

Defining A Community Forest

A broad definition can be any forestry operation managed by a local group, be it local government, First Nation or a community based group incorporated for that purpose. To many of us the meaning of a forestry operation is large corporations harvesting large volumes of timber whose head offices are far from our area. However in BC the core principle of community forests is about local control and local decision to embrace the enjoyment and benefits of the communities adjacent to this natural capital. These benefits are both monetary and non-monetary.

A common management principal that flows within a community forest is that of “integral forestry”. This is determining the limits to human uses be it how much water can we take from a stream or how do we remove trees but maintain the integrity of a mixed stand. This is done by applying management strategies that will maintain a long term fully functioning ecosystem. Humans are considered part of the ecosystem.

There are 3 pillars of sustainable development for a community forest: Social, Ecological and Economic Sustainability. Socially their application in a community forest promotes community participation by encouraging and strengthening communication between local communities. Ecological comes with discussion, research and development of a management plan that will maintain a long term stewardship over the area and finally Economical seeks to promote and advance innovation through cost-effective diversification.

The Provincial Government has as well given definition to this tenure by creating objectives for all community forest agreements. They are:

- Provide long-term opportunity for achieving a range of community objectives, values and priorities.
- Diversify the use of and benefits derived from the community forest agreement area.
- Provide social and economic benefits to British Columbia.
- Undertake community forestry consistent with sound principles of environmental stewardship that reflect a broad spectrum of values.
- Promote community involvement and participation.
- Promote communication and strengthen relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and persons.
- Foster innovation.
- Advocate forest worker safety.

Our next newsletter will take a look at how existing agreements are defining their forest. Check us out at www.columbiaheadwatersforest.com.

