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YUKON FOREST RESOURCES ACT

Wildlife Features Standard

REGULATORY REFERENCE

Forest Resources Regulation

PART 2 - PLANNING

DIVISION 5 – GENERAL

Guidelines and standards

23 The Director may develop management guidelines, standards or manuals identifying operating procedures for forest resource harvesting and related activities as described in a timber harvest plan, a woodlot plan or a site plan.

OBJECTIVES

- Ensure that important wildlife and ecological features are given adequate protection during forestry planning and operations.
- Where wildlife features are known, or identified during planning, appropriate measures will be put in place to conserve these features.
- Wildlife features include: mineral licks, bear and wolverine dens, nest sites, beaver dams, cavity nesting and wildlife trees, game trails, cliff faces, and fish over-wintering or spawning areas.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- The wildlife key area database should be consulted for mapped locations of some of these features, values and attributes (Environment Yukon).
- Where terrain features or other obstacles make it necessary to encroach on identified buffers for specific features, the operations must be conducted in a manner that maintains the integrity of that feature.
- When wildlife features are encountered during harvest operations, efforts will be made to avoid disturbance of the feature. Consideration will be given to alternate harvesting methods.
- Leave snags where worker safety is not compromised and the retention is consistent with site objectives.

SPECIFIC FEATURES

Mineral Licks

The management objective is to maintain use of the lick by wildlife and to prevent easy access to the lick by hunters.

Standards:

- Mineral licks shall not be disturbed or destroyed.
- Maintain cover around licks and wildlife trails to licks.

Guidelines:

- A minimum 200m no disturbance buffer of should be implemented around mineral licks.

Effective Date

Beaver Dams and Lodges

The management objective is to maintain furbearer populations.

Standards:

- Beaver dams shall not be disturbed unless a permit to remove them is authorized.

Guidelines:

- Incorporate consideration of beaver dams and lodges into riparian management.

Game trails

The management objective is to maintain local migration corridors for wildlife. These are often used repetitively over long time-scales.

Guidelines:

- Where documented game trails are known in advance, a no disturbance buffer averaging in width of 200m should be implemented around the game trail.
- Where possible, do not disturb or destroy known, significant game trails.
- Where roads bisect a game trail, minimize activity within 100m of the game trail along the road right-of-way. Also may consider other options including notching windthrow and sightlines.

Fish over-wintering or spawning habitat

The management objective is to maintain critical habitats for fish.

Guidelines:

- Where fish over-wintering or spawning habitat is known in advance, site planning for roads and stream crossings should avoid these habitats.
- Refer to road construction, surveying and stream crossing standards where fish over-wintering or spawning habitat is identified during road surveys and construction.
- In fish bearing streams ensure fish can pass through all manmade structures, ensure that water substrate is not changed to the point of creating new water features unless it benefits fish passage.

Cliff Faces for Nesting

The management objective is to maintain conditions suitable for the use of the cliff face by nesting birds and other wildlife.

Standards:

- Active cliff face for nesting minimum 300m no disturbance buffer.

Guidelines:

- Based on the ecological requirements and sensitivity to forestry operations of the species utilizing the cliff, management options for the surrounding forest will be considered which will maintain the habitat value of the nesting site.

Raptor Tree Nests, Stick Nests

The management objective is to maintain breeding opportunities for raptors and other birds on the landscape.

Standards:

- Raptor tree nests and stick nests shall not be destroyed.
- Raptor tree nests and stick nests require a minimum 50m no activity buffer where harvesting is to occur between April 1 and September 30 of any year.
- Between April 1 and September 30 of any year; a buffer is not required where the nest is determined to be inactive by a qualified professional.

Guidelines:

- Consider seasonal operating windows to avoid disturbing active nests.
- Where possible, incorporate nests into retention patches and maintain linkage to surrounding forest.
- Where possible, retain forest cover around nests to maintain landscape integrity, provide lasting habitat values, provide windthrow protection and reduce exposure to predators.
- When found, consider groups of raptor nests (2 or more within a 100m radius of any other raptor nest) as a single feature to be managed rather than managing each individual raptor nest separately and incorporate the feature into block reserves when possible.

