

# Ontario Professional Foresters Association

## Practice Bulletin No 4

### Certification of Annual Reports

Approved by Council, September 13, 2004

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify the accountability of members of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association (OPFA) when asked to certify an Annual Report when not all of the required information is available.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of a Management Unit Annual Report is to document the annual implementation of forest management operations and to monitor the progress towards achieving management objectives identified in the Forest Management Plan (FMP).” The plan author is responsible for the preparation and certification of the Annual Report while the Sustainable Forest License (SFL) holder and Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) are responsible for the preparation of specific components of the report.

The annual report information is used locally to update the Forest Resource Inventory data and provincially to update provincial records and produce the Provincial Annual Report on Forest Management.

#### **ISSUE**

It has been reported that in some instances, plan authors are signing or being asked to sign and certify Annual Reports that are incomplete or inaccurate.

#### **SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS**

If the plan author signs the annual report, knowing that information is either not accurate or has not been provided, then the plan author would be in violation of the Code of Ethics (Fidelity to citizens), guilty of professional misconduct (3.2, 35 and 36) and in violation of the Standards of Practice By-law (Principle 4).

Where this information is not available for inclusion within the Annual Report or is inaccurate, the plan author must document this and provide to the members of the planning team these facts. The plan author should not certify the Annual Report until the required accurate information has been provided or until MNR or the forest company provides a statement indicating that the required information cannot be made available. At this point the plan author would be able to certify the report noting that the report is incomplete as previously identified.

In some instances, MNR foresters are required to provide information or data to the plan author from “systems” or “data bases” for which they cannot confirm accuracy or completeness. In these instances the plan author should note the inability to confirm the accuracy or completeness of the specific information in question. At this point the plan author would be able to certify the report noting that certain information in the report cannot be confirmed for accuracy or completeness.

#### **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given that a member considers that they are in a situation where they may face a potential Code of Ethics violation or be guilty of professional misconduct, what are the appropriate steps for the member to follow in order to determine the appropriate action to be taken?

1. Ask themselves what would a reasonable forester do in these circumstances and how would that forester view the situation if asked to comment.
2. Consult with other professional colleagues for their professional opinions.
3. Consult the OPFA’s Blue Ribbon Panel for confidential advice.
4. If the prevalent opinion is that there is a potential violation of the Professional Foresters Act 2000, the Code of Ethics or a by-law or that to continue would constitute professional misconduct, the member must notify the supervisor or client and advise that continuation would constitute a violation of the Professional Foresters Act 2000 and that the member is not prepared to continue until these potential conflicts do not exist.