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How can stakeholder cooperation improve Strategic Environmental Assessment Follow-up?

A case of the private-operated Forest Management Plan, Saskatchewan, Canada

Abstract

Stakeholder engagement is seen as a vital component of a successful Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA, an evaluation of environmental and sustainability consequences of strategic initiatives prior to their implementation, seeks to ensure that various stakeholder perspectives are considered early in strategic decision-making process. But once the implementation decisions are taken are the stakeholders consulted upon or involved in plan/program implementation and **SEA follow-up**? How can participatory processes facilitate the delivery of strategies and follow-up? These questions remain largely unexplored due to the conventional focus on **ex-ante** SEA evaluations. Meanwhile, given their long-term effects, the added values of stakeholder participation and cooperation in the SEA follow-up activities may significantly contribute to promoting the sustainability and democracy principles. This paper explores the role and potential of stakeholder processes in facilitating SEA follow-up on the case of a 20-year Forest Management Plan (FMP) in Saskatchewan, Canada, undertaken as a part of a PhD research. It identifies different forms of engaging stakeholders from private, regulatory and public sectors and explores the elements of SEA follow-up which they are linked to and can influence.

Key words: SEA follow-up, communication, stakeholders, participation.

1 SEA and stakeholder participation

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a proactive evaluation of environmental and socio-economic consequences of strategic initiatives prior to their implementation. It emerged in the 1970s, however its practice was largely ad-hoc and de facto until the idea of sustainability came along. The concept was given a “real political momentum” (Klane & Albrecht 2005,19) in the Brundtland Commission Report (UN/WCED 1987). It was then widely propagated at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, which adopted the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21¹. The concept of sustainable development has required cardinal – ‘strategic’ changes in political and socio-economic systems with equal weights to be given to the interests of environmental protection, social justice, and economic

¹ The Rio Declaration set out a set of principles, some of which relate to sustainability and promote the principles of precautionary approach in environmental issues, citizen participation in decision-making, access to environmental information, etc. (UNCED 1992). Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of global, national and local actions to attain sustainable development with a special focus on community-based and –driven actions (UNWCED 1992).

development. It has become a global policy that has placed SEA and similar Environmental Assessment tools in the forefront as key instruments for promoting the spirit of sustainability². Sustainability has stressed the key role of SEA for balancing environmental and socio-economic objectives of usually highly politicized PPPs, and for “moving... PPPs...towards sustainable outcomes” (Brown & Therivel 2000,184).

Stakeholder engagement is widely seen as an essential element for a successful SEA (figure 1). *To increase participation of a wider range of actors in PPP and strategic decision-making* is one of the fundamental aims of SEA alongside influencing (improving) higher tier decision-making and policy, plan, program (PPP) formulation taking into consideration wider environmental impacts and alternatives; strengthening project-level EIA; supporting decision-making towards sustainable development; and creating a learning process and new knowledge (e.g. in Fischer 2007; Noble 2002; Partidario 2000; Therivel 2004). That is said, SEA aims to involve a wide range of stakeholders whose participation might range from providing input (mainly by the public) to making strategic decisions (strategy owners or authorities). If SEA fails to secure a public participation process, the perspectives of various stakeholders will not be considered (early) in strategic decision-making process leading to stakeholder conflicts, mutual dissatisfaction, rejection of PPPs by various levels/groups of stakeholders, etc. Another reason in support of public input in SEA is quite pragmatic, i.e. the practice of public participation in SEA should anticipate and, if possible, help to avoid NIMBY (not in my back yard) and LULU (locally unwanted land-use) at larger spatial scale (e.g. DG TREN 2005). Ultimately, this can lead to reducing costs and avoiding decision delays.

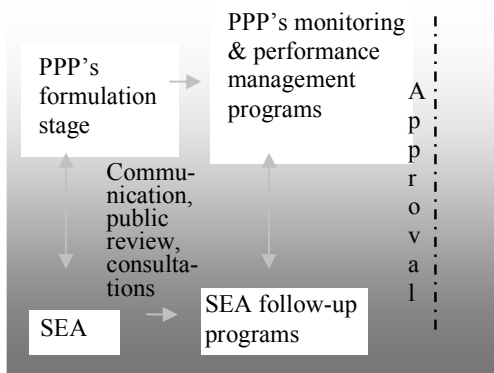


Figure 1: Participatory/Communication processes during a PPP and SEA preparation

Therefore, the relevant stakeholders - proponents (developers) of PPPs, experts and consultants, the authorities and the public (organizations/individuals) - should be engaged in SEA. The way how the engagement is accomplished might significantly influence the quality of SEA and PPP. By tailoring different stakeholder involvement techniques to various stakeholder groups, the evaluation process gains unique local knowledge, increases the validity of evaluation and credibility of plans and programs under evaluation.

