



**JULY 2002 BC-WIDE PUBLIC
OPINION TRACKING POLL**

**Public Perceptions & Attitudes
Toward RPFs &
Forest Management**

Presented To The Association Of BC Professional Foresters On July 26, 2002

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BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Since 1997, the Association of BC Professional Foresters has been tracking public perceptions of forest management in the province with particular emphasis on awareness and opinions of Registered Professional Foresters.

Market Facts MarkTrend was commissioned to conduct the June 2000 and subsequent waves of research. Prior to 2000, Angus Reid conducted the poll for the Association. This report focuses on the 2002 results conducted from July 8th to July 13th. Where possible, comparisons are made with previous waves of research.

On the total sample of 500, the maximum margin of error is +/-4.4%, 95 times out of 100. When comparing the results of this poll to previous polls, a difference of at least six points is required to be considered statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence.

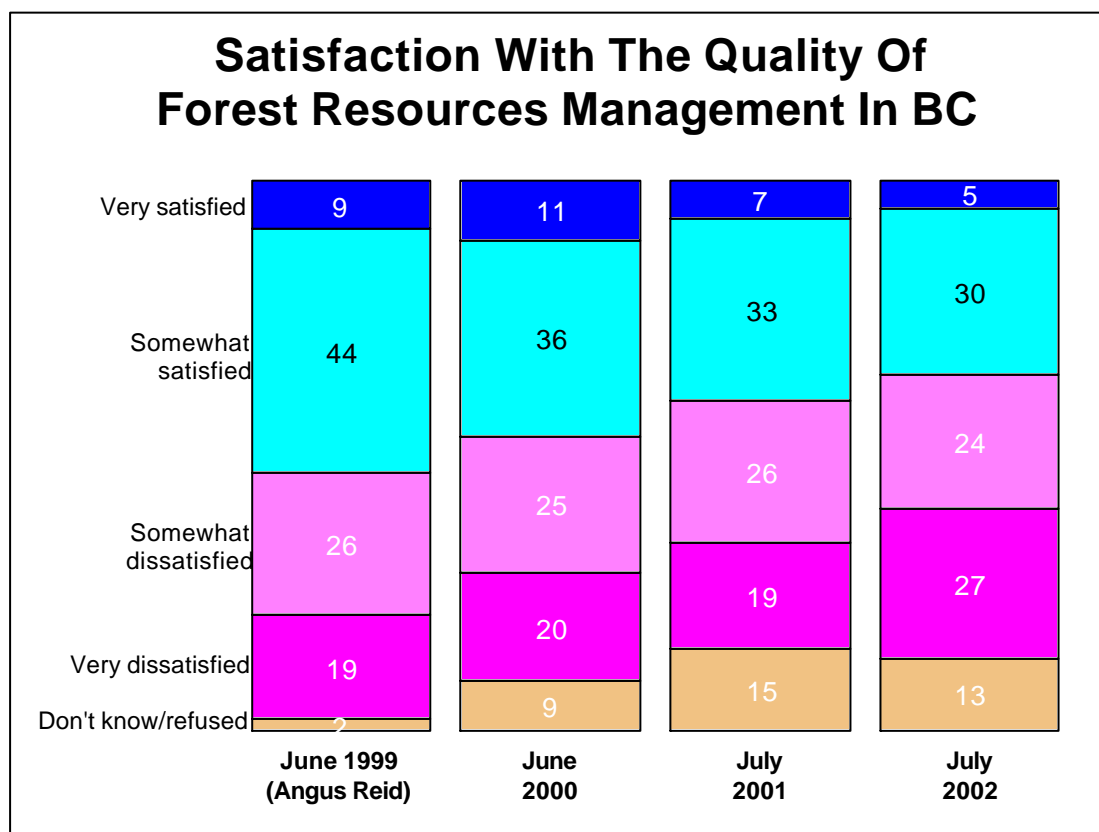
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Satisfaction With Forest Resources Management in BC

One-third of BC residents are satisfied with the quality of forest resources management in the province, most of which (30%) being somewhat satisfied. In contrast, one-half of residents are dissatisfied.

