

# Community Forest Operating Plan

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*Cortes Forestry General Partnership*



**Cortes Island, BC**

**July 2014**

*Strategic planning is a process, not a document. Strategic plans for community forests should set out critical information that shows what a community believes, where it wants to get to, and how it intends to get there.*

*~Ken Day from The Community Forest Guidebook II*

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## Acknowledgements

Funding for the development of the Community Forest Operating Plan (CFOP) was provided by the Friends of Cortes Island (FOCI), which promotes awareness and respect for the earth and its people throughout Cortes Island and beyond, recognizing that human well-being is ultimately dependent on fully-functioning healthy ecosystems. FOCI's support of the CFOP recognizes that the process embodied in the document will support educated local participation in the Cortes Community Forest, and recognizes the commitment of the Cortes Forestry General Partnership (CFGP) to ecosystem-based management of the forest. The final CFOP document along with new community forest maps will be submitted to FOCI, where it will also be made available to the public, and to organizations seeking community forest and community involvement resources.

Thanks to the CFGP Executive Committee for attending meetings, doing set-up and take-down, and for understanding how important this process and document are to Cortesians, and how necessary the building of trust and creation of an ongoing mechanism for community involvement is to the success of the Cortes Island Community Forest. Additional special thanks to the Klahoose First Nation for providing meeting space and facilities.

Thanks to the Cortes Community Forest Cooperative (CCFC) Board of Directors and members who took the time to attend extra meetings, sent email contributions to the CFOP, and contributed a vast hoard of maps and mapping data.

Thanks to Theechim Management Group for providing new presentations of maps of the community forest on Cortes Island.

Thanks to our community facilities for providing meeting venues:

Gorge Hall

Klahoose Multi-Purpose Building

Linnaea Farm Education Centre

Manson's Hall

Finally, and most especially, thanks to the Cortes community members who participated in this process, which for some has been going back decades. Your commitment to the development of the CFOP has been a key part of putting the "Community" in the Cortes Community Forest.

## Overview of the Community Forest on Cortes Island

In September 2013 the BC Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations issued a Community Forest Agreement (CFA) for approximately 3,869 hectares of crown land on Cortes Island to the Cortes Forestry General Partnership (CFGP) - the legal entity that will manage the Cortes Island CFA. The partners are the Cortes Community Forest Co-op (CCFC) and Klahoose Forestry No. 2 Limited Partnership (KF2LP).

The CFGP was legally established in June 2012 to reflect the community's wish for the non-aboriginal people of the island and the Klahoose First Nation to be equal partners in the Community Forest venture.

Both partners have invested equally and are equally represented in the governance of the General Partnership. Six representatives form the Executive Committee, composed of 2 co-chairs (one from each partner), a Secretary, Treasurer and 2 additional Committee members. Decision making is by consensus.

It has been long recognized that, on Cortes Island, there is significant community interest in the establishment and management of a community forest, and that the success of a community forest endeavor must rest firmly on a process of active community engagement. Thus, in making application for the CFA tenure, the CFGP included the following:

### *Commitment to the Cortes Community*

Following the issuance of a Community Forest Agreement tenure on Cortes Island, the Executive Committee of the Cortes Forestry General Partnership will create a Community Forest Operating Plan which will describe the management philosophy for the CFA. It will be developed in consultation with representatives of, and reflect the expectations of the broader Island community.

The Plan shall also establish a public input and monitoring mechanism for ongoing planning and operational activities in the CFA, as well as a process for revising of the Plan where necessary over time.

The Plan will be approved by the CFGP Executive Committee and will require that all silviculture prescriptions must refer to and be consistent with it. Therefore, a prescribing Forester must legally either be consistent with the Plan directions or, if conditions in the field warrant a deviation, a rationale must be provided and approved by the CFA manager and/or the Executive Committee of the CFGP.

Active engagement with the community is a condition of every CFA issued by the Province of British Columbia. The Cortes Island CFOP takes community involvement a step further by documenting the values that Cortesians hold for the community forest, as gathered through extensive community process.

The CFOP also includes a formalized procedure for public input and a monitoring mechanism for the evolution of the CFOP.

