

# Environment and Sustainable Resource Development—Reforestation Follow-up

## Summary Department

The Department of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (formerly Department of Sustainable Resource Development and the Department of Environment and Water) implemented our recommendations relating to performance measure information, and monitoring and enforcement—see below.

## Findings and recommendations Our audit findings Matters from prior-year audits Performance measure information— implemented

### Background

In our *October 2006 Report* (vol. 1—page 118), we made the following two recommendations:

Recommendation no. 13—We recommend that the Department of Sustainable Resource Development produce appropriately timed reforestation performance reports to confirm the effectiveness of its regulatory activities.

Recommendation no. 14—We also recommend that the Department of Sustainable Resource Development:

- strengthen its quality control process for performance information
- re-examine whether achieving the target for reforestation rate in harvested areas indicates satisfactory reforestation

In 2009, we followed-up on these recommendations and noted that the Department had still not adequately reported on the effectiveness of its reforestation activities. As a result, we repeated these two recommendations in our *April 2009 Report* (page 52). However, we reworded and combined the two recommendations as follows:

Recommendation no. 2—We again recommend that the Department of Sustainable Resource Development publicly report relevant and sufficient reforestation performance information to confirm the effectiveness of its regulatory systems.

The recommendation was reworded because the Department no longer planned to include in its annual report the performance measure originally referred to in our 2006 annual report.

### Our audit findings

We examined the reforestation performance reports generated by the Department. We tested the Department's ability to generate performance information by testing data inputs, assessing the modeling assumptions used, checking a sample of cutblock openings, interviewing staff and reviewing relevant Department records.

The Department has expanded the range of performance metrics it reports in its various publications, such as its annual report, business plan and others on its website, to include additional detail on reforestation. The Department has developed two new performance measures. The “Rate of Forest Regrowth,” compares actual forest growth rates to planned targets. The other performance indicator measures industry’s compliance with forestry standards.

The Department also publishes a series of forest management facts and statistics on its website on a range of operational areas, including reforestation, monitoring, enforcement, harvesting and forest management. The Department has combined key reforestation information, which pertains to our recommendations, in one comprehensive report. The *Annual Status of Reforestation in Alberta* report is on the Ministry’s website and will be updated annually.

The Department also generates performance reports that measure industry’s compliance with regulations and standards. The Department has controls in place to ensure that reports it generates are timely, complete and accurate. Further, the Department generates reports that show industry non-compliance and follows up on these in a timely manner.

As a result, we consider this recommendation implemented.

## Monitoring and enforcement—implemented

### Background

In our *October 2006 Report* (no. 15, vol. 1—page 122), we recommended that the Department strengthen its monitoring of reforestation activities by:

- bringing more rigour to the review of forestry operator plans
- making its field inspection program more effective
- promptly identifying and correcting non-compliance with legislation

We followed up on this recommendation in 2009 and concluded there was satisfactory progress as of our *April 2009 Report*. The Department still needed to complete the following activities to fully implement the recommendation:

- obtain quality assurance certification over its Forest Operations Monitoring Program (FOMP) process
- ensure that all field offices were using current forms and processes
- ensure staff were clear on the minimum number of on-site performance survey inspections required
- use the penalty provisions of the *Timber Management Regulation* for inaccurate regeneration survey data

### Our audit findings

We reviewed the quality assurance certification over the FOMP process, interviewed area office staff to ensure that current forms and processes were consistently used, and assessed the Department’s use of penalty provisions in the *Timber Management Regulation* for inaccurate and incomplete regeneration survey data submitted by operators. Through our interviews and inspections, we were satisfied that staff understood the minimum number of on-site performance survey inspections required.

The Department uses the penalty provisions of the *Timber Management Regulation*, and publishes all enforcement actions on its website. The FOMP has provided a mechanism for the Department to promptly identify and remediate non-compliance with legislation.

The Department has developed a comprehensive system to support forest monitoring and has successfully pursued independent certification of the process and its ability to ensure quality management. This program brings consistency to the Department's operations and ensures the use of appropriate forms and inspection methods. One of the benefits of the program's certification is the focus on continual improvement.

As a result, we consider this recommendation implemented.

