

SCEK Project Profile

Project Name:	OGMA Assessment Project (Dawson Creek Timber Supply Area)
Project Number:	RA2011-06
Proponent:	EnCana Corporation
SCEK Funding Envelope:	Environmental Impacts
Timeframe:	October 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012

Project objectives

The objectives of this project are as follows:

1. optimally define the information needed to allow an oil and gas company to, in the pre-application stage, assess whether their proposed oil and gas activity can pass the OGMA material adverse effect “test” when planning to develop within an OGMA.
2. assess the development “footprint” already present in the OGMA and the impacts of this ‘footprint’ to old seral forest representation.
3. assess whether the current OGMA modification process captured in the BC Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Order will work for the oil and gas industry as it allows for “minor intrusions into OGMA’s”. “Minor” is currently defined as:
 - Provided the disturbance to the gross OGMA area does not exceed:*
 - (a) 10% in OGMA’s less than 50 hectares; or*
 - (b) 5% or 40 hectares, which is less, in OGMA’s of 50 hectares or greater.*

Project description

The project will study old seral stage forest representation in several Old Growth Management Areas (OGMA) in the South Peace region, an area generally west and south of the City of Dawson Creek. The project will analyze the following attributes and issues in the selected OGMA’s:

- OGMA forest species composition and seral stages.
- Areas within the OGMA that do not contribute to the old seral stage forest representation target.
- Percent of OGMA that would contribute (or not) to the Timber Harvesting Land Base (THLB) areas; Productive Forest Land Base (PFLB) and any Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) calculations.
- Areas within the OGMA that are constrained by other requirements such as OGAA EPMR riparian areas, designated Wildlife Habitat Areas or Ungulate Winter Ranges or wildlife features.

- Additional biodiversity factors that are “in addition to” the old seral stage forest representation targets.
- Extent of Mountain Pine Beetle impacts, as this may have impacted old seral forest representation in the OGMA.
- Existing development within the OGMA in hectares and percentage of the OGMA under developed.
- With industry’s support, estimate potential new footprint required within each OGMA.

Project Background

Old-growth management areas are an important biological diversity attribute on the land. OGMAs were officially designated under the *Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)* in Northeast BC’s Dawson Creek TSA in 2009. The *Oil and Gas Activity Act (OGAA) Environmental Protection and Management Regulation (EPMR)* came into force in October 2010 which sets out government environmental objectives for OGMAs.

It is anticipated that the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) will by *Order* designate the OGMAs under OGAA. Once these OGMAs are designated, oil and gas activities will need to address Section 7 of the EPMR and ensure there is no material adverse effect to old seral forest representation in any OGMA.

Project approach

The project will involve the following approach:

1. Utilize a consultant experienced and knowledgeable about OGMAs (e.g., forestry consultant) to analyze the factors listed in the project description and prepare preliminary recommendations.
2. Discuss preliminary recommendations with industry and appropriate government technical staff.
3. Draft joint recommendations based on discussions with industry and appropriate government technical staff.
4. Present findings to the SCEK Fund.
5. Distribute applicable information and findings to industry and government.

Project deliverables

The deliverables from this project include the following:

- draft analysis report complete with maps that includes preliminary recommendations.
- Joint recommendations from industry, MFLNRO and OGC technical staff that address oil and gas activities in OGMAs.
- process to determine land disturbance impacts on an OGMA-by-OGMA basis, and, potentially, a process to address any new OGMAs on a landscape level that could be applied across other areas of Northeastern BC.

Project team members

- Mike Lambert, Project Sponsor, EnCana.
- Jill Carlsen, Project Manager, EnCana.
- Danny Way, Assistant Project Manager, EnCana.
- Andrew Higgins, CNRL.
- Scott Grindal, Conoco-Phillips.
- Niki Weinrauch, Shell Canada.
- Dean McCluskey, Talisman Energy.
- Lynn Huntley, Apache.
- Rod Backmeyer, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO).
- Gerry Fox, Oil and Gas Commission (OGC).

Application and uses of project findings

Outcomes from this project will assist:

1. Industry in meeting the material adverse effect “test” when they must develop oil and gas resources within a designated OGMA.
2. Industry in demonstrating that responsible development of energy resources can address and incorporate management of important environmental values.
3. The OGC in regulating oil and gas activities within OGMAs.
4. MFLNRO in establishing OGMAs in the most optimal locations so that biological diversity values are managed on the landscape while allowing for the least conflict with government’s objectives and responsible development of energy resources.