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*The development of goals  
and values for the community  
forest will be an iterative  
process of committee  
discussion, facilitated public  
input and discussion, and  
subsequent refinement.*

*~ Ken Day from The Community  
Forest Guidebook II*

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## **CFGF Foundation Statements**

### **VISION:**

The Cortes Forestry General Partnership (CFGF) is an equal partnership between the Klahoose Forestry No 2 Limited Partnership (KF2LP) and the Cortes Community Forest Cooperative (CCFC) committed to building a resilient and vibrant world-class community-based forestry operation on Cortes Island.

### **MISSION:**

The CFGF exists to be a successful forestry business known for the quality of its timber and its eco-system based forest stewardship.

### **VALUES:**

The CFGF values:

- long term sustainability of the forest ecosystem;
- financial viability of the community forest (CF) undertaking;
- the balancing of the community's economic and social objectives with forest sustainability;
- the management of recreational trails and forest roads in consultation with recreational user groups and the community;
- identification and appropriate management of important natural features and their surroundings;
- identification and special management of environmentally sensitive areas;
- timber harvesting and entrepreneurship that invests in value-added manufacturing;
- biodiversity, hydrological functions, wildlife habitat, recreational and visual quality;
- non-timber resources for tourism and recreation;
- innovation in all aspects of CFA management;
- the promoting of safe work practices;

## **GOVERNING PRINCIPLES**

### **Management**

CFGF will manage:

- the Community Forest using a sustainable, ecosystem-based strategy;
- in accordance with all pertinent legislation and regulations;
- by including beneficial lay, technical and professional input of the community;
- to produce forest products best suited to support and encourage local forest industries and to provide such industry with a supply suited to their needs.

## **Finances**

CFGP will operate a fiscally responsible CF business, including contingency planning.

CFGP will generate profits:

- that are distributed 50% to CCFC and 50% to KF2LP;
- that are distributed independently by the two partner organizations;
- only after stated legal obligations have been met.

## **Community Relations**

CFGP encourages:

- public involvement to ensure planning is sound and appropriate;
- comprehensive public interaction to solve resource management disagreements;
- continued strong relationships between the partners and within the Cortes Community.

## **Firewood**

CFGP recognizes the need for a reliable supply of firewood to residents. CFGP will make firewood available in a variety of ways to satisfy demand for both private users and contractors.

## Community Forest Management Philosophy

### **Sustainability**

#### *Maintaining Ecosystem Health, Resilience and Benefits over the Centuries*

The CFGP appreciates that a healthy, fully functioning forest ecosystem is a complex system of interconnected, interdependent organisms interacting over time in a mutually beneficial way. It is a living system that, undisturbed, accumulates biomass, nutrients, and diversity that are stored within the system and the landscape it occupies.

The CFGP recognizes that the benefits we wish to receive from the Community Forest, both for ourselves and especially for future generations, will only flow from a healthy and self-sustaining forest ecosystem.

Therefore the CFGP, using Strategic Planning, will:

- use an ecosystem-based approach to developing plans for all roads and silvicultural treatments for the CF land base;
- establish a clear method for determining a harvest rate within the constraints of ecosystem-based management, the Precautionary Principle<sup>1</sup>, and a strategy to age the forest;
- ensure that the natural nutrient cycle and hydrological function is maintained and enhanced;
- practice Adaptive Management which means identifying benchmarks against which future management performance will be measured;
- identify research and inventory priorities that will increase the effectiveness of ecosystem-based planning and management;
- monitor performance and outcomes to adapt and improve future planning.

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<sup>1</sup> The Precautionary Principle: If an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or environment, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action or policy is harmful, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking action.



## Operational Planning and Data Use

### *Getting it Right – Having Accurate Data and Using It*

During the initial process of developing plans for operations on the Community Forest land base, the Manager shall:

- plan for resilience through various appropriate silviculture treatments and harvesting techniques;
- utilize historical and current mapping information relevant to the plans being developed;
- search for and incorporate emerging information pertinent to planning for sustainability;
- propose and implement risk management strategies that reflect the need to adapt to climate change.

In addition, the Manager shall:

- become familiar with the overall Community Forest land base and have a thorough understanding of areas that are planned for harvest;
- develop permanent sample plots for determining the productivity of the various areas within the Community Forest and for the long-term monitoring of forest health and the impact of activities;
- give consideration to local knowledge, expertise and volunteer energy that may be available and beneficial to the undertaking.

