

Community Forest Pilot Agreements

Community forests are commercial forest operations that are locally managed to reflect local goals.

What is a community forest?

In British Columbia, a community forest can be described as any forestry operation managed by a local government, community group, First Nation or community-held corporation for the benefit of the entire community.

Community forests are typically managed to reflect community goals, such as:

- supporting the local economy by hiring and buying supplies locally and selling timber to local timber processing facilities,
- diversifying the local economy by making small volumes of wood fibre available to new and existing niche markets such as small-scale, value added manufacturers and artisans,
- maintaining and enhancing local recreational opportunities,
- protecting drinking water, views, wildlife and other environmental attributes; and,
- providing a source of income to support local community initiatives.

The majority of community forests in B.C. are on Crown land under a “timber tenure” such as a Forest Licence, Tree Farm Licence or Community Forest Agreement.

Like all forest tenures, these community forests are bound by a legal agreement between the Forest Service and the

agreement holder. This agreement grants the community specific rights to use public forest land and harvest timber in exchange for meeting certain forest stewardship obligations and the payment of stumpage and annual rent.

Why was the Community Forest Agreement created?

In response to calls from communities throughout the province, the *Forest Act* was amended in 1998 to create the Community Forest Agreement. This new forest tenure was designed to allow more communities and First Nations to participate directly in the management of local forests. Based on the recommendations of a stakeholder advisory committee, the Community Forest Agreement:

- is restricted to entities that represent, or are supported by the community, including bands, municipalities, societies and corporations,
- is area based,
- has no minimum or maximum size,
- may include private land or Indian reserve land; and,
- has a term of 25 to 99 years.

In order to test the effectiveness of this new forest tenure, the Ministry of Forests launched a pilot project in which it issued a special form of the tenure, called a Community Forest Pilot Agreement (CFPA). The pilot agreements are limited to a term of five years, during which the tenure is evaluated.



Those holders who successfully operate the pilot agreements may be offered long-term Community Forest Agreements with terms of 25-99 years.

To date, eight CFPAs have been issued to communities, First Nations, or partnerships of the two, and several more agreements are pending. These pilot agreements are located throughout the province, and range in size from about 400 hectares to more than 60,000 hectares. Each agreement is unique, and reflects the priorities outlined in each organization's proposal for the agreement. For example, agreements vary by type of legal entity that holds the agreement, administrative structures, and by business and forest management approaches.

Will there be additional opportunities to apply for an agreement?

The issuance of pilot agreements under the September 1998 Request for Proposals is complete; however, there may be opportunities for additional pilot agreements.

Under the Forestry Revitalization Plan announced March 2003, the province committed to significantly increasing the volume of timber allocated to community-based forest tenures, including community forest pilot agreements. It is anticipated that new opportunities will begin to be available in late 2004.

Before creating an opportunity to apply for a Community Forest Pilot Agreement, the Crown would consider a number of factors, including:

- the availability of suitable Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) and landbase(s) within certain boundaries (e.g. a Timber Supply Area),
- the anticipated level of local support for the opportunity; and,
- the potential to address local land use issues.

As well, priority may be given to resource-based communities that have experienced the effects of a recent mill closure or other impacts on their economy.

Opportunities to apply for an agreement may be available either through a competitive process or a direct invitation to apply. Under a competitive process, any community or First Nation would be eligible to apply. Under special circumstances a direct invitation may be made to only one community.

Is a community forest pilot agreement right for my community?

Operating any forest tenure, including a community forest, is a challenging, complex undertaking that is not without risk. B.C. has some of the most strict forest management standards in the world. In addition, international market conditions and the cyclical nature of forestry add to the difficulty of successfully operating a forest tenure.

Before a community considers whether a CFPA or any other forest tenure is right for them they should consider:

- The proposed objectives of the community forest, for example:

"A community forest is not 'a licence to print money.' Community forestry is a business requiring a good product with good marketing and strong financial management."

Geoff Battersby,
President,
Revelstoke
Community Forest
Corporation

revenue, employment, recreation, education and training, business diversification.

- The level of local support. Do community residents support a community forest? Are they prepared to invest their time and possibly their tax dollars? Are they prepared to accept the responsibilities and the risks?
- The availability of financial and human resources to administer and operate the community forest. To be successful, a community forest must be administered by people who understand forestry and how to run a business. If your community lacks this expertise, you should consider where to acquire it before pursuing an opportunity.

What responsibilities are associated with the tenure?

Agreement holders must comply with legislative requirements of the Forest Practices Code *Forest and Range Practices Act*, the *Forest Act*, and all other applicable acts and regulations.

For example, agreement holders must prepare management and operational plans, cutting permits and road permits. They are also responsible for the costs of road building, harvesting, reforestation and payment of stumpage and annual rent.

Should my community start working on a proposal now?

Until a new opportunity to apply for a pilot agreement is advertised, or a community is directly invited to apply,

communities risk investing time and resources in a proposal that may not be considered.

When new opportunities are created, communities will be given sufficient time to develop a proposal.

If your community is serious about an opportunity to apply for a CFPA, write to your Ministry of Forests District Manager indicating your interest. You will receive a response acknowledging your community's interest and information on the current potential for the opportunity.

For more information:

Community Forests program page:
www.for.gov.bc.ca/hth/community

Ministry of Forests: Ministry of Forests: www.gov.bc.ca/for/

Forest Revitalization Plan: <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/mof/plan/>

Contact the community forest resource person in your region:

Coast Forest Region, Nanaimo
250 751-7001

Northern Interior Region, Prince George
250 565-6100

Southern Interior Region, Kamloops
250 828-4131

Resource Tenures and Engineering Branch, Victoria
250 387-5291

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