West Fraser

Summary Document

2026 Hinton and Edson Forest Management Plan

October 2024

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1 Introduction

This FMP Summary Document provides a plain language overview of the Forest Management Plan (FMP) being prepared by West Fraser for submission to the Alberta government by May 1, 2026. The FMP is a strategic plan for West Fraser's Hinton and Edson Forest Management Agreement (FMA) areas that sets out overall resource management goals and objectives and identifies appropriate strategies for achieving them. The FMP is a high-level plan; it covers a 200-year time horizon and provides direction to all other plans below it (such as the General Development Plan and Annual Operating Plan).

FMPs are large, complicated plans that take many years to prepare. West Fraser's FMP preparation began in 2024 and will continue in 2025 and into 2026. A similar "plain language" FMP summary document such as this will also be prepared for distribution in subsequent years.

Currently, West Fraser is just beginning the process of developing the 2026 FMP. Over the next year, the plan will be further developed, with the final submission to the provincial government by May 1, 2026. There will be two additional public/stakeholder feedback opportunities, one in 2025 and one in early 2026.

2 Basic Requirements

This FMP will plan over a 200-year time horizon and provide direction to all other plans below it, such as the General Development Plan. Within the final FMP, an Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) is recommended. All-important non-timber values, such as grizzly bears, biodiversity, old forest, barred owls and recreation, are identified, and strategies identified to manage them. The FMP will contain a 20-year Spatial Harvest Sequence (this means proposed harvest area locations are shown on a map for the first 20 years of the plan) and the location of proposed main road corridors. More details about the content of the FMP are provided in Section 3. West Fraser previously prepared FMPs for the Hinton and Edson FMAs separately; the previous plans were approved in 2017 and 2020, respectively. A flow chart showing how the FMP fits within existing and future plans can be found in Figure 1.

Once approved, the new FMP will include the projected locations of harvest areas that will be logged in the next 20 years. Associated with those harvest areas will be roads (only major proposed corridors are shown in the FMP) and silvicultural activities such as site preparation, planting, and stand tending. This FMP Summary Document does not contain the location of harvest areas because the Spatial Harvest Sequence (SHS) has not yet been developed; however, the SHS will be part of a future public participation opportunity in 2026.

The FMP is being developed by West Fraser for its FMA 9700032 (Edson) and FMA 8800025 (Hinton) areas, both located in West Central Alberta. The FMA area boundaries are shown in Figure 2. The Hinton FMA area (Forest Management Unit E14) covers just under 1,000,000 hectares, and the Edson FMA area (Forest Management Unit R13) covers just over 265,000 hectares.