Bear Dens

The management objective is to minimize disturbance to denning bears and denning habitat.

Standards:

- Bear dens shall not be damaged or disturbed.
- Structures and features that may be bear dens found during planning require confirmation of their status by a qualified professional and the applicable no disturbance buffer and retention area from Table 1.
- If a suspected bear den is encountered during forest operations the location of the den must immediately be reported to a Forest Officer. Activities within 200 meters of the den shall be suspended until it is assessed by a qualified professional. Following assessment the appropriate no disturbance buffer or retention area from Table 1 shall be applied.

	Active Bear Dens		Inactive Bear Dens
	No Disturbance Buffer Radius(m)	<i>Sow with Cubs</i> No Disturbance Buffer Radius(m)	Retention Area Radius(m)
Grizzly Bear	200	300	25
Black Bear	100	200	

Table 1. Minimum No Disturbance Buffers and Retention Areas for Bear Dens.

- Active black bear dens require a no disturbance buffer of 100m radius (3 hectares). Black bear dens occupied by a sow with cubs require a no disturbance buffer of 200m radius (12.5 hectares).
- Active grizzly bear dens require a no disturbance buffer of 200m radius (12.5 hectares). Grizzly bear dens occupied by a sow with cubs require a no disturbance buffer of 300m radius (28 hectares).
- Permanent bear dens (e.g. natural rock cavities) confirmed by a qualified professional require a no disturbance buffer of 200m radius (12.5 hectares).
- Bear dens containing bears of unverified species will be assumed to be black bear dens.
- Principles of adaptive management will be applied in situations where no disturbance buffers and retention areas have been unknowingly encroached upon during operations.

Guidelines:

- Consider seasonal operating windows to avoid disturbing active dens.
- Landscape level management is the preferred tool for incorporating bear dens into reserve zones and habitat connectivity.

- When found, consider groups of dens (2 or more within a 100m of each other) and other ecological features, such as nest or mineral licks, as a single feature to be managed collectively rather than managing each individual feature separately.

Safety

- The above identified “no disturbance buffers” are intended to provide for the protection of bears and their den habitats. Working in bear country at any time of year requires worker diligence and application of safety practices, as described in publications such as: How you can Stay Safe in Bear Country (Environment Yukon, 2013), and Guidelines for Industrial Activity in Bear Country (Environment Yukon, 2010).

DEFINITIONS

Active Den – is one where there is evidence of current use or use that season and has been assessed by a qualified wildlife biologist.

Inactive Den - is one that historically has been used but is not currently occupied as determined by a qualified professional.

Permanent Den – is one which has not been excavated out of the ground and is located in natural rock cavities and has been confirmed by a qualified wildlife biologist.

No Disturbance Buffer - is a temporary area of inactivity in order to minimize disturbance.

Retention Area – is an area of inactivity which remains during and after operations in order to minimize disturbance to a bear den and maintain forest cover in the surrounding habitat.

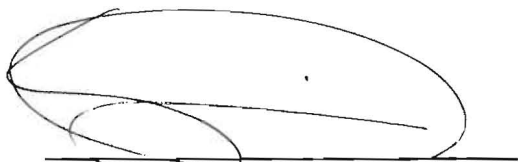
Adaptive Management – is the practice of identifying site conditions such as forest density, topography and other pertinent factors to determine the most appropriate size, shape and location of buffers and retention areas.

Qualified Professional – is an individual who through suitable education, experience and knowledge, may reasonably be relied on to provide advice within his or her area of expertise, and is practicing or providing advice which is applicable to their area of expertise.

Cliff Face for Nesting - is a cliff face or outcrop which has historically been documented to support breeding nesting, or roosting birds.

Game Trails - are trails or corridors showing evidence of significant levels of use and which have been documented by wildlife surveys or local knowledge.

Inactive Nest - is one that historically has been used but is not currently occupied as determined by a qualified professional.



Approval signature

Lyle Dinn

Director, Forest Management branch

Feb 27, 2014
Date