

A Local Community Forest

As mentioned in our previous newsletter a community forest is not just another license to harvest timber for dimensional lumber. Many communities across BC have found their community forest to be an exciting new tool for community development. These forests are being managed socially, ecologically, economically and for spiritual sustainability which is resulting in both monetary and non-monetary benefits for the community.

Gaining an agreement from the Province to have a community forest is not by any means easy. A community must first receive permission from the Minister of Forest! Once a community shows an interest in a community forest a minimum of 3 years is invested to secure an agreement. If successful a community gains the exclusive right to harvest Crown timber and may also be granted the right to manage the area for non-timber forest product. Agreements may be granted for a period of 25 years and which are renewable.

So what is the area being discussed locally? In order to arrive at an area for discussion, 5 criteria were thought to be important to our community:

1. Watersheds that are important to the community.
2. View-scapes which are critical to or highly valued by the community.
3. Fire interface forests whose management could have significant bearing on the community's wildfire risk.
4. Directly adjacent to the community or for which the community feels a sense of connection and stewardship.
5. Capable of supporting the community's intended use over the long term.

These 5 criteria were applied to the land features around all communities from the Village of Radium Hot Springs to the Village of Canal Flats resulting in a study area as shown on the map accompanying this newsletter. As the communities become engaged through discussions and community meetings the final size will become clearer.

With the Steering Committee members going out into the communities to talk about a community forest, it is important that key features of community support are established.

- ❖ Passion for obtaining an agreement and ultimate management
- ❖ Leadership in all areas
- ❖ Participation by First Nations and non-first nations local people
- ❖ A sense of community
- ❖ Pragmatic local knowledge for guidance and historical value
- ❖ Holistic viewpoint

The next newsletter will deal with governance models. Check us out at www.chwcf.com. See map under our Map section.