

Community Forest Management Objectives

Cortes Forestry General Partnership



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Overview of the Community Forest on Cortes Island

The impact of modern forest harvesting in the 1980's and 1990's catalyzed the development of a cooperative relationship between the Klahoose First Nation (KFN) and the non-indigenous community leading to a mutual desire for shared control of forest management over as much of the forests on Cortes as possible.

In 1999, an unsuccessful effort began in an attempt to establish a Community Forest (CF) including all Crown Forest plus the lands then owned by MacMillan Bloedel. At the invitation of the Klahoose First Nation in 2008 the community forest application process was restarted. The Cortes Forestry General Partnership (CFGP) was legally established in June 2012 to form an equal partnership with island residents for the shared management of the community forest in Klahoose traditional and un-ceded territory.

The partners are the Klahoose Forestry No. 2 Limited Partnership (KF2LP) and the Cortes Community Forest Co-op (CCFC). Both partners are equally invested and represented in the governance of the CFGP. Six representatives form the board of directors, composed of two co-chairs (one from each partner), a Secretary, Treasurer and two additional committee members. All decisions are to be made by consensus.

In September 2013, the BC Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations issued a Community Forest Agreement (CFA) tenure for approximately 3,869 hectares of Crown Forest land on Cortes Island to the CFGP.

While engagement with the community is a condition of every CFA tenure issued, CFGP committed to a process to create a guiding document reflecting the broad values held by our communities regarding the management of the tenure. Input was gathered through a lengthy and inclusive community process resulting in the 2014 Community Forest Operating Plan (CFOP).

The CFOP reflects the strong community philosophy for sustainable, ecosystem-based management of the CF that allows for a modest harvest of timber to develop and support a local forest-related economic sector. The CFGP also committed to reviewing the CFOP guiding document every five years from its inception in order to keep it current and pertinent.

CFGP GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

The CFGP Board shall:

- Operate as a “hands-on” Board, providing direction to hired staff
- Promote safe work practices
- Manage the Community Forest using a strategy that balances fiscal responsibility with ecological sustainability and community benefits
- Welcome traditional, lay, technical and professional input
- Encourage and support the development of a local forest-related economy

CFGP COMMITMENTS

Partners' Relationship

The coming together of the Klahoose First Nation and the non-indigenous island inhabitants in the CFGP for collective management of local forestry lands is an act of reconciliation. Bridging the cultural and historic differences requires our ongoing respect, effort and sensitivity. We commit to foster this relationship so that deeper understanding can be established as we conduct business together.

Sustainable Forest Management

The community and CFGP understand the basic need for the forest ecosystem to retain the majority of the nutrients that it generates and acquires in order for it to be able to sustain itself over time. Therefore, the rate of harvesting shall represent a modest proportion of the nutrient accumulation that is reflected in the Mean Annual Incremental (MAI) growth of our forests.

Ecosystem-Based Management Criteria

A list of criteria is provided in Appendix A that is intended to minimize the impact of harvesting activities on the CF ecosystems. These criteria shall be considered by CFGP staff in developing and evaluating operational plans.

Operate a Viable Business

CFGP will operate a fiscally responsible CF business that generates benefits to the community. CFGP will generate and distribute profits only after stated legal obligations and requirements for reserves have been met.

Generate Community Benefits

The distribution of profits will be 50% to CCFC and 50% to KF2LP to be used independently by the two partner organizations.

In addition to profit disbursement, the CFGP will provide economic opportunities by hiring contractors and selling logs. The Cortes CFA tenure offers island residents the opportunity to invest in the local economy and the value added forest sector.

The CFGP shall strive to address the need for firewood as fairly and appropriately as possible.

Supporting Local Economy

The CFGP will:

- Support local processors by making logs available regularly and on a priority basis at market prices
- Manage the forest to age it for future yields of high quality timber as well as for improved biodiversity and resilience
- Favour harvesting contracts where priority is given to hiring local workers and subcontractors, given that all certification requirements are in place and rates fall within industry standards

- Respect the importance of other sectors from Cortes Island's economy and take this into consideration

The harvest of mushrooms, botanicals, tree boughs and salad 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.

Communication and Community Engagement

The CFGP will foster ongoing community engagement that is transparent and interactive while ensuring public access to all relevant information. The website (cortesforestrypartnership.com) will post relevant information such as CF history, maps, documents, log purchase opportunities, contract tenders, current and upcoming operations, and area closures. Contact information for the CFGP board & Forest Manager will also be posted.