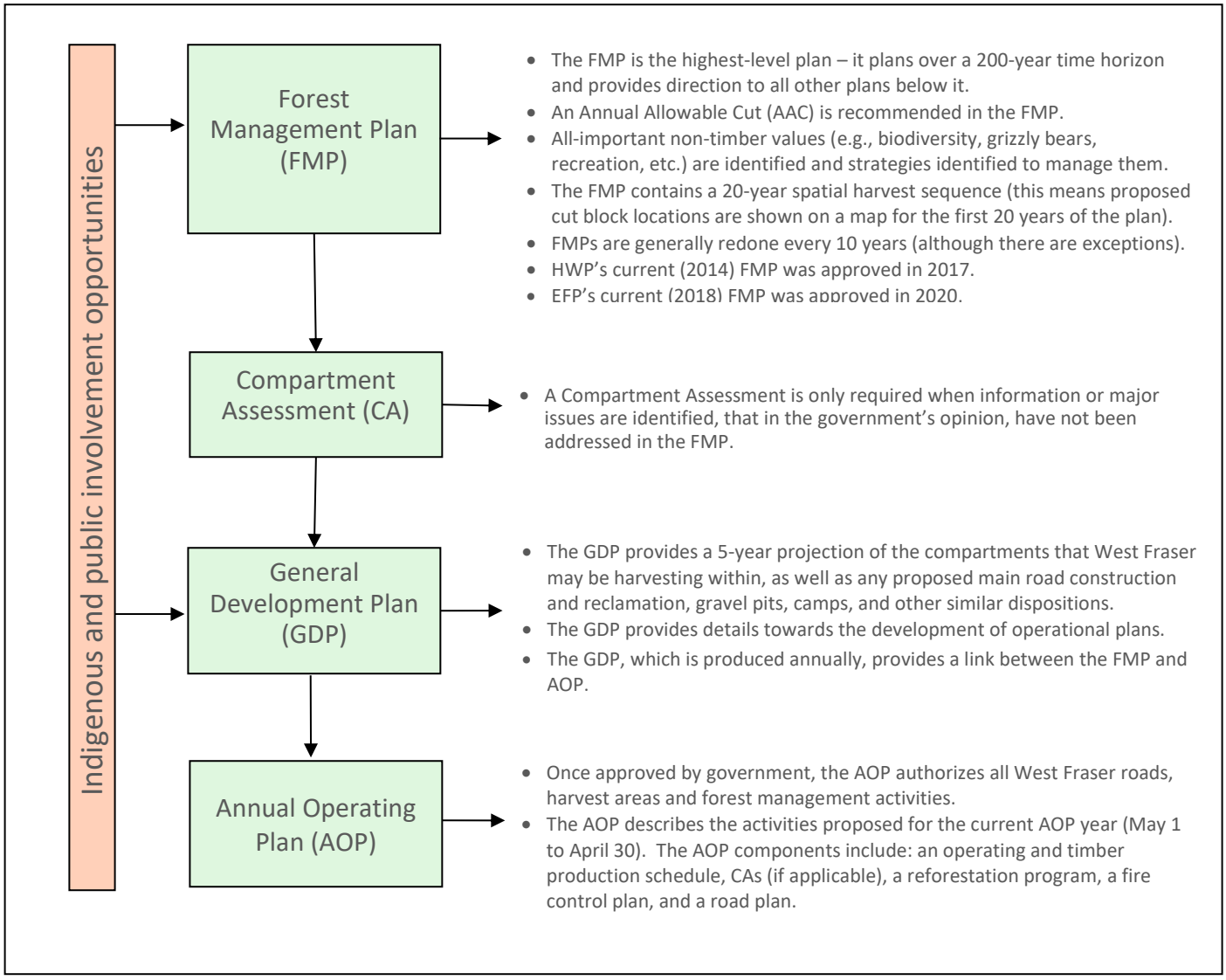

Figure 1. An overview of the planning process for forest companies in Alberta.