Public satisfaction continues on a downward trend, dropping from 53% in 1999 to 47% and 40% in 2000 and 2001 respectively, to the current low of 35%.

Demographically, residents aged 35 or older tend to be more dissatisfied than those under 35 (54% versus 39%). Residents across the province are equally dissatisfied with the management of forest resources in BC.



Whether Forest Management Is Improving Or Getting Worse In BC

Overall, more BC residents are inclined to believe that forest resources management in the province has deteriorated over the past five years than to believe that it has improved. Specifically, 30% feel that it has worsened, 18% say it has improved, while 38% feel that no significant change has occurred.

In 2000, the net perception that forest resources management had improved stood at +20 (51% improved less 31% worsened). In 2001, perceptions were about even at -1 (21% improved less 22% worsened). This year, the net perception has fallen to -12 (18% improved less 30% worsened).

Whether The Quality Of Forest Resources Management In BC Is Getting Better Or Worse Compared To Five Years Ago

				July 2002				
	June 2000	July 2001	July 2002	Satis. With Forest Mgmt.		Aware Of RPFs		
	Total	Total	Total	Very/ Somewhat Satisfied	Very/ Somewhat Dissatisfied	Well Aware	Well/ Somewhat Aware	Not Aware
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Base	501	501	500	178	257	100	381	118
Much better	11	6	5	10	3	9	5	5
Somewhat better	40	15	13	20	10	18	14	10
About the same	n/a	36	38	46	35	36	37	39
Somewhat worse	19	13	18	13	24	19	21	8
Much worse	12	9	12	2	21	10	12	14
Don't know/refused	18	20	13	11	7	8	10	24

* In June 2000, respondents were not provided with the option of "about the same".

Women (39%) are more likely than men (23%) to believe that the quality has worsened compared to five years ago.

Biggest Concern About BC's Forest Management Practice

The levy or surtax on softwood exports (16%) is the biggest concern of British Columbians followed by environmental concerns such as clear-cutting (11%), over cutting (8%) and lack of reforestation (5%). The lack of secondary industry resulting in the export of raw logs and loss of jobs (each with 5% mention) were also mentioned.

