

**MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
DECISION NOTE**

Date: March 14, 2002  
File: 202-20/ISC  
Ref:

**I. PREPARED FOR:**

Integrated Steering Committee (ISC), For **DECISION**

**II. ISSUE:**

**MSRM Participation in the Northwest Data Network**

**III. RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve MSRM, Skeena Region's involvement in the Northwest Data Network as part of a major MSRM pilot project.

**IV. BACKGROUND:**

Government has committed to participating in public/private partnerships. There is an expectation from key forest industry stakeholders in Skeena Region that data sharing partnerships proceed over the next 2 years. This expectation is reflected in the draft Memorandum of Understanding signed by Weldwood, West Fraser and Canfor.

Prior to the formation of MSRM, the Ministry of Forests (MoF), and Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks pooled their data management infrastructure to form a multi-agency data warehouse in Smithers that served internal clients, forest companies, resource consultants, universities and first nations. This history of local collaboration and business contact means that the formation of a data management partnership with natural resource stakeholders is a natural extension of these relationships.

Support for continuing with exploration into local data management partnerships was endorsed by Allison Bond and Don Howes on their visit to Skeena Region in November 2001.

Skeena Region is in active discussion with northwestern forest companies and first nations on forming a partnership that would provide access to forest company and first nations data and access and management of local, regional data. The region is engaged and contributing to a collaborative contract to scope out the options for the Northwest Data Network using project funding from Forest Renewal BC. The concept for this project originated with the MoF and carried forward when MSRM was formed in June 2001.

This briefing note describes the current status of the project and requests confirmation of project direction for the next 2 fiscal years.

## V. DISCUSSION:

The short term local business drivers for a data partnership are the Morice/Lakes Innovative Forest Practices Agreement, Morice Land and Resources Management Plan (LRMP) and Wet'suwet'en participation in the Morice LRMP. Licensees have entered into a draft, overarching partnership agreement with MSRM for the Morice LRMP. The LRMP is a critical service plan deliverable for MSRM. The licensees involved in the LRMP consider the data sharing network a key success factor of the LRMP partnership.

The long-term business drivers are Designated Forest Management Area data management and analysis, vegetation cover update, landscape level plan analysis, management plan evaluation and approval and resource change monitoring.

The proposed partnership has two distinct dimensions: technical and organizational. Two contracts are underway which lay the options for implementing a data network and the type of governance structure to manage the network. MSRM staff and potential partnership participants will review the reports at a workshop in Smithers on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

It is anticipated that the majority of the implementation funding for the data network will be provided by local forest companies through operational and forest investment account funding. No direct costs to MSRM are anticipated.

A public/private data management partnership would make a positive contribution to the viability of the northwestern business community. This partnership is potentially the first of many linked resource management partnership initiatives. For example, a timber and habitat supply analysis partnership is in discussion between industry and government that will build upon the data management partnership foundation as does the LRMP and resource monitoring.

There are three possible options for project direction over the next 2 years.

## VI. OPTION 1: MSRM does not participate in the Northwest Data Network

### Pros:

- Staff resources not dedicated to the formation of a partnership.

### Cons:

- Lost opportunity to build on the client relations already established.
- Lost opportunity to share data in a structured way with external organizations.
- In-house resources costing \$75,000 per year need to be dedicated to the preparation and maintenance of Morice LRMP data sets and to provide analysis services to the table.
- No mid to long term cost reductions to government.
- Loss of a key success factor of the LRMP partnership agreement.

## OPTION 2: MSRM participates as a short term pilot of public/private data partnerships

### Pros:

- Resources and commitment need not be dedicated to the formation of a long-term partnership.

- Efforts are only used to ensure that data is managed cooperatively for the purposes of the Morice LRMP. This effort is needed in order to meet the short-term goal of reducing the data management costs of the Morice LRMP.

Cons:

- Lost opportunity to build on the client relations already established.
- Lost opportunity to formalize long term data sharing with external agencies.
- Lost opportunity to fully realize government’s commitment to public/private partnerships and the spirit and intent of the data sharing MOU.
- Lost mid to long term cost reductions to government.

**OPTION 3: MSRM participates in the Northwest Data Network as a major MSRM pilot project.**

Pros:

- Capitalizes on the client relationship from existing data sharing efforts in Skeena Region.
- Capitalizes on the efforts that have to be put into data sharing in order to meet the short-term goal of reducing the cost of data management for the Morice LRMP.
- Demonstrates immediately MSRM’s corporate support for data sharing partnerships.
- Structures the project to provide documented results and models for other service centres.
- Ensures the project meets MSRM corporate standards for data management.
- Provides a forum for other innovative data management practices.
- Reduces costs to government for accessing and managing external data.
- Provides opportunities for other partnership arrangements with the same partners e.g. monitoring.

Cons:

- Requires long term MSRM commitment to the private sector.
- Requires staff time from other MSRM centres.

**VII. RECOMMENDED OPTION:**

Approve MSRM Skeena Region’s involvement in the Northwest Data Network as a major MSRM pilot project.

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Approved/Not Approved  
Evert Kenk, ISC Co-Chair

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Approved/Not Approved  
Dave Gilbert, ISC Co-chair

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Date

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Date

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