

**GCTAC Conference Call “DRAFT” Minutes  
April 17, 2007**

**On-line:** Sally Aitken, Brian Barber, Dave Kolotelo, Greg O’Neill, Michael Stoehr (for Alvin), Tongli Wang, Jack Woods, Alex Woods

**Absent:** Scott Green, Andreas Hamann, Alvin Yanchuk

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**Brian** – to distribute State of The Forest Indicators and link to national Criteria and Indicators for genetic diversity. DONE – Thank you.

**Sally, Dave & Jack** – To meet on May 8<sup>th</sup> @ UBC and develop a first draft for the genetic conservation plan for distribution to and comment by GCTAC prior to presentation to FGC on June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Please review the minutes and forward comments back to me before May 1, 2007. I will adjust and send out more complete minutes. *Purple italics are my post-meeting comments* – I’ll include your as well, please forward them. These will assist with the first draft of the Genetic Conservation Plan.

**1. Review GCTAC Mandate**

We reviewed the mandate for GCTAC that was approved by council and determined that it should be adjusted to better reflect a few areas: the specific inclusion of a climate change reference, consideration for the maintenance of genetic diversity in forestry operations, better linkages with other groups and whether our mandate extends to within-species diversity or both within and between species (species selection) diversity. Some editing done on line (indicated in red below), but the consensus was that the mandate items needed to be redefined more fully off-line (suggestions appreciated)

The mandate of the GCTAC pertains to indigenous forest tree species, and includes:

1. Guidance and policy recommendations to the FGC on genetic conservation issues,
2. Business planning direction to the UBC Centre for Gene Conservation and to review reports.
3. Budget recommendations to the FGC on genetic conservation projects, including the UBC CFGC annual budget.
4. Leading development of genetic conservation strategies and programs, including conservation issues associated with climate change. <the climate change reference here seems unnecessary – JW>
5. Facilitating discussion among experts in issues associated with genetic conservation.

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## 6. Developing genetic conservation programs and measures.

We discussed whether the maintenance of genetic diversity in forestry operations could be attached to the measures mandate (#6), but most believed a separate item was required to capture it properly. For some, genetic diversity was specific to the breeding program, for others it was planted areas or areas we could have an impact on and for others it was the forested landscape. *I'm not sure we came to consensus, but I think the expectation is that GCTAC would provide guidance on (at least) within-species diversity across the forested landscape. I think it is important we agree on this aspect of the scope.*

JW view:

I think it's important that we separate genetic conservation from genetic diversity issues associated with plantation "resilience" or ability to remain healthy through to rotation. Genetic conservation is multi-faceted, and includes in-, inter- and ex-situ components. This is (will be) summarized in the CFGC catalogue, and there will be measures as needed to maintain required levels. Genetic diversity in plantations has several components as well, including wild-stand seed collection standards, orchard seed effective-population-size minimums, and breeding population sizes (which is partly a subset of orchard seed Ne needs). In my view, the GCTAC should keep it's focus on conservation, and not on diversity associated with plantations, except where to two may have some overlap.

In terms of issues with regard to species diversity there was agreement that GCTAC represents a subcomponent of Biodiversity, but cannot address all of it and many other 'groups' are involved. There was concern by members with GCTAC taking on "species selection" as this is a much larger issue and beyond the scope or mandate of the GCTAC. Some felt that embracing species selection more fully would dilute the time available for GCTAC members to contribute to their direct areas of expertise (within species diversity). There was recognition of other programs that are specifically looking at species selection directly (i.e. Forest Practices Branch – Pat Martin; Forest Analysis & Inventory Branch – species selection implications to growth and yield; FFEI – species diversity; Al Vyse – reviewing historic species trials). These trials have generally been outside the forest genetics community involvement. Greater linkages and partnerships with other programs were also considered important (i.e. FFEI). Linkages with field staff, especially with respect to species range fringes was considered an important link for a variety of current and future CFGC projects.