Further, the Manager shall:

- develop and maintain an effective record-keeping system;
- maintain timely, effective communication with the CFGP Executive Committee;
- be proactive and positive in interactions with the community;
- keep in mind the need for efficiency in the harvesting operations as it relates to the profitability of the Community Forest business.

## Local Employment and Business Initiatives

### *Supporting Local Economy*

The awarding of the Community Forest tenure on Cortes Island and plans for the ongoing annual harvest of increasing quality timber will enable existing and new entrepreneurs to develop businesses that will benefit themselves and the overall community over time.

Therefore the CFGP will:

- where economically feasible, plan for consistent annual harvesting of timber from the Community Forest;
- communicate with local primary and secondary wood processors in an attempt to match their needs with timber harvested,
- support local processors by making logs available on a priority basis at fair market prices,
- favour harvesting contracts where priority is given to hiring local workers and/or subcontractors, given that all certification requirements are in place and rates fall within industry standards,
- recognize that other business sectors play an important role in Cortes Island's economy and take these into consideration during CF planning,
- benefit the overall community by returning all profits from the Community Forest business to the community through the two Partners.

## **Education**

### *Telling the Cortes Community Forest Story*

Through education and positive promotion of our sustainable community forest management, CFGP will nurture pride in the Cortes Community Forest endeavor and contribute to better forest management.

#### **Therefore, the CFGP will:**

Maintain and build on existing education networks to promote advances in forestry education and business opportunities.

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Chief James Delorme says:  
“Education is at the forefront  
of the Klahoose First Nation  
and the community forest will  
be an important piece of this  
commitment.”

The CFGP would like the  
community forest on Cortes  
Island to be a model of best  
practices and management  
approach, one that can be  
shared across the province.

~ from the CFA Application

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## Communication and Community Engagement

### *Keeping the Community in the Community Forest*

The CFGP will foster community engagement that is transparent, interactive, and on-going while insuring full public access to relevant information necessary to make informed decisions.

Therefore the CFGP will, with regard to general communication:

- Build a culture of open, two-way communication with the community in a timely manner;
- Use plain language with maps as reference where applicable;
- Post notices in multiple formats to recognize different community access methods including email/website, mail/postings;
- Clearly define access procedures to make inquiries or proposals to the CFGP

With regard to local consultation:

- Consult with landowners of properties adjacent to community forest harvest, road-building and silvicultural treatment areas;
- Use signs at harvesting areas with current and/or educational information on harvesting and treatments;
- Recognize the importance of community access to forest by working co-operatively with recreational user groups;
- Liaise with community groups to support community-based business and educational initiatives.

With regard to proactive communication:

Inform the community of:

- Upcoming logging and silviculture contracts
- Road-building projects and access agreements
- Data and knowledge gaps, including maps
- Log buying opportunities
- Volume of salvage available
- Where community or other external organizations may help meet community forest objectives

## Statement of CFGP Role and Responsibilities

The role of the CFGP in relation to the community forest (CF) is that of tenure holding, governance and overseeing the management of the CF. It includes the following duties:

- ensure adherence to CFOP
- hire a forest manager
- create an economically viable forestry business
- comply with relevant provincial CF regulations
- monitor and enable projects that enrich the database and resources of the CF

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*We're Partners – KF2LP & CCFC*

*We Don't Own Equipment  
– We Provide Opportunities*

*We Sell the Logs*

*We Return Benefits to the  
Community*

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The following policy statements help further define the role of the CFGP:

*The CFGP owns the tenure but does not own equipment.*

It will rely on contractors to provide their own equipment for all forestry operations and will sell logs, relying on the purchaser to invest in value-added production where feasible.

This model of management is used successfully by the Klahoose First Nation in their own woodlots. The advantages include:

- low overhead costs by avoiding the necessity of investing in the purchase and maintenance of expensive machines, and by sharing insurance costs with contractors
- avoiding the problems of machinery failure due to sitting for any extended period of time
- the incentive for good machine care and usage is highest when owned by the user

The Cortes CFA tenure offers the people of this island the opportunity to invest in their local economy and their own businesses. The CFGP will provide economic opportunities by hiring contractors and selling logs.