The international professional literature suggests that public input should occur throughout the whole SEA process (see Figure 1), i.e. public participation and communication should be an integral part of SEA and contribute to the following evaluation steps (Fischer 2007,34):

- defining SEA objectives (screening, scoping),
- supporting comprehensive baseline information (scoping),
- identifying alternatives (scoping),
- choosing between alternatives (assessment and report),
- identifying mitigation measures (assessment and report), and

² The Rio Declaration, Principle 17, states that EIA “as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority” (UNCED 1992).

- ensuring the effective implementation of the proposed PPP (follow-up).

2 Research problem and aim

As more and more countries establish formal requirements for the SEA systems, public participation as its integral element gains more importance. However, the practice shows that even when a stakeholder engagement plan is developed, it is rarely properly conducted during the evaluation and prior to decision-making. At the same time, there is a conventional practical and theoretical focus on public participation during **ex-ante** SEA evaluations. And what happens to stakeholders and their perspective **after** the decisions to implement PPPS are taken? Are they consulted upon or involved in plan/program implementation? What are the roles and inputs of stakeholders **in SEA follow-up**, which includes monitoring, (summative and formative) evaluation, management and communication that accompany the delivery of strategic initiatives? Is stakeholder participation needed at all for the delivery of strategic initiatives and their SEA follow-up?

These questions are hardly researched. Meanwhile, to explore public participation and its benefits for and during the implementation of PPPs can be equally, if not more, important than during the SEAs and PPP formulation process. One crucial reason for this is that of time. Namely, the planning and SEA evaluation process usually lasts for 1-3 years, while the implementation of strategies and follow-up may require from 5 to 50 years. During this period of time the interests, priorities, visions and opinions of the stakeholders may significantly change. This will need to be considered as part of PPP and follow-up delivery contributing to their flexible, sustainability-friendly and continuously improving delivery.

This paper aims to explore the role and identify the benefits of stakeholder processes for SEA follow-up. It is led by the questions what the added values of communication and participation in SEA follow-up are and what kind of factors/elements it can influence to facilitate or improve follow-up.

