implementing the guidelines. They have been referred to several times during this workshop. Such things as scarcity of funds, different

boundaries for wildlife management and forest management, incomplete scientific knowledge, inconsistencies in application, and the lack of quantifiable wildlife management targets are all recognized as important impediments that require attention.

A discussion about problems leads inevitably to the search for alternatives. After much discussion the group concluded that the guideline approach is a reasonable way to proceed and it could not identify a viable alternative that would better meet the requirements for integrated resource management at the present stage of our evolution. An important conclusion was that we better learn to use a small number of important guidelines before embarking on a proliferation of manuals, etc., to cover all the wildlife species in the forest.

The role of companies *vis a vis* wildlife generated some lively discussion. The industry and the Ministry are clearly at a crossroads on their roles in the protection of "other values," i.e., the environment. It is something that is being reviewed and discussed and must be better defined in the near future. I look on this as a very positive development.

Now turning to recommendations. We see a major need to communicate both to ministry and industry staff where the Ministry is going with guidelines and how to apply them. We have to educate and train our professional and technical people on what is expected and how we see some flexibility being built into the system. We recommend that the cost of implementing the guidelines be reviewed, that means be sought to reduce these costs where possible, and that the focus should include the costs associated with paperburden and administrative complexities as well as the more conventional considerations. The importance of setting quantifiable objectives and devising practical means to measure progress was also stressed. Our final recommendation is that we stress the importance of increased dialogue at the local level for in the final analysis it is only through an acceptance within the industry and the Ministry that we are going to generate any real integrated resource management in the field.

¹Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Kenora, Ont.