Although species selection as a GCTAC mandate did not gain consensus there did appear to be consensus around GCTAC specifically addressing facilitated migration (or other diversity-widening or risk reduction methods) as a component of our mandate. <JW – I suggest we leave it at this. Facilitated migration and the development of seed transfer policy is relevant to GC, but not the mandate of GC>

The GCTAC mandate does not include operational 'species selection'. The GCTAC is considering all 50 indigenous forest tree species and this is a much greater number than those operationally planted. It also considers genetic conservation outside of areas managed for timber production.

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## 2. Review of Responsibility Matrix

The review led to some adjustment in context and there was a need for the wording to be clearer in several places. We decided to change “Quantify climate change impacts” to “**Quantify and address climate change impacts as they pertain to genetic conservation**”. In terms of cataloguing there appears to be a need to be more explicit in terms of monitoring, reporting and analysis required and how they tie in to FGC and provincial reporting requirements (more under Measures/Targets below).

There was concern expressed, especially in terms of research with the ‘hard-line’ drawn between the CFGC and the MOFR and we agreed that this was not intended to limit collaboration, there are many ongoing collaborations and if we keep this schematic we’ll put a dashed line there. There was some discussion on how the pest impacts and development of a Threat Index fits within GCTAC and/or whether other ‘groups’ are leading these initiatives. These appear to be developing and ongoing work, and Greg and Alex will assist in ensuring both the pathology and genetics issues are dealt with appropriately. Aiding with these initiatives moving forward is the requirement for districts to have a “Forest Health Strategy” and these will likely include impacts of diversity and climate change. The Forest Health responsibility has again become a MOFR responsibility due to the failure of the Defined Forest Area Management initiative.

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## 3. Measures and Targets

Brian discussed three levels of reporting concerning diversity that GCTAC should be more aware of.

1. **FREP** (Forest and Range Evaluation Program). There is a benchmark report on landscape diversity, but I couldn’t find it. Here is a link for more information on the program.  
<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/about/index.htm>
2. **BC State of the Forest Reporting** – Brian circulated genetic diversity indicators. This is pre-release, so as Brian indicated, please do not circulate beyond this group. There maybe an opportunity to submit genetic conservation status (from cataloguing effort) to this initiative in the future.
3. **National Criteria and Indicators** -  
[http://www.ccmf.org/ci/rprt2005/English/pg48-53\\_1-3.htm](http://www.ccmf.org/ci/rprt2005/English/pg48-53_1-3.htm)

An additional item discussed was ongoing (writing stage) work by Andreas and Sally looking at the “stability” of protected areas and their ability to predict whether species can adapt to future climate scenarios within the protected area. This would be an important overlay in terms of investment and confidence in protected areas for the conservation of genetic diversity. Other overlays were also discussed, such as forest health or pest outbreaks.

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We again asked whether we need different measures for commercial species and non-commercial species? We didn’t proceed any further in terms of specifically defining performance measures for GCTAC and FGC.

The federal initiative, CONFORGEN, is also set up to develop genetic conservation measures that it is expected will link to CCFM C and I reporting. GCTAC initiatives should align with these as they develop. BC is well represented in the CONFORGEN initiative.

**Probably missed a few points or misinterpreted them, so please review and, forward comments and I'll try and get out final minutes for May 4<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Miscellaneous GCTAC items**

Mention of an upcoming report (end of May) on the cataloguing project (chapter 1 – all species without ex-situ or inter-situ data) would be available for review. This is a foundation document for GCTAC and I encourage everyone to become more familiar with the proposed reporting and provide comments to Sally and Christine.

A PhD pre-proposal was forwarded to GCTAC for Sierra Cutis-McLane's desired transfer to a PhD program. This was raised briefly in November, but Sierra has subsequently met with her advisory committee and they fully support her transfer and the topic of her thesis. The proposal is still in development and Sierra and Sally would appreciate any comments you might have. No major objections raised as the adjustment to existing CFGC plan is relatively minor.

An announcement for the whitebark pine meeting will be coming out in the next week. The workshop is scheduled for August 21-24 at the Listel Whistler Hotel in Whistler, BC.

I will forward a document concerning the assumptions of quantifying "viable seeds" in our ex-situ seed bank and would appreciate comments. These results will be used in Chapter 2 of the CFGC cataloguing report and as part of the BC contribution to CAFGRIS. Greg is co-ordinating the inter-situ contributions to CAFGRIS.

Thank you.