Biggest Concern About BC's Forest Management Practices

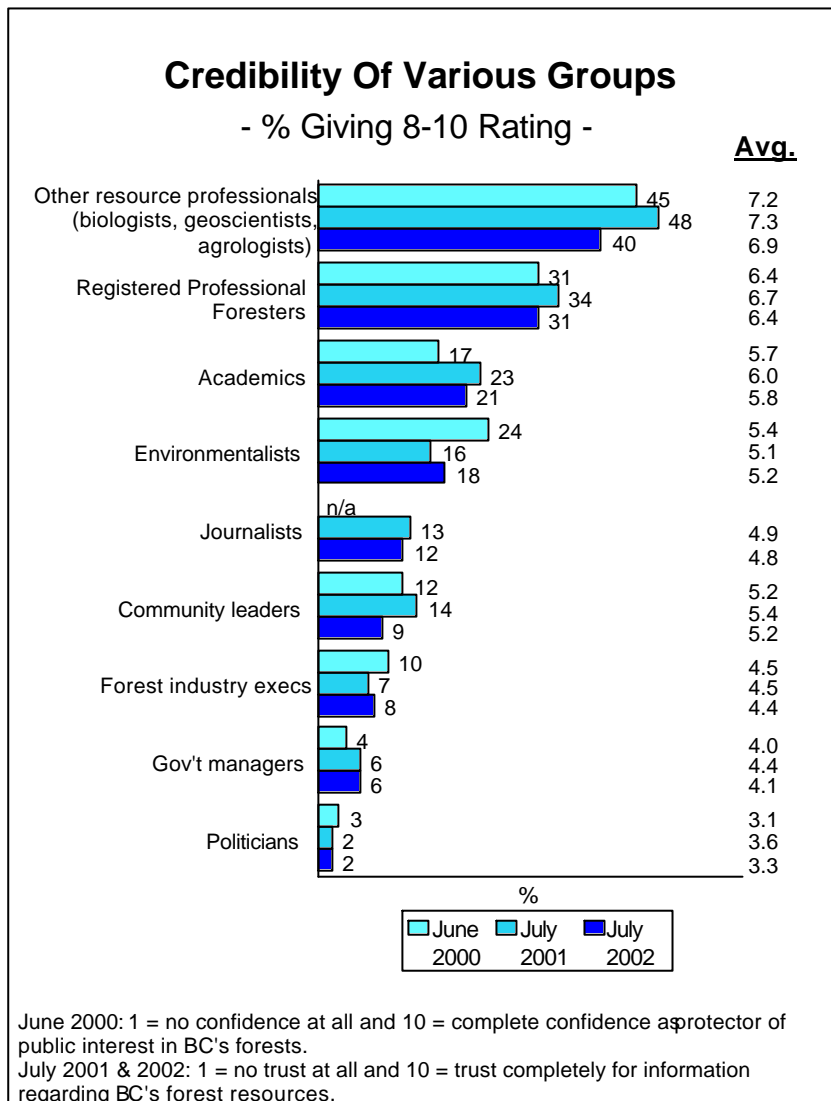
	July <u>2001</u>	July <u>2002</u>
Base	501	500
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Levy/surtax on softwood export	-	16
Clearcutting	14	11
Over-cutting	5	8
Lack of reforestation	10	5
Exporting raw logs/lack of secondary industry	7	5
Loss of jobs	4	5
Long term plans/sustainable development	8	4
Government red tape/bureaucracy	4	4
Companies not following the regulations/only concerned with profit	2	2
Pine beetle infestation	1	2
American/foreign ownership	-	2
Old growth logging	3	1
Protection of the environment/loss of animal habitat	2	1
Change to the Forest Practices Code/Results-Based Code	-	1
Land/soil erosion	-	1
Environmentalists have too much influence	1	1
Do not clean up mess/waste	1	1
Should allow more logging/stumpage rates are too high/ too much land being protected	2	-
Fisheries/harm to fish	1	-
Stumpage rates are too low	1	-
Other	6	6
No particular concern	18	17
Don't know/refused	10	7

The levy or surtax on softwood exports arising out of the trade dispute with the United States is a major concern in all BC communities although it is far more prevalent in the North Central area where it is the focus of three in ten (29%) residents. The levy is also the most prominent concern in the Thompson/Okanagan (18%), the Island/Coast (16%), and in the Fraser Valley and other southwest communities (11%). GVRD residents are about equally concerned with the levy and clear-cutting (13% and 14% respectively).

Another notable concern for Island Coastal residents is loss of jobs, and for North Central residents, the pine beetle infestation.

Credibility of Various Groups

The BC public continues to place the greatest trust in resource professionals such as biologists, geoscientists and agrologists when it comes to information regarding BC's forest resources. When asked to indicate their level of trust on a ten-point scale (where one means not at all and ten means completely trust), 40% express a great deal of trust (i.e. give a rating of 8, 9, or 10) to these particular professionals. Registered Professional Foresters are in second place and are well trusted (i.e. rated an 8, 9 or 10) by 31% of British Columbians.



In comparison to previous waves of research, very little has changed when it comes to which groups the public instills the most trust in. RPFs and other resource professionals, academics and to a lesser degree environmentalists, journalists and community leaders are recognized as being more trustworthy than their forest industry executive, government manager and politician counterparts. The latter three groups are generally looked upon with suspicion when it comes to providing information regarding BC's forest resources.

We continue to find a high degree of consistency over the past three years when we compare the 2001 and 2002 ratings which were based on the level of “trust” with each group to the 2000 ratings which were based the level of “confidence as protectors”.

Also of note, while resource professionals such as biologists, geoscientists and agrologists, continue to be held in the highest regard of the various groups, the proportion expressing a great deal of trust in these professions (ie. a rating of 8, 9, or 10) dropped by 8 points from last year.

Residents who are aware of RPFs continue to give above-average ratings to RPFs, awarding an average score of 6.7 out of 10 versus 6.0 from those unaware of RPFs. This indicates that raising the profile of the profession would be beneficial to the profession’s overall credibility.