With regard to general communication, CFGP will:

- Follow communication protocols outlined in Appendix B
- Use plain language with maps as reference where applicable
- Post notices in multiple formats to recognize different community access methods, including email, website postings, mail, and posters

With regard to local consultation, CFGP will:

- 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, CFGP will 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 CF objectives

CFGP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board Role and Responsibilities

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

- Develop and implement all policy and governance structures for the organization
- Meet or exceed applicable provincial regulations^{1 2}
- Create an economically viable forestry business
- Monitor and enable projects that enrich the database and resources of the CF
- Employ a forest manager, RPF, and other staff as needed

Management Role and Responsibilities

During the process of developing plans for operations on the CF land base, the Manager shall:

- Develop and maintain familiarity with the overall CF land base and have a thorough understanding of areas that are planned for harvest
- Give consideration to the ecosystem-based management criteria detailed in the Appendix A
- Plan for resilience through various harvesting techniques and silviculture treatments
- Utilize historical and current mapping information relevant to plans being developed
- Incorporate emerging information pertinent to planning for sustainability
- Propose and implement risk management strategies that reflect the need to adapt to climate change
- Develop permanent sample plots for determining the productivity of the various areas within the CF 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
- 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 CF business

¹ Forest Planning and Practices: http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/14_2004

² Community Forest Requirements: http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/16_352_2004

OTHER CFGP COMMITMENTS

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

The CFGP owns the tenure but does not own equipment

CFGP relies on contractors to provide their own equipment for all forestry operations. This helps to assure low overhead costs by avoiding the necessity of investing in the purchase and maintenance of expensive machines and by sharing insurance costs with contractors. Furthermore, the incentive for good machine care and usage is highest when owned by the user.

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 and ensure workers are sufficiently trained. Contractors who employ trainees in their work require all appropriate certifications, insurance and WCB coverage, and assume all liability for their trainees.

The Community Forest as an Educational Resource

The CFGP would like the community forest on Cortes Island to be a model of best practices and management that can be shared across the province and recognizes the value of allowing the community forest to be used as a tool for education. The CFGP is therefore committed to making the community forest accessible to educational programs and purposes whenever practically possible.

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.

The review 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
- Hold CFOP Review Community Meeting to present CFGP review of current CFOP and indicate trends, using a speakers list for community input
- Revise CFOP and publish new document

Suggested timeframe: 3-4mos

APPENDIX A: Ecosystem-Based Planning and Harvest Strategies

The following ecosystem-based forestry practices shall be implemented in CFGP long-term planning:

- Exercise a precautionary principle of reduced harvest rates to ensure long term incremental volume, abundance and age of mature forest within the land base to satisfy the desire for improved ecological function and diversity, sustainable timber supply and community values.
- Apply sensitive ecosystem inventory³ (SEI) data to long-term planning strategies to ensure that representative sensitive ecosystem classes exist dispersed within the operable land base as ecologically effective retention.
- Use mitigation strategies to avoid detrimental impact to sensitive sites such as shallow soils, wet areas, and steep slopes.
- Apply riparian buffering that effectively mitigates risk to water quality and temperature, wind throw potential, aquatic habitat quality, erodible soils, stream bank stability and ensures a network of contiguous retention on the land base.
- Plan harvests to maintain forest structure and a range of age classes.
- Develop plans for accessing all CF areas and for sequential harvesting.
- Map existing road beds and consider incorporating them into access plans.
- Ensure that wildlife features such as raptor nests and heron rookeries are located, mapped and protected, and that effective endangered species habitat is represented within forest retention strategies.
- Develop plans for mitigating climate change impacts.
- Establish permanent sample plots to monitor growth in our CF.

The following harvesting and silviculture strategies will be implemented:

- Incorporate local knowledge and ground truth information.
- Log in appropriate season and terrain combinations to avoid disturbing nesting birds, increasing fire hazards, damaging wet terrain, or otherwise increasing the impact of activities.
- Where appropriate, retain healthy dominant trees in each cut block.
- Leave slash in place to retain nutrients in the soil.
- Keep openings small, such that none are larger than 3 hectares in size.
- Protect fish-bearing and other waterways from degradation.
- Exceed Provincial riparian setback requirements.
- Plan openings to address forest health and rehabilitation issues, such as mistletoe hemlock and laminated root rot.

³ http://www.cortesforestrypartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2011_Cortes-SEI-on-CFA-Lands.pdf

- Use appropriate equipment to minimize soil and root disturbance.
- Use existing road beds where practical and consistent with overall access plans.
- Plan permanent and temporary access structures that reduce the risk of significant or ongoing erosion, maintain natural drainage patterns, and reduce cumulative site degradation.
- Leave slash and coarse woody debris dispersed within harvest areas to return nutrients to the soil, maintain soil moisture, recruit habitat, and minimize the need for slash burning.
- Incorporate wildfire mitigation activities in residential interface zones to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire events.
- Use no chemical fertilizers or herbicides.

APPENDIX B: 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, and area closures. Contact information for the Community Forest Manager and a CFGP Executive Committee representative will also be provided on the website.

Semi-Annual Operational Reporting

The Community Forest Manager will report on CF operations to the community semi-annually, and more frequently as necessary. Reports will be posted online, and hardcopies will be available upon request.

The report will include:

- Descriptions of proposed and current CF operations and their locations, including roadbuilding, harvesting, and silvicultural treatments
- Completed harvest results
- On-going planning, mapping and volunteer activities
- Sample plot data

Annual Community Forest Meeting

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:

- An operations report, describing the year's forestry operations such as 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 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.