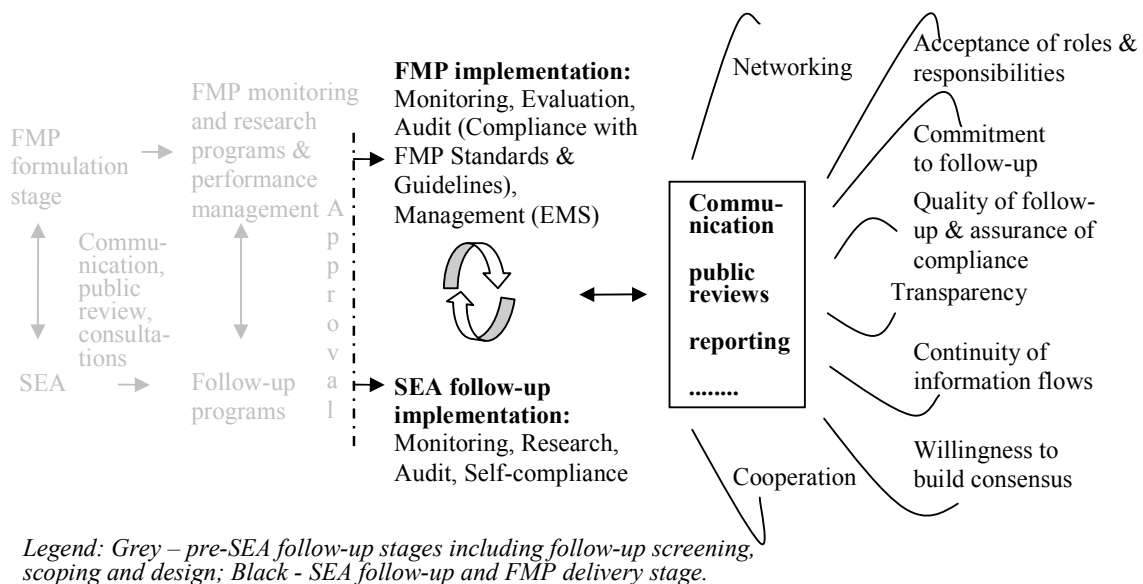


Figure 2: SEA follow-up enabling elements that are influences by communication and participation processes

Given the virtual absence of practical and limited theoretical insights, which are more like the speculations about the benefits of public participation in follow-up (see Section 3), there is an obvious need for empirical evidence. Thus, to achieve its aim this paper explores the case

study of a 20-year Forest Management Plan (FMP) in Saskatchewan, Canada, undertaken as a part of a PhD research. It primarily deploys such qualitative research methods as document analysis, interviews and consultations and draws upon the theoretical and evaluative SEA follow-up developed for the mother-PhD project. As a result it identifies different forms of engaging stakeholders from private, regulatory and public sectors such as governmental control and self-regulation by the proponent, advisory forums and community pressure. It looks further into various essential SEA follow-up elements that are related to the stakeholder communication and participation processes in follow-up and that might be influenced (facilitated or hampered) by them (Figure 2). Step-by-step it summarizes the analysis of processes linked to and influences by various stakeholder engagement forms presenting them as added values for the SEA follow-up and FMP delivery.

This paper consists of 5 sections. First, it explains the need for and importance of stakeholder engagement in SEA. Then, in this section it points out to the knowledge gap about participatory processes during SEA follow-up and strategy implementation and outlines the research method. In Section 3, it reviews the current state of SEA follow-up in relation to participation/communication and presents assumptions/speculations about its potential benefits. Section 4 introduces the background to the case study and identifies the envisioned forms of communication. Section 5 consecutively explores the elements that enable a successful SEA follow-up and are linked to and influenced by the participatory and communication processes of the follow-up and FMP delivery. Lastly, key findings are summarised.

3 SEA follow-up and stakeholder participation

Despite the importance of stakeholder participation and communication in SEA follow-up, it has been hardly addressed in the SEA literature. This is partly because it has been very recently that the concept of SEA follow-up per se as well as the need for and significance of follow-up for delivering systematic changes towards sustainable development has been understood. In fact, follow-up to SEA saw a growing interest in the 2000s when few researchers and practitioners around the world began contemplating about the utility and role of ex-post SEA or SEA follow-up for the implementation of strategies.

SEA follow-up is defined as *“monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of a strategic initiative and relevant environmental factors for management of, and communication about, the environmental performance of that strategic initiative”* (Cherp *et al.* 2008). Partidario & Arts (2005,255) contend that the objectives of SEA follow-up should be related to:

- Controlling plan implementation and/or checking the changes in the environmental and socio-economic situation and, if viewed necessary, formulating adaptive management actions;
- Learning on substance and/or process of strategic decisions and thinking, and enhancing the process of learning within organizations;
- Providing information for assessing the relevance and potential impacts of certain options on which decision-making is pending; and
- Communication with stakeholders and the general public on plan implementation and sensitive issues.

As it can be seen, communication has been assigned an important position in SEA follow-up as one its four main activities (see the definition) and as one of its key objectives.

Informing internal and external stakeholders and the wider public about the implementation progress of a PPP and its SEA follow-up and gaining feedback from them are tasks of communication (e.g. Arts *et al.* 2001; Morrison-Saunders & Arts 2004). It is suggested that if follow-up communication is designed as an open process with active participation, it may enhance cooperation of various parties, contribute to better outcomes for all involved (Arts &

Morrison-Saunders 2004b) and provide for continuous learning and capacity-building among stakeholders. It is also argued that public involvement³ can be a resource in its own right (Arts & Morrison-Saunders 2004a) owing to the local knowledge, information and values the public holds.