Public Awareness Of What An RPF IS

Awareness levels of RPFs have remained consistent over three years, with one-fifth of British Columbians claiming to be “well aware” and a further three-fifths “somewhat aware” of what a RPF is.

Awareness Of What A Registered Professional Forester Is

	June <u>2000</u>	July <u>2001</u>	July <u>2002</u>
Base	501	501	500
	%	%	%
Well aware	21	18	20
Somewhat aware	58	56	56
Not aware	20	26	24
Don't know	1	-	-

- Percent Saying They Are “Well Aware” Of What An RPF Is –

- July 2002 -

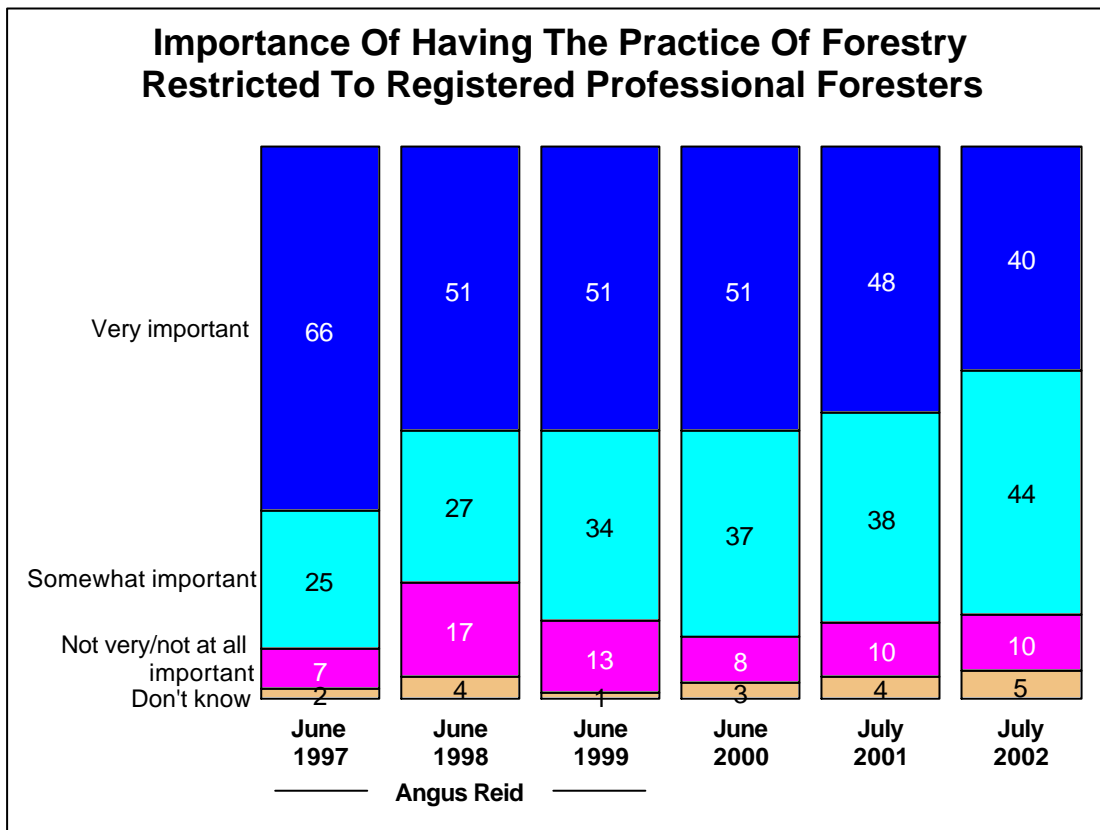
Total	<u>Base</u> 500	%	20
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	250	%	26
Female	250	%	14
<u>Age</u>			
18-24	33	%	9
25-44	191	%	17
45-64	191	%	25
65+	84	%	21
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	134	%	19
Vocation/technical/college	158	%	15
University	205	%	25
<u>Region</u>			
GVRD	250	%	15
Non GVRD	250	%	25
Fraser Valley/Other SW	37	%	19
Island Coast	91	%	26
Thompson/Okanagan/Kootenay	80	%	21
North Central	42	%	36
<u>Satisfaction With Forest Management</u>			
Very/somewhat satisfied	178	%	23
Very/somewhat dissatisfied	257	%	20

Note: When asked in the June 1997, 1998 and 1999 Angus Reid surveys “Do you know what a registered professional forester is?”, the percent answering “yes” was 42% in 1997, 45% in 1998 and 44% in 1999.

