

Community Forest Letter & Principles

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November 15, 2004

Ed Steeves, Chairperson
Sunshine Coast Regional District

Garry Feschuk, Chief
Sechelt First Nation

Cam Reid, Mayor
District Municipality of Sechelt

Barry Janyk, Mayor
Town of Gibsons

Re: Proposed Community Forest Licence Agreement

From: Board of Directors
Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

The Sunshine Coast Conservation Association has been following the discussions regarding the proposed Sechelt Community Forest with great interest and some concern. As you are aware, the conservation community is actively involved in researching and promoting community forestry on the Sunshine Coast. We recognize the economic and social benefits to the community that could be realized. However, the public process for establishing a community forest and subsequent forest development planning must be undertaken properly in order to be successful, i.e., to benefit the community economically and socially while protecting forest values and safeguarding the water resources that we are dependent on.

We note that public comments about community forestry are becoming polarized and that the entire project appears to be at risk. No public consultations have yet taken place. Based on the provincial government's timber volume (AAC) take-back and reallocation program, it is obvious which chart areas are being considered for assignment to a community forest licence. Activities in these areas are already highly contentious, and to date it is not clear what level of management authority is actually being awarded—an area-based community authority or a volume-based timber-harvesting licence. In the interests of seeing a community forest project for the Sunshine Coast move forward, the SCCA has drafted a document for your consideration; *Sunshine Coast Community Forest Principles and Suggested Goals*.

We believe these concepts are essential to foster progress toward the establishment of a community forest for the Sunshine Coast that will benefit the entire community.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Bouman, Executive Director
Sunshine Coast Conservation Association.

Cc Hon. Gordon Campbell, Premiere

Sunshine Coast Community Forest Principles And Suggested Goals

The invitation to apply for a Community Forest License could be an excellent opportunity for the people of the Sunshine Coast. By gaining control over our local forests, it would be possible to increase participation in forest planning, institute urgently needed improvements to forest management practices, retain more local economic benefits and enable the community to protect important community assets. However, community forestry is a complex endeavour and not without risk. For this venture to be successful, it is necessary to secure a high level of public support and involvement. Some key principles to ensure that a community forest on the Sunshine Coast reflects our community's values and has broad-based support are:

Community Participation and Support: The community, not selected individuals, must determine the vision, goals and objectives of our community forests. A comprehensive public engagement process is required to evaluate community support

and work towards clear goals and objectives.

A Transparent Decision-Making Structure: A clear and equitable decision-making structure must be in place to ensure that all sectors of the community are involved in decision making about our community forests. Politically appointed boards, or the devolution of community participation to a token "advisory" role, is not acceptable.

Financial Analysis and Accounting Structure: A detailed economic analysis must be completed to assess all the economic values of our community forests, such as: timber, tourism, drinking water and botanical products. Costs and benefits must be given careful consideration to ensure that public funds are not used to subsidize resource extraction from our community forests. The accounting structure must clearly show how revenue is handled and how benefit sharing would be organized.

Area-Based Planning: Community forests are designed to manage specific areas of forest rather than specified volumes of timber. The area-based nature of community forests will allow our communities to consider various economic, cultural and ecological values *before* determining timber-harvesting levels. Starting the planning process with a pre-determined timber harvest volume must be avoided.

Recognition and Accommodation of Aboriginal Rights and Interests: Our community forests must respect the inherent rights of local First Nations. Local First Nations must have a mutually acceptable role in management and economic-benefit sharing in our community forests.

Assuming community forests on the Sunshine Coast are founded on these principles, the SCCA suggests the following core goals for our community forests:

Protect Our Community Watersheds: Residents have the right to an adequate supply of clean and safe drinking water. The Sunshine Coast's community forests must respect the community's legitimate desire for local control and authority to protect its vital water supply. The community is clearly not willing to tolerate any further opportunities for industrial resource extraction in the community watersheds. This long-standing

position has been consistently demonstrated through public processes, referendum and petition.

Promote Community Economic Development: Our community forests must balance all forest-based economic activities such as: timber harvesting, tourism, recreation and non-timber forest product harvesting. Economic developments must maximize local employment and be consistent with our Official Community Plans.

Achieve Independent Certification: Operations in our community forests must meet or exceed the Forest Stewardship Council of Canada (FSC) certification standard. FSC is the most stringent of forest certification standards and the only standard offering independent verification of on-the-ground sustainable management practices.

Maintain Ecological Integrity: Our community forests must follow an ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach that requires comprehensive maintenance of all ecosystem functions at all planning scales as well as protection for species and plant communities at risk (as identified by BC's Conservation Data Centre).

Sustain Social and Cultural Activities: Our community forests must address and protect social and cultural activities such as recreation, outdoor education and scientific research.

Adapted from Section 3.4: Attributes of a Successful Community Forest Venture, Community Forest Advisory Committee Background Discussion Paper 1, 1997. BC Ministry of Forests Community Forest Agreement Program, June 2003 Bulletin.