Some authors argue that the communication component in SEA follow-up should go beyond just informing of stakeholders, and include consultation, or even partnerships (Cherp *et al.* 2008) and other participatory approaches, such as negotiation within and between actor groups. Those forms of communication are more than important as implementers of PPPs and SEA follow-up are seldom their formulators, and therefore implementers need to be informed about PPP- and SEA making process (e.g. Cherp *et al.* 2008).

Presumably, communication and involvement of stakeholders may occur during the other key activities of follow-up, i.e. monitoring, evaluation and management, in two-way streams, e.g. involving participants in both conducting monitoring and commenting/reporting on its results. Such a close interaction and exchange of information might allow for better transparency and credibility of strategic initiatives. Different forms of involvement described in the SEA literature can be combined and incorporated in SEA follow-up design according to its purpose and objectives. Some forms of those, mainly reporting, can be occasionally found as prescribed by legislation⁴ or guidance in different countries; however their enforcement is considered to be rather weak (e.g. in Fischer 2007).

Overall, some authors argue that communication is important for learning, formation of cultures, networks and institutions that are the key components of societal change (e.g. Cherp *et al.* 2008; Gachechiladze 2008; Gachechiladze *et al.* 2009; Partidario & Fischer 2004; Partidario & Arts 2005). Therefore, it should be the central element of SEA follow-up if SEA aims to achieve strategic change for sustainability.

4 Case Study: Pasquia-Porcupine Forest Management Plan

The Saskfor MacMillan Limited Partnership was formed in 1995 between MacMillan Bloedel Limited, one of Canada's largest forestry industries, and a subsidiary of the Saskatchewan Crown Investments Corporation. The Partnership applied for a Forest Management (FM) Agreement for the operation of the Pasquia-Porcupine Forest in 1997 (SMLP 1998). In order to enter into a Forest Management Agreement with the Saskatchewan Government the Partnership was obliged to prepare a Twenty-year Forest Management Plan (FMP) and Environmental Assessment. The integrated FMP and EA document was reviewed by the Government and the public⁵ and endorsed in 1999; following this the Forest Management Agreement was signed. The same year Weyerhaeuser Saskatchewan Ltd., a daughter company to one of the world's largest timber producers - Weyerhaeuser, bought out the Partnership and since then it has been implementing the Pasquia- Porcupine FMP.

³ The terms "communication", "participation", "consultation" and "reporting" are often confusingly and interchangeably used; meanwhile they differ as follows: participation is an engagement process, in which the public is called to contribute to the decision-making process by exchanging information, predictions, opinions, interests and values; consultation is an engagement process, in which the public is called to comment on documentation; communication is a one-way process with objectives to inform and assist the public towards understanding of problems, alternatives, opportunities and solutions; and reporting is a documentation process which makes the results available in a written document, on the basis of which the public can make their comments, provide feedback on the analyses and decisions made (Fischer 2007,34). Methods for involvement and consultation are described in many works (e.g. Bisset 2000; Rauschmayer & Risse 2005; Vicente & Partidario 2006)

⁴ For example, the SEA Protocol (Art. 12) states that: "the results of the monitoring undertaken shall be made available, in accordance with national legislation, to the authorities referred to in article 9, paragraph 1, and to the public" (UNECE 2003).

⁵ As per the Saskatchewan EA Act, Clause 9.1.- Assessment of FMPs (amended in 1996) and the Forest Resources Management Act of Saskatchewan (Sections 100-107).

The FM Area is located in Eastern Saskatchewan along the Manitoba provincial border surrounding the communities of Hudson Bay and Cumberland House. It lies within the Boreal Plain Eco-zone covering approximately two million hectares with a larger half being suitable for commercial timber production (SMLP 1997b). The FM Area is within the spatial boundaries of the Integrated Pasquia-Porcupine Forest Land Use Plan (IFLUP) developed by the Saskatchewan Environment (SE) in collaboration with land users to guide the FMP⁶. The FMP must be renewed every 10 years, and is subject to monitoring and feedback results of local level annual operating plan(s), which includes also a five-year rolling plans.

