

JEM Readers Respond . . .

DEAR Ms. SCHOOLING,

Congratulations on the success of your new *BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management*. We look forward to future issues on this important topic. However, we believe there needs to be some clarification on the recently posted *JEM* article, "Using forest structural diversity to inventory habitat diversity of forest-dwelling wildlife in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia" by Kris McCleary and Garth Mowat [see pages 120–132]. The authors state that "forest ecosystem inventories currently used in the province only document forest composition (Vegetation Resources Inventory) or identify plant communities (Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping) and are therefore inappropriate or inadequate as tools for land management planning." Yet the methods subsequently described for using forest structure as a means of inventorying forest-dwelling wildlife habitat appear to draw heavily on these existing provincial inventory standards for forest and ecosystem inventory. These inventories should have been correctly acknowledged and referenced in McCleary and Mowat's article.

For example, the Vegetation Resources Inventory (Resources Inventory Committee 2002) describes structural diversity, both canopy gaps and vertical structure, and also measures coarse woody debris, depth of litter and duff, and tree size. Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (Resources Inventory Committee 1998) methodology defines seven structural stages—the same six that are put forward in the article, plus one additional stage for sparsely vegetated units. Wildlife habitat inventories (Resources Inventory Committee 1999), based on these standardized ecosystem inventories, provide information on the ability of forested lands to support a wide diversity of species, and provide different interpretations (ratings) for each possible structural stage.

These inventory standards reveal that there are indeed well-established approaches to undertaking this work in British Columbia and they have been widely used as land management planning tools for more than 10 years.

It is encouraging to note, however, that the analysis techniques used by McCleary and Mowat may have

broad applicability for determining forest structure relationships from existing data. With more than 13% of the province already mapped to Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping standards, this work could be built upon to model structural stage from a combination of existing data and remote sensing. The concept of an index of structural diversity should contribute to indicator-based monitoring programs.

Sincerely,

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For More Information

Resources Inventory Committee. 2002. Vegetation Resource Inventory Ground Sampling Procedures. Version 4.3. Terrestrial Ecosystems Task Force. Victoria, B.C. URL: <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/risc/pubs/teveg/vri%20ground%20sampling2k2/vrigno%7e1.pdf>

Resources Inventory Committee. 1998. Standards for Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping. Ecosystem Working Group. Victoria, B.C. URL: <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/risc/pubs/teecolo/tem/index.htm>

Resources Inventory Committee. 1999. British Columbia Wildlife Habitat Rating Standards. Version 2.0. Terrestrial Ecosystems Task Force. Victoria, B.C. URL: <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/risc/pubs/teecolo/whrs/index.htm>