

"This executive summary has been reproduced in its exact format  
from the original proposal received from the proponent."  
For contact information regarding this proposal and other community forest pilot proposals,  
please visit to the Community Forest Pilot Program Home Page

---

# Village of Burns Lake Community Forest Pilot Agreement Proposal

## Executive Summary

This proposal is the result of more than two years of intense effort by the Burns Lake Community Forest Steering Committee, a volunteer organization whose members come from all walks of life.

The steering committee began its work early in 1997, and by the fall of that year had completed an initial proposal prior to the passage of Bill 34 (the *Forest Statutes Amendment Act*). This preliminary document, entitled *The Lakes District Community Forest Proposal*, was reviewed and amended after the Ministry of Forests issued its Request For Proposal in September 1998. The final document, completed in December 1998, was developed with extensive participation by members of the public, First Nations, and other stakeholders.

### **Land Base**

After extensive discussions with Ministry of Forests officials in the Lakes District, the proponent was able to identify a land base suitable for use as a community forest. The target area surrounds the community of Burns Lake, and includes approximately 19,862 hectares (ha.) of Crown land and provincial forest in nine planning cells within the Lakes Forest District. Some of these areas have been managed in the past as part of the Small Business Forest Enterprise Program (SBFEP). (See *Section 2.0 - Community Forest Land Base*, Page 9)

Much of the target area is earmarked for special management under the recently-completed Lakes Land & Resource Management Plan. It lies within the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en, and a portion is currently allocated to the Small Business Forest Enterprise Program. The majority of the land base, however, is not allocated to any specific tenure holder.

To show its commitment to the community forest pilot project, the Village of Burns Lake is contributing 60 acres of municipally-owned property to the community forest for the initial pilot period. This land, the title to which will remain with the Village, contains significant stands of mature pine and spruce that will benefit from forest management. (See *Section 2.0 - Community Forest Land Base*, Page 5)

The proponent has also identified a source of annual allowable cut that can be allocated to this land base. Although the proposed community forest can sustain an AAC of 33,434 cubic metres per year (m<sup>3</sup>/year), officials within the ministry have suggested that an AAC of 23,677 m<sup>3</sup> can be directed to this tenure. A large part of the volume

comes from the 60,000 m<sup>3</sup> target set by the ministry for Jobs and Timber Accord initiatives within the Lakes District. (See *Section 2.0 - Community Forest Land Base*, Page 22)

The land base in question supports a variety of species of varying age classes, with pine and spruce making up the predominant timber types. The area's timber profile suggests the proposed community forest is well suited to enhanced management and can generate adequate reserves of mature timber to generate initial revenues. Fortunately, major road systems required for management of the community forest are already in place - thus reducing capital costs. (See *Section 2.0 - Community Forest Land Base*, Page 6)

Yet as this report reveals, the proposed community forest can support a range of activities in addition to timber harvesting. Its proximity to Burns Lake and the Highway 16 corridor makes this area ideally suited to outdoor recreation; several unique geological features add to its appeal with hikers, skiers, snowmobile enthusiasts, and equestrians.

### **Stewardship and Management Plan Regimes**

The awarding of a community forest tenure in the Lakes District will not only provide new opportunities for community management of Crown land, forests and forest resource, but afford the community greater flexibility in managing the use of these resources.

Through the consultative process, the proponent has identified a number of goals and guiding principles associated with the community forest. In addition to generating a source of revenue and employment for the community, it is hoped this venture will provide the area with a vehicle for testing innovative harvesting practices. Local educational institutions have also expressed an interest in using the community forest as a training ground for individuals planning a career in forestry. (See *Section 3.0 Stewardship & Management Objectives and Regimes*, Page 33)

The establishment of a community forest around Burns Lake will also give the community the ability to pursue such environmental goals as protecting biodiversity and fish/wildlife habitat.

The proponent has identified a series of management strategies designed to achieve these goals. These include the use of innovative harvesting techniques, increased public consultation and involvement, and the development of trail systems (to name but a few). In managing and developing the target area, the proponent will comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements and ensure its objectives/strategies are consistent with those outlined in the Lakes Land & Resource Management Plan. (See *Section 3.0 Stewardship & Management Objectives and Regimes*, Page 34)

The proponent will involve the public in all aspects of community forest management through a comprehensive and well-defined program of public consultation. **Of particular note is the proponent's commitment to work closely with the Office of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs on all matters relating to the community forest.** This philosophy is shared by the Wet'suwet'en. (See Attachments, Page A-94)

If conflicts arise during implementation of the proposed Community Forest Pilot Agreement, the proponent will employ a proven dispute resolution process to ensure its

activities and plans meet with public approval. (See *Section 3.0 - Stewardship & Management Objectives and Regimes*, Page 24)

### **Community Involvement**

Even prior to ministry's Request For Proposals, the proponent embarked on an extensive public information program to promote local involvement in this proposal. These efforts continued throughout the proposal development phase, and included several public meetings, presentations to a number of stakeholder groups, verbal and written correspondence with existing tenure holders, the publishing of a series of articles on the community forest, the broadcasting of several radio interviews, and the release of newsletter/survey to every household in the Lakes District. (See *Section 4.0 - Community Involvement*, Page 101)

First Nations (principally the Office of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs) were actively involved in preparation of this proposal, and were in fact represented on the steering committee.