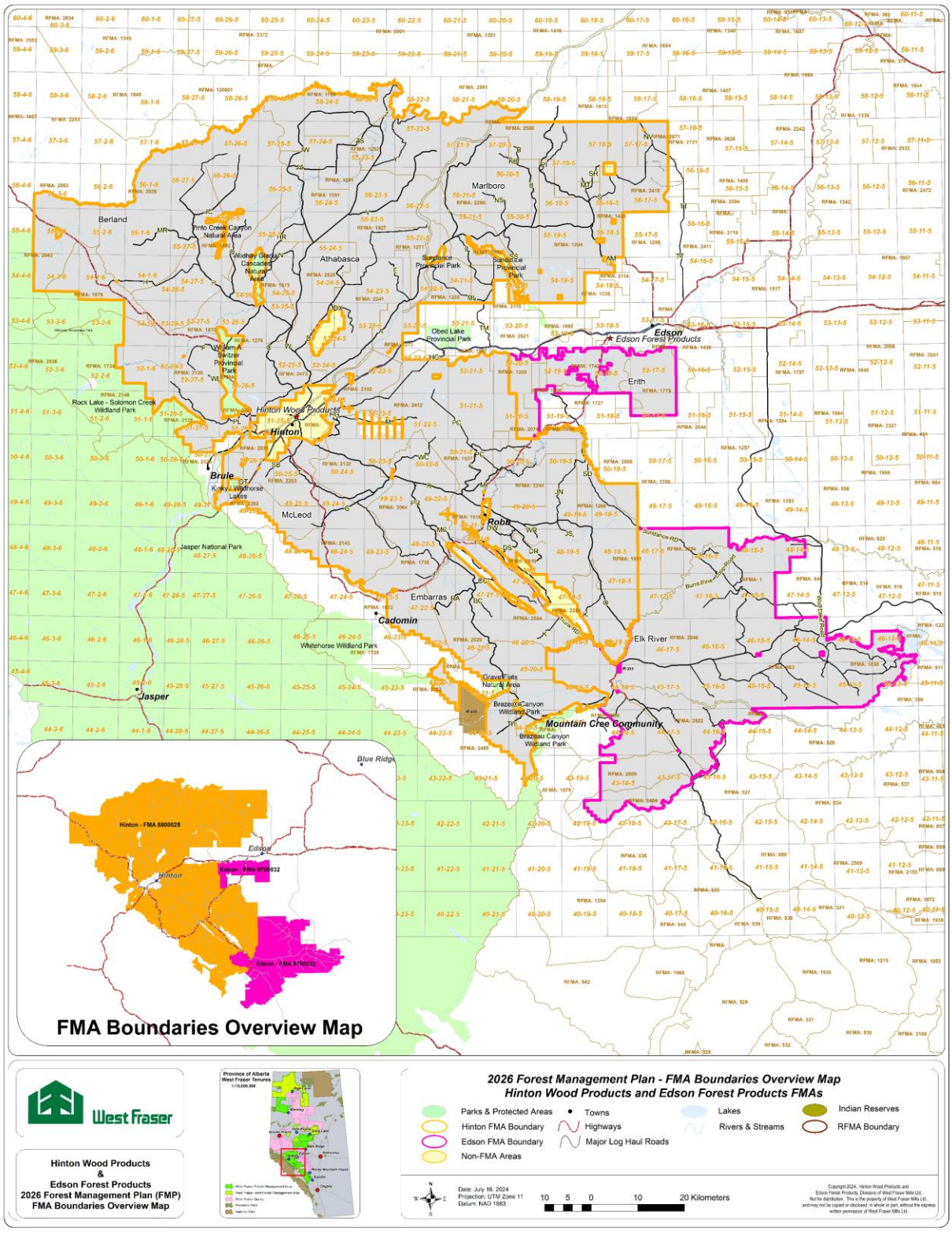

Figure 2. An overview map of the FMA boundaries for the Edson and Hinton Forest Management Areas.

3 Key Components of the Forest Management Plan

There are a number of key components of an FMP, any of which a member of the public or stakeholder group might want to provide comment on. The following sections will describe the major components of an FMP and will describe the current status of each component.

3.1 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference describe the process to be used for developing and implementing the 2026 Forest Management Plan and was developed jointly with the provincial government. It follows the process described in the Alberta Forest Management Planning Standard. These Terms of Reference describe the process from the point of starting work on the 2026 Forest Management Plan in 2024 to starting work on the next FMP, which is expected to be due in 2036.

Status: The Terms of Reference were approved by the GoA in June 2024.

3.2 Landbase Classification

One of the first and most important components in the development of a new FMP for the Hinton and Edson FMA areas is to determine the net landbase that is available for harvesting and other related forest management activities. This is done by identifying the current condition of the landbase by classifying every hectare of the two FMA areas as either available, or not available, for long-term forestry operations. The 2026 FMP landbase determination must also account for other information that has been updated since the last landbase determination for the 2014 and 2018 FMPs, including updating the vegetation inventory, logging and silviculture history, hydrology (i.e., streams and lakes) data, road construction, steep slope information, and energy dispositions (e.g., well sites, seismic lines, etc.).

Status: The landbase determination process has just started, and West Fraser is currently determining all the other information required to complete the landbase classification. The landbase has to be given an “agreement-in-principle” by the GoA before an AAC (Annual Allowable Cut) calculation can be made.

3.3 Growth and Yield Analysis

The annual allowable cut is the rate at which trees can be harvested while ensuring that future timber yields are not compromised. Growth and yield analysis determines how much standing timber is currently on the landscape and forecasts future tree growth in order to predict the amount of timber available over time. These forecasts are supported by robust sampling programs that measure tree and forest conditions, and change in forest conditions are monitored over time through re-measured plots. A Growth and Yield Plan is developed as part of each FMP and outlines commitments to future sampling to ensure that our understanding of forests can be continually updated.

Status: West Fraser is currently developing a sampling program that will be provide additional data to be used in yield projections. The growth and yield information has to be given an “agreement-in-principle” by the GoA before an Annual Allowable Cut calculation can be made.

3.4 Values, Objectives, Indicators, and Targets

The provincial Planning Standard requires companies to develop a set of Values, Objectives, Indicators, and Targets (VOITs) that provide key direction for the implementation of all major strategies contained within the FMP. These VOITs inform and provide direction to all aspects of the FMP, including the Annual Allowable Cut calculation, the Spatial Harvest Sequence, biodiversity management, reforestation commitments, stakeholder consultation, legal compliance, soil and water conservation, Indigenous consultation, and fire risk mitigation.