*The CFGP will not provide training or funding for training.*

- Any contractor working under the CFA will be required to be certified to the industry standard specific to their role to ensure workers are sufficiently trained.
- The CFGP will rely on all contractors to be appropriately certified upon applying for any contract under the CFA.
- Profits earned under the CFA will be shared equally - 50% to each partner in the CFGP. Each share of the profits will be spent entirely at the discretion of each partner who will disburse funds according to their respective mandates.

*The CFGP will meet or exceed all provincial regulations.*

The CFA requires that the CFGP ensure that provincial forestry regulations are followed in all operations. Refer to the following for details:

- Forest Planning and Practices:  
[http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/14\\_2004](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/14_2004)
- Community Forest Requirements:  
[http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/16\\_352\\_2004](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/16_352_2004)

*The CFGP will support the local economy through log sales and hiring contractors.*

- The CFGP will make logs available to local buyers on a priority basis at fair market prices thereby supporting local processors, builders and craftspeople.
- The CFGP Manager will put out a regular request for local timber needs and coordinate local demand with logging operations. The community will also be encouraged to put in timber requests with the manager as they arise.
- CFGP contracts with any contractor who will hire employees to work in the CF will include the proviso that priority be given to local workers and sub-contractors given that all certification requirements are in place and rates fall within the industry standard.

*Harvest of mushrooms, botanicals, tree boughs and the like will not be regulated by the CFGP at this time.*

- Permits are not required to harvest non-timber products from the community forest.
- Harvesters will observe and obey any restriction to access notices posted for safety or for monitoring purposes.

## Community Forest Communication Protocol

### Day-to-Day Community Forest Communications

All public inquiries regarding the Community Forest will initially be referred to the CFGP website. The website will post relevant CF information such as call for wood requests, tenders for contracts, current and upcoming operations and their locations, area closures, etc. Contact information for the Community Forest Manager and a CFGP Executive Committee representative will also be provided on the website.

**Contact the CFGP Executive Committee Representative** for inquiries regarding new community forest projects e.g. volunteers for mapping, monitoring, etc., branding/marketing projects, and for all general community concerns and comments.

**Contact the Community Forest Manager** for all business inquiries.

### Operational Reporting – A minimum of semi-annually

The Community Forest Manager will report on CF operations to the community. The report will be posted online with hardcopy available at the CF office upon request.

The report will include:

- a description of proposed and current CF operations and their location, including roadbuilding, harvesting, and silvicultural treatments
- completed harvest results
- on-going planning, mapping and volunteer activities
- sample plot data

### Community Forest Meeting - Yearly

An annual community meeting is required by the terms of the CFA. This meeting will give an overview of the past year's activities in the community forest and offer a forum for public input on any issues that may have arisen in that time. The annual community meeting will include:

- a report on operations:
  - what forestry operations occurred and where, including road building, harvesting and silvicultural treatments
- a report on all requested and approved deviations from CFOP guidelines
- a financial report

- a forecast of trends for the coming year and how they are being addressed in CF planning
- a report on forest monitoring and community outreach

Following reports from the CF, the floor will be open to community members. a speakers list will be used, and public statements will be recorded by an appointed secretary and submitted to the Executive Committee of the CFGP.

The annual community meeting will be publicized a minimum of 10 days in advance on appropriate websites and in posters at local bulletin boards. A written summary of the CF Report will be made available on-line and in hardcopy.



## Periodic CFOP Review

The Community Forest Operating Plan is intended to be a living document that will be reviewed regularly by the community and amended as appropriate. In addition to regular community forest operational reports and annual community meetings to review community forest activities and upcoming plans, the Community Forest Operating Plan will undergo a review once in every 5-year period to correspond with the 5-year cutting cycles stipulated by the CFA.

## Review Process

The process will be as follows:

- publish the current CFOP for community review including a synopsis of CF activities, which shall specify any and all deviations from the current CFOP approved in the period, and a list of amendments suggested by the CFGP
- solicit written input from the community with specific guidelines for content
- mail out a questionnaire to determine community satisfaction, concerns and/or new community forest values
- active promotion of materials available, questionnaire and CFOP Review Community Meeting (post agenda)
- hold CFOP Review Community Meeting, present CFGP review of current CFOP, indicate trends, use speakers list for community input
- solicit and allow window for additional written input
- revise CFOP
- publish new version of CFOP

