Ecosystem Based
Management in
the Boreal Forest

HEALTHY
LANDSCAPES
PROGRAM

Understanding EBM Through Dialogue

Learning about Ecosystem Based Management through engaging partners in group dialogue

ORGANIZATION:

HEALTHY LANDSCAPES PROGRAM

PARTNERS:

ALBERTA PACIFIC FOREST INDUSTRIES INC.
CANFOR
MILLAR WESTERN FOREST PRODUCTS LTD.
TOLKO INDUSTRIES LTD.
WEST FRASER TIMBER
WEYERHAEUSER
FOREST RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA

YEARS:

2018–2019

LOCATION:

THROUGHOUT ALBERTA

ECOSYSTEM BASED MANAGEMENT:

PARTNERS:DECISION-MAKING

Information was sought to make collective decisions

PARTNERS:NEIGHBOURS

A moderate number of neighbours were involved

DOWNLOAD CASE STUDY

Overview

EBM is a complex subject. So it makes sense that its definition could differ from its original among groups. Unlocking the conversation of what EBM is and what it means to various people was the objective of the EBM Dialogue sessions. We discovered that EBM is variously defined, but that pursuit of its principles is a common desire among a diverse stakeholder group.

Photo credit: fRI Research

Background

Despite the potential of EBM for forest management, implementing it in some areas is complicated by social and practical challenges. Forest managers have noted that issues such as economics or species at risk recovery often prevent the use of EBM.

To understand the challenges to implementing EBM, we designed a dialogue process to capture

diverse perspectives on understanding and implementation of EBM in Alberta. Our first goal was to listen to stakeholders and learn from them. Our second goal was to find the barriers and to explore if, or how, stakeholders might best make progress towards using EBM in their working lives.

> "...conversations were focused less on the technical aspects of EBM ... instead were focused on the importance of stakeholder relationships"

Photo credit: fRI Research

Innovation

The EBM idea has been around for 30 years, so everyone in relevant fields agree what it is and how to implement it. Right? Well, it turns out that this is not the case. EBM is a challenging and sometimes contradictory concept that has been defined in different ways by both scientists and land managers.

The Healthy Landscapes program has been working on the EBM concept for over a decade. The innovation of this project is to take a step back and assemble some key stakeholders to listen to how they understood EBM. The insights from this process will help the HLP make progress on implementing EBM in Alberta.

Discovery

As expected, there are many different definitions of EBM, as well as misunderstandings. Perhaps because these sessions were not intended to teach people what EBM is, rather learn from a variety of perspectives, some left the meetings with doubt in their minds about the concept. While this may not be ideal, it is real. And it tells us that if we are going to promote EBM as an aspirational land management method, we need to clarify what we mean by EBM and develop steps to make it possible to implement in Alberta.

Experience, and these sessions show, that to work in the Alberta forest industry, everyone from company presidents to equipment operators have to understand on some level, what EBM means. This does not mean that everyone becomes an EBM expert. We learned that a layered definition, one that spans beneficial field practices, complicated analyses, complex systems and even the chaos of market behaviours should be developed.

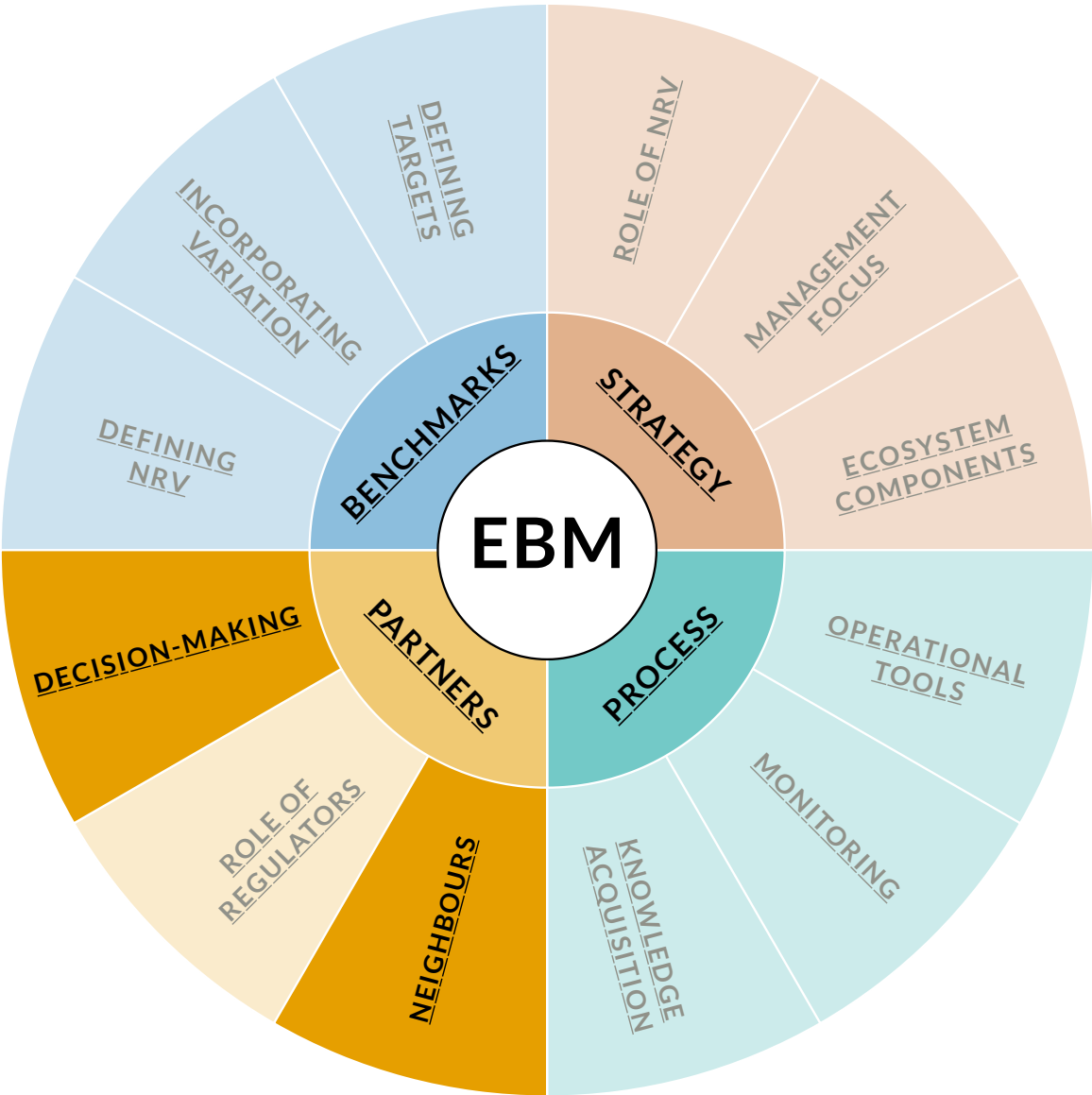> ” The results were, to say the least, interesting.”

MORE DETAILS

Where in the wheel?

EBM is as much about intent as it is application. These dialogue sessions made clear that there is a desire to move beyond management status quo and that that EBM could be a viable alternative. To make EBM a reality in Alberta, both our understanding of the science of EBM and the trust developed through discussions needs to be continued.

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