Among the various sub-groups, men are almost twice as likely as women to claim they are well aware of what a RPF is. As would be expected, those living outside the GVRD are more likely to be well aware of RPFs than those living in the GVRD (25% versus 15%).

Importance Of Restricting The Practice Of Forestry to RPFs

Over eight in ten BC residents (84%) feel that it is important to restrict the planning, approving, and assessing the impact of most forestry activities to RPFs. Conversely, one in ten residents say it is not important to have the activity solely under jurisdiction of RPFs.



By large, British Columbians continue to believe that it is important to have forestry practice restricted to RPFs. However in contrast to previous years, where most residents tended to consider it “very important” as opposed to “somewhat important”, residents are now evenly split between these two stances. Specifically 44% say it is “somewhat important” and 40% “very important”.

Fraser Valley residents, older British Columbians and residents with higher incomes are more apt to believe that restricting the practice to RPFs is only “somewhat important”.

Performance Evaluation Of RPFs

Similar to previous years, over three-quarters of British Columbians strongly or somewhat agree that RPFs are technically competent. However, slightly fewer residents this year agree that RPFs are ethical in their decision-making, accountable for their actions, and do a good job at managing BC's forest resources. Evaluations are notably more favourable among those well aware of RPFs, indicating not only that those in the know give credit to the profession, but also that raising public awareness of RPFs would increase public appreciation generally.

	Performance Evaluation Of Registered Professional Foresters						Strongly/Somewhat Agree Among Those Well Aware Of What RPFs Are
	Angus Reid*			Strongly/Somewhat Agree* ²			
	June 1997	June 1998	June 1999	June 2000	July 2001	July 2002	
	600	600	600	501	501	500	100
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Registered professional foresters are technically competent	83	82	80	79	78	77	89
Registered professional foresters are ethical in the forest resource management decisions they make* ⁴	72	64	59	72	71	65	73
Registered professional foresters are accountable for their actions	72	59	59	65	69	64	71
Registered professional foresters are doing a good job of managing BC's forest resources* ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	71	64	61	70
Registered professional foresters will always choose the public interest when faced with a conflict between the interests of their employer and the public	n/a	37	29	45	n/a	n/a	n/a

* For the Angus Reid surveys, agreement was based on those rating 5, 6 or 7 on a seven point scale where one means "completely disagree" and seven means "completely agree".

*² For the Market Facts MarkTrend surveys, a greement was based on those strongly/somewhat agreeing.

*³ Statement worded as "Registered professional foresters are doing a good job of practicing forestry in BC" in June 2000

*⁴ Statement worded as "Registered professional foresters are ethical in the decisions they make" in June 2000

Perceived Interests That RPFs Serve

When asked whose interests they believe a professional forester is most likely to favour when making forest resource decisions, in line with last year, about one half of British Columbians feel that there will be a bias towards the employer. A further one in five or 21% (up from 15% in July 2001) believe that the interests of the government will be furthered, while one in ten each feel the interests of the public and the community will be served.