Table 3-1 outlines the definition of each component of a VOIT. VOITs are developed in consultation with the public, First Nations, Metis Settlements, Credibly Asserted Metis Community (CAMC) members, and other interested parties. Input into the development of these VOITs is the most direct way that interested stakeholders can have influence and shape forest management activities on the Hinton and Edson FMA areas.

Table 3-1 Definitions of Values, Objectives, Indicators and Targets

Element	Definition
Value	An FMA-specific characteristic or quality considered by an interested party to be important (e.g., ecosystem diversity or forest conditions)
Objective	A broad statement that describes a desired future state or condition for an FMA-specific value (e.g., maintain current levels of types of ecosystem diversity).
Indicator	A variable that measures the state or condition of an FMA-specific value and for which one or more targets are set (e.g., age-class structure of the forest's stands).
Target	A specific statement describing a desired future state of condition of an indicator (e.g., maintain forest age class within range of natural variability). A target is commonly stated as a desired level of an indicator

Table 3-2 outlines an example of a public stakeholder focused VOIT being considered for the 2026 FMP. Once the FMP is approved, regular reporting on the success of meeting VOITs will also be part of the process.

Table 3-2 Example public stakeholder VOIT

Value	Objective	Indicator	Target
Provide opportunities to derive benefits and participate in use and management	Integrate other uses and timber management activities	Activities that allow interested parties to participate in the decision-making process	•Implement the approved Public Involvement Plan. • Conduct open houses annually for the public to review plans and provide feedback and ask questions. • Continue to engage with stakeholders and members of the public who express interest in forest management.

Strategies for how West Fraser intends to manage for a number of other major non-timber values are described in the VOIT section of the FMP. This will include strategies to manage for various species, such as grizzly bear, barred owl, songbirds, and pine marten, as well as strategies to manage for other important non-timber values like riparian areas, uncommon plant communities, and old forest.

Other important non-timber values, such as wildlife habitat and mineral licks, are managed through a combination of managing for appropriate natural disturbance targets on the entire FMA area (see Section 4 on Ecosystem-Based Management) and identifying site-specific values (e.g., mineral licks) on the ground while conducting fieldwork and ensuring they are adequately protected.

Status: West Fraser has just started working on VOITs with the GoA. We will continue to revisit existing VOITs and develop new VOITs. If you are interested in participating in the development of any VOITs, please contact us through any of the contact methods listed at the back of this document. Attached in Appendix 1 is a copy of the most up-to-date VOIT table (August 2024), which should still be considered draft.

3.5 Annual Allowable Cut Calculation

An annual allowable cut (AAC) calculation is how we determine how much volume can be harvested on a sustainable basis. There is an easy way to understand this! If you know what forests are available for harvest (after managing for various values such as biodiversity, grizzly bear, water, recreation, etc.) and how much that available forest grows each year, you are then able to harvest, in perpetuity, whatever grows each year on that available forest. It's like withdrawing the interest earned in a savings account but leaving the principal to earn more interest every year. While vastly overly simplified, this is essentially how complicated computer modelling works to determine the AAC.

The 2026 FMP will utilize the best information available to define a new AAC for the Hinton and Edson FMA areas. Three major categories of information will be inputs into the computer modelling, or timber supply analysis, used to calculate the AAC:

1. Landbase classification. Defines where HWP and EFP will and will not harvest, both now and in the future.
2. Growth and yield. Predicts the volume currently in the forest and projects how stands will grow in the future. The estimates are based on field measurements and government-approved growth models.
3. Management intent. Defines the objectives HWP/EFP has in managing the forest, primarily determined through the VOIT process. These objectives will include economic, ecological, and social needs.

Table 3-3 Summarizes the AAC calculations from the previous Hinton and Edson FMPs.

FMU	Company	Disposition	Coniferous Allocation (m3/yr)	Deciduous Allocation (m3/yr)
E14	West Fraser Mills Ltd.	FMA8800025	1,495,800	328,600
E14	Local Use		8,500	1,500
R13	West Fraser Mills Ltd	FMA9700032	565,300	48,130
R13	Local Use		2,822	241
R13	Precision Forest Industries	CTQR130001	2,645	
R13	CTPP		6,955	6,470

Status: The process of determining a new AAC for the 2026 FMP has not yet been started.