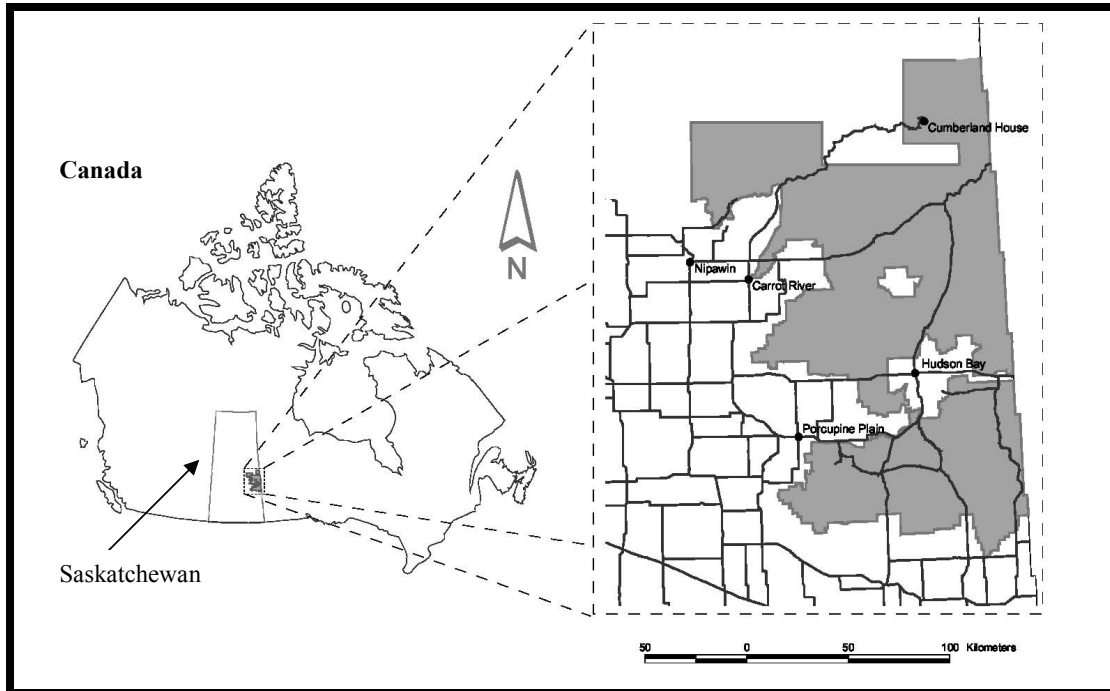


Figure 3: Pasquia-Porcupine Forest Management Area in Saskatchewan, Canada

Source: Gachechiladze et al. (2009)

The main actors engaged with the implementation and follow-up to the FMP with reference to the decision-making levels they are involved in are identified as follows:

- The Proponent: SMLP – the Partnership until 1999, since then Weyerhaeuser – the Company (sub-provincial, regional, local) and his Contractors (industrial - local)
- The Government - SE represented by its Forest Service (FS), EA branch (provincial, regional, local) and other agencies (heritage, licences, permits, etc. - regional, local)
- Public and interest groups (Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC⁷) including NGOs, tribe council representatives, etc.-regional; communities - local)
- Independent scientists (members of the Forest Science Advisory Committee-provincial, regional, local or local/international research and education institutions)
- Independent Auditors (commissioned by the Proponent or the government).

⁶ The aim of the ILUP was to “*manage the use of the land and the renewable and non-renewable resources on an integrated and environmentally sound basis to ensure ecological, economic, social and cultural benefits for present and future generations*” (SERM 1998).

⁷ The FMAC was appointed in 1995 by the Minister for SERM and was made up of representatives of stakeholder groups in the region (SMLP 1997b). The FMAC generally meets quarterly and is actively involved in the implementation of the IFLUP and providing resource management advice to SE and Weyerhaeuser (see SE 2002).

4.1 Communication and public participation in SEA follow-up of the FMP

Formal requirements for follow-up reporting including the subject, contents and intervals are contained in the approvals conditions, regulations and Project Specific Guidelines. They require the proponent to involve *the public in implementation activities and provide opportunities for public inputs and reviews before each operating plan is approved*. In this respect, the FMP and EA document envisioned two communication-related strategies, i.e. 'Public involvement in management planning' and 'Public involvement in implementation' (SMLP 1997b). According to them the proponent, in consultation with SERM, the Pasquia-Porcupine FMAC and other users, identified procedures for involving the public "in the development, implementation and post-implementation review of Operating Plans, on an annual cycle" (SMLP 1997b,xvii). These included:

- Submission of a first draft of the Operating Plan for both harvesting and reforestation to SERM and the Heritage Branch of the Saskatchewan Government early in the calendar year.
- Public meetings at 5 or 6 locations for review, discussion and critical comment of the previous year's operations and the draft Operating Plan.
- Additional meetings with Aboriginal communities, groups and reserves;
- Presentation of the Operating Plan at local and area trade fairs;
- Formal review with SERM of issues arising from public consultations;
- Meetings with councils or rural municipalities regarding road use; and
- Frequent contact with active forest users throughout the year.
- The Operating Plans receive final approval from SERM before any operations can begin.
- The Partnership provides the FMAC with all monitoring and audit reports and
- SMLP develops a record-keeping system for tracking public inputs and the Company's responses.

According to the documents and interviews Weyerhaeuser implements the public involvement strategies as intended. The FMAC, being a representative of many communities and interest groups, serves as a mediator between the Company, SE and the public. The way how the communication and participation mechanism is organized and run by the proponent and supported by the provincial and local authorities and FMAC contributes to *the continuity of information* flows throughout the strategy life-cycle. One minor weakness is that follow-up communication and reporting are more meetings- and reports-based and do not provide for a possibility to review annual reports/operating plans online. It is only now for the update of the PP FMP, when Weyerhaeuser decided to create a website that would describe the new FMP development process and contain downloadable versions of draft and approved FMP documents (see Weyerhaeuser 2009).

5 Discussing the SEA follow-up processes influenced by communication/participation

5.1 SEA follow-up communication to facilitate stakeholder cooperation

Cooperation with the authorities, agencies and the public. During the last decade, stakeholder participation and input to EA has generally improved in Canada demonstrating more shared decision-making approaches, however true meaningful involvement is still rare (Lawe *et al.* 2005). Cooperation processes in SEA follow-up seem to be rather effective as they build on the collaboration platform established in the course of the FMP and EIA preparation. They included two-way communication between SMLP and the Human and Community Development Committee, Government agencies, First Nations, tourism groups, and the FMAC on the FMA and EA preparation, community needs, employment, training, etc.

Establishing connections with Aboriginal groups was challenging (see SMLP 1997a) and their involvement continues to be problematic. Cooperation with the public during the FMP implementation and reviews/renewals was envisioned in the FMP's public involvement strategies, which are implemented by Weyerhaeuser. Furthermore, when preparing site-specific plans, the proponent conducts consultations with the relevant communities and individuals using the previously established GIS database⁸.

One of the FMP's goals was to "Ensure that all those who may be affected by the implementation of operational Plans have the informed opportunity to provide input and review before each Plan is approved, and during implementation." (SMLP 1997b,12). This goal's realization strategies became part of the integrated FMP and SEA follow-up implementation and drew upon the above mentioned cooperative activities. E.g. the FMAC has continued to be actively involved in the FMA and SEA follow-up delivery; so has been SE as many of the FMP strategies and the associated indicators and actions require close cooperation with its departments.

Cooperation with contractors. The FMP and EA preparation included consultations with harvesting contractors, logging contractors associations that encompassed logging contractors and truck drivers including Aboriginal sub-contractors, etc. The transfer of knowledge and operating requirements to contractors was considered vital by the Proponent for the effective FMP and EA follow-up performance. Some conflicts arose in cases where commercial interests of the Company and its sub-contractors confronted.

5.2 SEA follow-up communication to facilitate stakeholder consensus building

The PP FMP process provided for stakeholders negotiations and dialogue regarding follow-up issues during both the preparation and implementation of the FMP/EA. The proponent compiled indicators for assessing ecosystem and diversity and measuring maintenance/enhancement of forest ecosystem conditions from those proposed by the CSA and developed locally (see SMLP 1997b). The PP FMP follow-up has evolved around the idea of cooperative and coordinated monitoring through participating in the provincial monitoring program which inter alia aimed to develop and reach consensus on appropriate criteria, indicators and methods for sustainable FM. However, there are a number of stumbling-blocks upon which the consensus by all stakeholders has not been reached. For instance, in relation to baseline monitoring the public was unclear about and dissatisfied with the choice of Representative Areas within the Network⁹, proposed by SERM and accepted by SMLP (3F).

