

Community Forest Management in B.C.

Our previous newsletter brought some definition to the words Community Forest. To round out this discussion let us now take a look at how community forests are managed and some of the products coming from them.

Presently there are 32 Community Forest in British Columbia with another 20 in development stages (BC Community Forest Association). These are dispersed throughout the province and are run by Municipalities, First Nations and local citizens groups using various types of management strategies, including corporate, society and cooperative. In all cases the Province of BC will only grant a community forest agreement for Crown land as long as the legal entity represents a community interest.

If one were to visit the community forests throughout BC they would see commonality of harvesting trees however there would be great diversity in this harvest. How many are harvested, size and intended use would vary greatly, for a community forest is not just for 2x4's or dimensional lumber. There would also be the specialty/high value timber for poles, house logs, musical instruments; timber for remanufacturing products like decking, siding, paneling, custom beams, specific local interest products as well as the all time favorite firewood.

Many community forests are offering more than just timber as a product. There are forest management & product marketing services for local forestry businesses along with local school forestry programs. These are all hands on type programs by local people for local people. It is not uncommon to see university and forest research programs taking place, with both local and non-resident grad students working within the community. With BC being a tourist destination many community forest are very active with recreational and tourism development. How we manage our viewscapes, drinking water sources and natural features we hold dear to the community are part of the management strategy.

A very significant value a community forest has come to reflect upon is non-timber values and their management. Botanical forest products have become a very important part of the community forest management plan. These plans are now reflecting strategy for such things as Saskatoon and Huckleberries, mushrooms and other fungi, traditional plants for use by both First Nations and non- first nation people such as tree barks, ferns, mosses, medicinal and edible plants. This is all part of "integral forestry".

Our next newsletter will focus on what area we are discussing locally and how it was derived. Check us out at www.chwcf.com.