

Schedule N

Stand Retention Guidance

Stand-level approaches to managing for ecological integrity is a critical component to building healthy ecosystems across a variety of scales. The objective in designing stand retention is to protect known features and values in development areas, along with maintaining a legacy of the previous forest, and managing for complexity across the landbase. This guidance document serves as additional interpretation and considerations for stand retention measures in the FRP.

1. General Measures

Part 2, Division 2 – Section 5 includes measures to be applied across the plan area, unless modified by a zone or priority management area. Subsection (1) outlines retention percentages and rules, along with a set of measures to be applied based on cutblock size.

- Less than 5 ha - Internal retention may be more difficult but is still encouraged where possible, including single standing trees. Forest influence is generally maintained on the forest edge.
- 5 to 20 ha – The amount of internal and external retention may vary according to the types of features to be included as retention, the harvest system, and constraints found on the landbase. Internal retention includes peninsulas, small and large groups of trees, and single leave trees. A dominant single leave tree may contribute up to 0.01 ha towards the overall retention amount.
- Greater than 20 ha - If a cutblock exceeds 20 ha, an emphasis on forest influence and internal retention is required. The cutblock must consider a variable retention system (>50% forest influence) *or* design the cutblock with primarily internal retention. “Primarily” is interpreted as more than half of the required retention amount. Patches of forest greater than 0.1 ha count towards the overall minimum retention amount.
- In areas where several cutblocks have formed one large opening (ie, 100 ha), and a patch-size analysis approach is being implemented, increasing the amount of retention may be required. In addition, a landscape-level analysis may show poor biodiversity condition at the landscape level and require increased amounts of retention at the stand level. Refer to best management according to natural disturbance regimes and landscape-level biodiversity planning.
- Veteran Trees – The intent of protecting large veteran trees and groups of veteran trees is to maintain the legacy and complexity of the forest prior to the large fire history in the early 1900s. These areas generally represent a high amount of biodiversity and are associated with standing snags and large coarse woody debris, that are rare on certain parts of the landscape. These areas are suitable for single tree retention or as anchors in patch retention. Avoid using tracked machinery underneath the dripline of retained trees. Veteran trees may be aged by counting tree rings or have characteristics such as a distinct bark texture, large branches, and lack of lower branches. It is not necessary to age every tree in a development area but a scan for veteran trees is required.
- Overlap with the conservation network – Stand retention may overlap with the conservation network, including areas set aside as Old Growth Management Areas and Wildlife Habitat Areas, where these reserves are immediately adjacent to the cutblock. Additional retention will likely be required outside the conservation network, especially where internal retention is required.

2. Zones

Part 3 of the FRP outlines four zones with varied approaches to stand retention for each of these areas. In general, these measures are meant to guide tactical level plans, such as total resource plans and landscape-level plans.

- Ecosystem Health Zone – “increase stand retention and reduce opening sizes, as required, with consideration to forest influence, maturing forest represented near openings, rotation age, and surrounding cultural values”. This does not necessitate higher than minimum retention for all cutblocks. A landscape approach may encourage areas with higher retention based on landscape condition, such as areas with current larger openings and younger age classes. Greater than minimum retention may seek to capture areas not previously identified in the conservation network, such as patches of veteran trees and unidentified old forest.
- Investment Zone – “manage harvest patterns to include a range of opening sizes and stand retention, while considering cultural values, access management and forest economics”. The investment zone may have larger openings due to the accessible nature of this zone. Minimum stand retention may be modified for a particular cutblock where individual trees and rare features are maintained, such as large individual trees, standing snags, and coarse woody debris. Minimum stand retention may also be modified through a landscape-plan or through recommendations from an integrated silviculture strategy.
- tiskʷat Stewardship Zone – “implement stand retention and forest influence rules according to Schedule M, with consideration to Part 2 Section 5 Subsection (2)”. Stand retention follows Schedule M. Part 2 Section 5 Subsection (2) refers to features to be captured within stand retention.
- saʔyayin Stewardship Zone - “increase stand retention as required, in addition to Part 2 Section 5, with consideration to rare plant communities and unique cultural plants identified during field work or in an Operational Plan Assessment”. Recommendations from the Operational Plan Assessment may warrant additional retention for these features or amendments to the conservation network may be considered to address longer term conservation of these areas.