5.3 SEA follow-up communication to facilitate commitment to SEA follow-up

The proponent and the government recognize that SEA follow-up process requires continuous fulfilment of commitments. The industry-led integrated FMP/EA contains specific follow-up commitments for the proponent as well as involvement opportunities for the public. Additional commitments are delineated in the broader IFLUP for both the proponent and SE. Furthermore, a recently prepared joint Action Plan stipulates commitments of the Company and SE in relation to adaptive management actions required in response to the issues identified by the independent FMP performance audits (see SE & Weyerhaeuser 2007).

⁸ This GIS databases contained some 700 traditional use locales (see SMLP 1997b)

⁹ According to the definition, "Representative Areas Network" is composed of lands and waters selected and designated to represent the natural ecological and biological diversity of the province and managed to retain that diversity. [These Areas] act both as reservoirs of biological diversity and benchmarks for comparison with the more heavily utilized landscape" (SERM 1998,85).

Neither the FMP, nor the EA explicitly note the consequences of non-implementation of follow-up programs; however, the implementation of monitoring and research activities is an obligation stipulated in the FMA. Failure to comply with follow-up and mitigation commitments can result in a range of penalties from fines to withdrawal of licenses and termination of the FMA itself. At the operational level, the minor cases of non-compliance are mostly investigated and resolved through actions taken internally. More serious infractions are examined and discussed by the stakeholders to work out suitable solutions such as collaborative action plans, etc.

5.4 Communication/participation to facilitate acceptance of roles and accountability in SEA follow-up

While follow-up roles are not mentioned in the FMP, they are internally and procedurally divided between the FMP implementers and stakeholders based on the established cooperation patterns and provincial (public) and industrial (private) values and objectives, thus contributing to an increased commitment of the actors.

The company's personnel are responsible for certain monitoring, aggregation, management and reporting tasks, which are distributed according to competences and qualifications of people regardless their position in organizational management hierarchy. For instance, Strategic Planning Coordinator holds a general responsibility for the 20-year FMP implementation and renewal as well as for monitoring of some environmental and CSA indicators and preparing the corresponding reports. The company is accountable to the provincial government and the public relative to follow-up and FMP performance indicators.

The corporate and personal accountability for follow-up actions and FMP performance as well as the acceptance of follow-up responsibilities is recognized by the proponent as essential for the effective FMP and follow-up delivery. Despite the twice changed ownership of the FMP, the willingness of the industry to be on-track and respect the relevant regulations as well as the generic/specific control by SE prevent a so-called 'diffused' responsibility problem from developing.

5.5 Communication and participation to facilitate transparent frameworks for SEA follow-up

A variety of mechanisms were designed in the PP FMP to provide for transparency of SEA follow-up framework ranging from purely technical (common databases, detailed accountability) to more participatory ones (reviews, direct involvement). As the documents and interviews confirm transparency was given a special consideration at the outset of the planning process. The PP FMP and SEA follow-up illustrate a careful approach towards balancing and combining transparency-aiding methods for their integrated delivery processes and encompass:

- expert judgements (independent audits with publicly available results; annual audits of Weyerhaeuser's ISO 14001 EMS and the CSA Sustainable FM System; analysis and verification of monitoring data by external consultants, and inspections by SE or municipal officers),
- technical measures (participation and use of provincial standardized and approved monitoring procedures and protocols, creation of common databases for ecosystem studies and support in GIS forest implications development), and
- participatory processes (annual public and provincial reviews and comments on operating plans, comments from the FMAC and quarterly meetings).

The implementation of the above processes, despite their deliberateness, encountered a number of institutional and procedural problems, such as accuracy of reported data, logistics

for meetings, non-applicability of protocols to actual FM situations, etc. These obstacles are being attempted by the implementers in a pragmatic “learning-by-doing” manner.

Transparent SEA follow-up also benefits from a clear formal apportioning of responsibilities among the FMP stakeholders and their commitment to the assigned tasks.

5.6 Communication and participation to facilitate networking for follow-up

Within the Company the exchange of experiences and follow-up data is accomplished both formally and informally. Formal networks comply with the organizational structure and procedural sub-ordination. Against this background, informal networks function well owing to the small size of the proponent’s office in Saskatchewan and variety of cross-cutting and supplemental activities that its personnel fulfils to deliver the FMP and SEA follow-up.

