
BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Forests

COMMUNITY FORESTS IN B.C.

A community forest is a forestry operation managed by a local government, community group or First Nation for the benefit of the community.

Community forests help communities diversify their local forest economies. Operations usually hire and buy supplies locally, offer logs to local manufacturers and practise innovative sustainable forest management. These are area-based tenures, which allow communities to manage harvesting operations as well as other values like trails and recreation sites, wildlife, water supply and viewsapes.

As part of its plan to revitalize the forest economy, government is reallocating 20 per cent of long-term replaceable logging rights held by major licensees and redistributing that timber to communities, First Nations, woodlot operators and BC Timber Sales to support a market-based pricing system. Approximately 300,000 cubic metres will go to communities to establish community forest agreements. Timber reallocation will open up new opportunities for communities to use their forestry and business experience to manage forest resources in their area.

The community forest agreement was created in response to calls from communities for greater control over their local forest resources. B.C. has several community forest pilot agreements, ranging from 418 to 60,860 hectares. This agreement was given a “pilot” designation to allow government a fixed period in which to assess the program’s success. Government recently instituted the community forest agreement as a bona fide form of tenure and, as of September 17, will no longer issue “pilot” agreements, but will instead issue “probationary” agreements.

Probationary community forest agreements carry a five-year term to allow both communities and the ministry an assessment period. If successful, the agreement-holder may be offered a long-term community forest agreement, which carries a term of 25-99 years and is replaceable every 10 years. Community forests are assessed from a number of perspectives, including:

- Forest practices, environmental standards and compliance.
- Return to the province in the form of revenues and landbase improvements.
- Economic self-sufficiency.
- Sound management across all resources.

In July 2004, government deposited a new community tenures regulation, which allows the Minister of Forests to directly invite a community to apply for a probationary community forest agreement. The direct invitation will be extended, for example, where there is likely only one applicant in the area where the tenure is available, or where a community currently holds another form of tenure and wishes to convert it to a community forest. Direct invitations to apply will also be made to communities that have a critical need for the opportunity or where a long-standing land use conflict can be solved.

Whether a community forest is directly or competitively awarded, the proponent must submit a proposal that includes a solid business plan and demonstrates community support and a commitment to sustainable forest management.

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