This program not only helped shape Burns Lake's community forest proposal, but resulted in tremendous public support for it. No fewer than 60 groups and individuals have provided the proponent with letters of support, with many more signing a petition urging Forest Minister Zirnhelt to award Burns Lake a community forest pilot project. The mail-in survey conducted in November also revealed that 97 per cent of respondents supported the community forest proposal. An impressive 72 per cent of respondents indicated they would be willing to help operate and management the tenure once it's awarded. (See *Section 4.0 - Community Involvement*, Page 103)

The proponent is committed to continuing its program of public consultation and involvement in the months and years ahead. Indeed, the continued involvement of local residents - and, in particular, First Nations - is considered key to the community forest's success.

### **Administrative Authority & Structure**

Any community forest tenure awarded to the proponent will be held and managed by Burns Lake Community Forest (ComFor) Ltd., a community-owned corporation registered in B.C. under the *Company Act*. The corporation will be managed by a seven-member board of directors, six of whom will be selected from the community at large. The seventh seat on the board has been reserved for the Office of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, which will appoint its own director. Nominations to the board will be solicited from the community, and all directors so appointed will serve two-year terms. (See *Section 5.0 Administrative Structure & Authority*, Page 108)

When handling the affairs of the corporation, the board will be guided by a clearly defined Mission Statement and Emerging Strategy. These document(s) clearly outline the corporation's purpose, goals, and guiding principles, and are based on information gained by the proponent through public consultation. (See Attachments, Page A-73)

To further assist with management of the community forest and Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd., the board of directors will appoint a five-member advisory committee to provide the corporation with technical advice on a variety of issues. Members of the advisory committee, drawn from the community at large, are expected to have extensive experience in forest management, business, recreation, and/or the

environmental sciences. The board will also hire a general manager to oversee day-to-day operations within the community forest. Clerical support will be provided by the Village of Burns Lake. (See *Section*

*5.0 - Administrative Structure & Authority*, Page 122)

Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd., through its board of directors, will be accountable to the community as a whole. The company will report annually to its shareholder(s) and the public through a public meeting and report, and will refer all development plans to the community for input prior to implementation. Various other reporting and monitoring processes - as well as a well-defined dispute resolution mechanism -- are also in place to ensure public accountability and involvement. These initiatives, combined with those yet to be implemented, will ensure that the corporation operates in a democratic manner and one consistent with the community's wishes. (See *Section 5.0 - Administrative Structure & Authority*, Page 110)

As the corporation's business plan attests, Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd. will be a profitable, self-sufficient company capable of withstanding changes in market demand and commodity pricing. The corporation is not only capable of assuming management of a forest tenure, but should (barring unforeseen difficulties of a catastrophic nature) generate a healthy profit for the community and considerable revenue to the Crown. The province will also benefit from the proposed five-year review of the corporation's activities. (See *Section 5.0 - Administrative Structure & Authority (Business Plan)*, Pages 118-134)

Finally, the proponent has suggested 'alternative fiscal arrangements' that will (a) reduce costs associated with administering the community forest tenure, and (b) better reflect the costs of managing the sensitive land base in question. (See *Section 5.0 - Administrative Structure & Authority*, Page 135)

## **Conclusion:**

As this document attests, Burns Lake's proposal contains all the key ingredients of a successful community forest. The proponent has identified a suitable land base and source of AAC, created a legal entity well suited to managing a forest tenure of this size and scope, identified key management goals and designed strategies to achieve them, and undertaken a detailed analysis of the potential risks and benefits of testing a new forest tenure. Equally important is the fact the entire package enjoys tremendous support among stakeholders, First Nations, and members of the public.

Burns Lake & District has been hit hard by the current downturn in the forest industry. For this reason, local residents see the establishment of a community forest here as an opportunity to promote increased participation in management of the area's forest resources. Furthermore, because this new form of tenure gives licensees authority to manage non-timber resources, residents of the Lakes District hope to use it as a tool for diversifying their economy by promoting tourism and recreation - while at the same time generating funds for community projects.

By accepting this proposal, the Ministry of Forests will not only provide Burns Lake & District with a unique opportunity to manage local forest and non-forest resources for public benefit, but ensure the province has an appropriate vehicle for testing a new and promising form of forest tenure.