In the broader setting, the PP FMP’s networks are maintained through various formal interactive processes such as forums, seminars, presentations, workshops and meetings that involve a range of stakeholders. These take place during the delivery of the FMP and follow-up and build on the networks and cooperation processes established *for/during* the development of the FMP and EA.

Informal network that support the implementation of the FMP and follow-up are identifiable between the industrial proponent, various ministerial branches and the public. A lot of efforts are put in these cross-actor networks, either formal or informal, that in turn enhance mutual trust and at times the credibility of the FMP, its follow-up and of the responsible actors themselves¹⁰.

5.7 Communication/participation to facilitate the quality of follow-up & assurance of compliance

In case of external changes or emergent situations timely communication and cooperation between the SEA follow-up stakeholders in the PP FMP are essential not only for a timely response, but also for securing the quality and compliance of follow-up.

The implementation of the PP FMP was accompanied with the “emergent” changes in the access management and harvesting practices as well as in employment targets approved by SERM. SLMP committed to construct 101 km of all-season road with an expected life of 10 years or greater during 1997 to 2019. In 2000-2002 Weyerhaeuser exceeded the road development limits and by 2005 the situation became critical as the built road kilometrage was close to the final target implied under the 20 year FMP. The Company justified this violation with a need to be able to deliver an increased volume of summer and fall harvested timber to the mills. The increase in harvested timber (as well as a seasonal shift in harvesting patters) was in its turn caused by the Company’s new strategy to cope with changing market conditions (as mentioned above) while maintaining sustainable forest management principles. The SE EA and SF with the support of the public and NGOs required the Company to prepare an EA to changes in the FMP and a Road Management Plan (required by Approval condition 8.3). All was submitted to SE in 2005 and upon approval incorporated in the Operating Plans, pre-harvesting prescriptions and monitoring programs (e.g. road densities monitoring).

A time gap is obvious between the dates of non-compliance with the approval conditions and with endorsed annual Operating Plans (i.e. the actual road construction) and approval of new EA. On the one hand the Company argues that it addressed SE with a proposal for changes

¹⁰ In cases when the actions of the proponent relative to the FMP and follow-up commitments differ from what was planned, mistrust from the interest groups and credibility concerns arise immediately.

as early as in 2002 and the detention in Development Change Plan and EA was due to the slow bureaucratic procedures at SE. On the other hand, FS of SE argues that after it observed a tendency of exceeding road construction limits from Annual Operating Plans and received several inquiries from the public, it required clarifications from the Company and involved the SE EA branch. Despite this controversy, the positive aspect is that before irremediable impacts on the environment took place, as a new EA showed, relevant mitigation and monitoring measures were proposed to be integrated with the ongoing implementation schemes. However, the warning aspect is that the public pressure was needed to instigate the preparation of EA.

6 Conclusion

The combination of the various forms of stakeholder cooperation and participation can positively influence the element of SEA follow-up that are essential for its effective implementation as well as for the implementation of the private-operated FMP. By investigating the synergies of the stakeholder processes and SEA follow-up activities, the paper has identified such added values as continuous identification and feeding of stakeholders' views and interests into the FMP and SEA follow-up implementation, securing a right for participation and feedback in the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and management, willingness to build consensus and openly cooperate in shared decision-making, increased commitment, acceptance of roles and accountability by all parties, and maintaining information flows and networks for increasing credibility and mutual understanding by the stakeholders (Figure 2). Moreover, as the SEA follow-up practice demonstrates follow-up activities may be successfully streamlined or enforced by NGOs and the public. They cannot implement follow-up activities themselves due to segmented knowledge or resource restrictions or simply are not obliged to implement follow-up; however, they can communicate the directions and changes/emerging priorities for follow-up actions in addition to those envisioned by the proponent or regulator and thereby improve the quality and compliance of follow-up.

The results of this paper may be relevant not only for forestry sector or Canada-specific context, but can also be useful for other sectors and geographical regions as they point out to the potential of communication/participation to help SEA follow-up safeguard environmentally-friendly and sustainability-led delivery of (corporate) strategic initiatives.

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