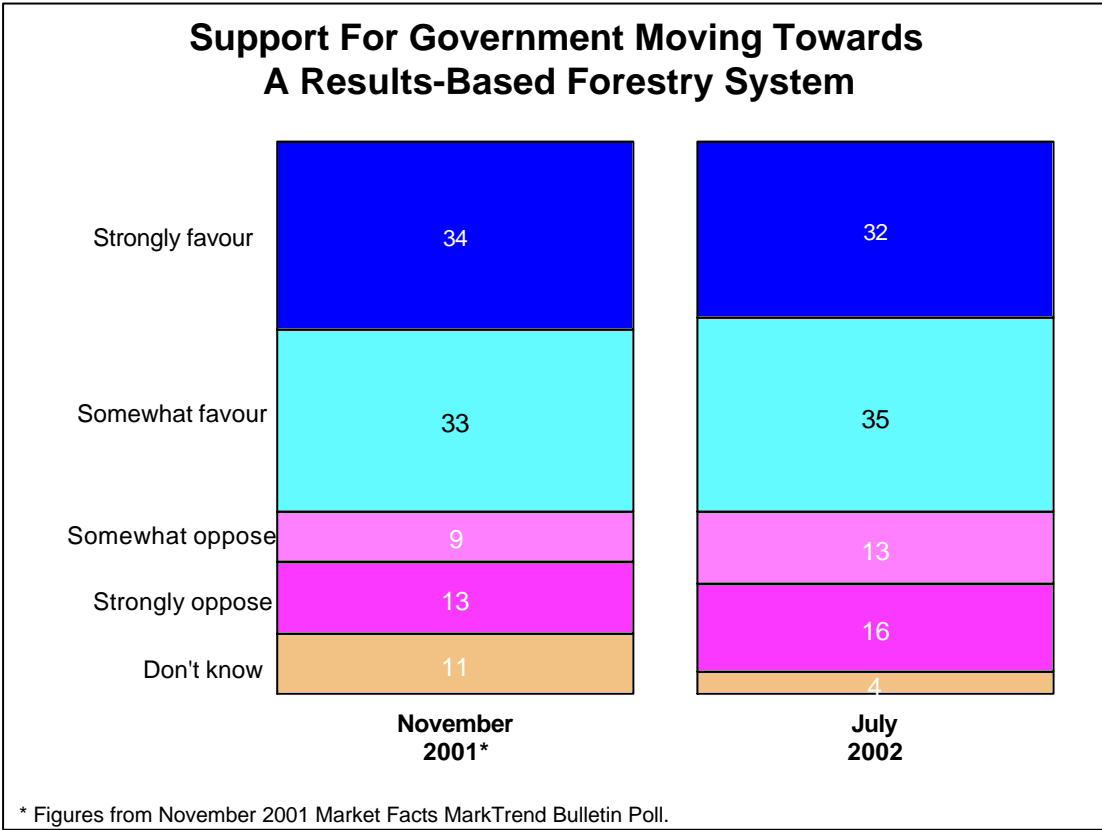
Whose interests do you believe a professional forester is most likely to favour when making forest resource management decisions?

	July <u>2001</u>	July <u>2002</u>
Base	501 %	500 %
<u>Aided Mentions</u>		
The employer's	53	52
The government's	15	21
The public's	10	10
The community's	12	9
<u>Unaided Mentions</u>		
Their own	1	1
Everyone's	1	-
Other	1	-
No one in particular	-	1
Don't know/refused	6	7

Support For Government Moving Towards A Results-Based Forestry System

Two-thirds of British Columbians are in favour (roughly one third each strongly and somewhat favouring) of the government moving towards a results-based system that would give companies greater flexibility in how they conduct forestry, as long as they can demonstrate that environmental standards are met. On the flipside, 29% of residents are opposed towards the new system.

Sentiment is similar to that measured in Market Facts MarkTrend’s Bulletin in November 2001.



By area, Thompson/Okanagan and North Central residents are most in favour of a results-based forestry system (each 76% respectively) subject to the environmental standard condition, while Fraser Valley residents are the least supportive (59%).

Level of education appears to factor into the equation, with support for a results-based system declining from 75% among those with high school or less to 68% among those with college or technical training, to 61% among those who attended university. Regionally, support is higher outside the GVRD, at 71%, than within the GVRD, at 63%.



Impact Of Greater Reliance On RPFs

Six in ten British Columbians say that they would be more likely to support the government proceeding with changes to the Forest Practices Code if it were to include greater reliance on the judgement and accountability of professional foresters. Just 10% say that greater reliance on RPFs would reduce their support for the changes, while the balance of residents, 29%, say it would make no difference to them or have no opinion.

Residents who are well aware of RPFs are particularly persuaded to support the proposed changes to the Forest Practices Code if it includes greater reliance on RPFs.