3.6 20-Year Spatial Harvest Sequence Map

The 2026 FMP will contain maps that will show the location of proposed harvest areas that West Fraser will be logging over the first 20 years of the FMP. The blocks are a good first approximation of where we will likely harvest. However, when better field information becomes available, cutblock locations can change. West Fraser may harvest in unplanned areas in response to natural disturbances such as blowdown or insect outbreaks.

Status: The process of determining a Spatial Harvest Sequence has not yet been started.

4 Forest Management Informed by Science

Forests are complex ecosystems composed of a wide diversity of plants and animals that are impacted by several factors including fires, insects, wind and other weather events, and diseases, which are collectively referred to as natural disturbances. Our understanding of forested landscapes and how they develop is continually evolving thanks to scientific research combined with West Fraser's on-the-ground experience and monitoring programs. West Fraser recognizes the importance of using science to inform our practices and strives to use science as the basis of our forest management plans.

West Fraser supports and invests in research with a number of collaborating partners in order to help advance scientific knowledge about our forests, and we work to incorporate the findings into our operations. Some of the organizations that West Fraser works with are fRI Research, the University of Alberta, the NAIT Center for Boreal Research, and the Canadian Forest Service.

fRI Research has been a leader in applied forestry research since it began operating as the Foothills Model Forest in the 1990s. West Fraser has been a partner since its inception and has benefitted from the work conducted through many of the fRI programs. The Healthy Landscapes Program has been critical in promoting understanding of ecosystem-based management and providing practical guidance on how knowledge about historical patterns of fire and other natural disturbances can be used to manage for biodiversity at the landscape level. Both the Grizzly Bear and the Caribou Program have provided valuable insights into these important wildlife species, with the Grizzly Bear Program in particular leading to the development of tools that are used as a part of forest management planning.

West Fraser funds research at the University of Alberta on a range of subjects, notably through sponsoring the establishment of research chairs in tree improvement, growth and yield and ecosystem-based management. Tree improvement looks for ways to create more robust and faster growing stands through selective breeding (not genetic engineering!) and is one avenue being investigated to address adaptation to climate change. Growth and yield research gives us a better understanding of how trees grow on different sites and in response to different silviculture treatments, which enables us to tailor our practices to maximize reforestation success and make more accurate predictions of long-term wood supply. Ecosystem-based management research at the university complements the fRI Research Healthy Landscapes program and enhances our ability to manage the forest to support multiple non-timber values such as wildlife and biological diversity conversation.

The Canadian Forest Service (CFS) has been conducting forestry research in Alberta for nearly a century and West Fraser has been supporting their network of long-term pine silviculture trials for nearly 25 years. These silviculture trials provide valuable information about response to a range of thinning treatments in fire origin stands that can be incorporated into on-the-ground management practices as well as improve growth and yield projections. More recently West Fraser began supporting work at CFS to understand the cause of aspen dieback and to determine how to minimize its impact. The work West Fraser has supported through the NAIT Center for Boreal Research has focused on thinning treatments in post-harvest stands, which complements the work by CFS in fire origin stands.

The results of the research programs mentioned above, along with other projects that West Fraser sponsors at these and other universities, are an important input to our forest management plans. We use them to help set forest management targets (as described in Section 3.4) and they inform the species conservation strategies that describe how we conduct our forest operations to conserve key wildlife species. An important aspect of the development of each new forest management plan is to evaluate the new information that has become available since the completion of the last FMP and determine how it can be incorporated not only to improve our estimates of the AAC but also to help better address the range of non-timber values that are important to stakeholders. For example, in the 2026 FMP there will be an increased focus on reduction of landscape level fire risk and West Fraser will using wildfire research to development related strategies.

West Fraser recognizes that Indigenous communities have a wealth of traditional knowledge about ecological processes and will consider opportunities to incorporate this knowledge into forest management planning.

5 Contact Information

This plain language FMP Summary Document provides an overview of West Fraser's Forest Management Plan, explaining what is contained within an FMP, what the current status of the FMP is, as well as other pertinent information about the FMP. West Fraser is looking for any feedback about this plan. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, or would like a copy of the Terms of Reference or be more involved in the process of identifying VOITs, please contact West Fraser by any of the contact methods noted below.

HWP/EFP CONTACT INFORMATION: General

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E-mail: hwpwoodloods@westfraser.com

Phone: 1-800-293-6955 Toll-free number

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Or write to us, at: Hinton/Edson Woodlands, 99 West River Road, Hinton, Alberta, T7V 1Y7

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