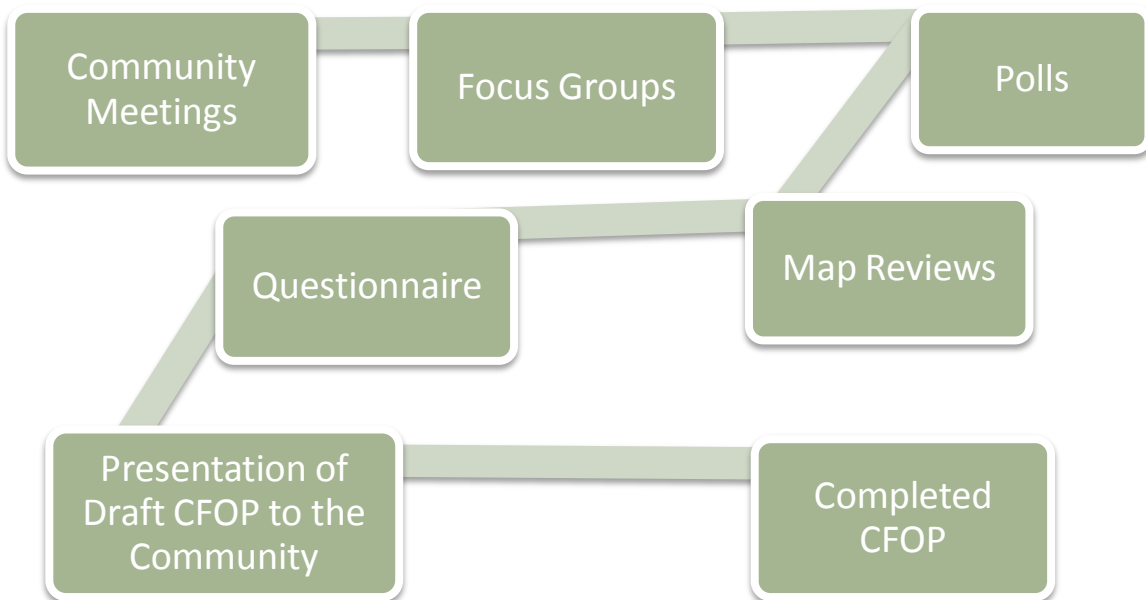
Suggested timeframe: 3-4mos

## Appendix – Process of Public Involvement

The purpose of including this section is to record the process of public involvement in the development of the CFOP.

### Initial CFOP Development Strategy

One of the primary goals of the CFOP is to accurately represent the values of the Cortes Island community in relation to the community forest - to give a formal voice to the people of Cortes in how the forest is managed. To this end, a number of different community engagement strategies were used.



## Method

The following steps were taken by the CFGP to involve the community in the development of the CFOP:

1. Initial **community meeting** to collect first thoughts from the community on what values are important in regards to the community forest (brainstorm)
2. **Hiring** a community-based planning coordinator
3. **Community meeting** to recruit community members to participate in focus groups to establish and expand upon core community values brainstormed in the first meeting.
4. Hosting 5 **focus group meetings** with the community-based planning coordinator as facilitator and note-taker to record more detailed description of community values
5. **Community meeting** to review draft value statements collected in focus group meetings
6. **On-line polls** to gauge community interest and priority values
7. **Questionnaire** posted to all island residents (see Appendix B)
8. **Map review open houses** – 2 opportunities for the community to examine and discuss current CF area maps
9. Final **community meeting** for CFOP draft review– invitation to community to submit any last comments for the initial CFOP document
10. **CFOP publication and distribution** via [www.cortesisland.com](http://www.cortesisland.com), email to members and community participants with hard copy available at the FOCl office.

Throughout the process an email address, phone number and mailing address were publicized inviting queries and input.

Once all input was collected a draft document was submitted to the FGP Executive Committee for revision. The reviewed draft was then presented to the community for any final comment before completion.

During the community involvement process effort was made to notify the community of upcoming meetings and other avenues of submitting input to the CFOP in a variety of ways including:

- posting on the local Cortes Island website: [www.cortesisland.com](http://www.cortesisland.com)
- email to CCFC membership and everyone who signed up for email notifications at any of the public meetings
- posters at all Cortes Island stores and major Community Notice Boards
- posting in the Cortes Marketer weekly newsletter

Efforts were also made to rotate the location of community meetings to the various community venues available to make it more convenient for those living on different parts of the island.