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District of Ft. St. James

Community Forest Pilot Agreement Proposal

Executive Summary

This proposal includes a community forest landbase of 33,500 ha which is immediately adjacent to the community. Almost all parts of the proposed landbase are visible from everywhere in the community, and there is an extremely high level of accessibility to all parts of the proposed area.

The proposed area incorporates a number of notable physical features of great importance to the community, including Stuart Lake and Mt Pope. Historically, the community has been deeply involved and highly pro-active in managing this area. One primary and overriding motivation for this proposal is for the community to continue and to enhance its role in the stewardship of this landbase.

Although the First Nations community of Nak'azdli is not a proponent we are unequivocal in our position that use of the term "community" implies full inclusion of the Nak'azdli community.

A second, but by no means inconsequential purpose is the establishment of a process to accomplish this stewardship. The process proposed herein is intentionally highly inclusive and intrinsically participatory. The community feels that the community forest tenure will provide a worthy and important project around which such a process will coalesce and develop.

The landbase includes a complex and diverse mosaic and network of resource values. Forest Stands, Historical and Cultural Values, Wildlife and habitats, Fish and fish habitats, Recreation, Water, Soils, and Biodiversity are all inordinately rich and of consequent high importance to the community. As well, the landscape is highly modified and affected by human occupance and there are a multiplicity of users and values. Industrial development coexists in proximity to proposed protected areas. Residential and commercial development coexists adjacent to the Stuart River which furnishes the migration path for one quarter of the Provincial Sockeye Salmon population. Issues of management are complex, and while this is a challenge, the community feels that this is also an opportunity to demonstrate that it is able to manage such a diversity of resources and human priorities.

These three major issues - adjacency, establishment of process, and diversity of resources and human activity define and drive this community forests' importance to the community.

There are several innovative measures for establishing and managing the proposed pilot tenure. Firstly, it is proposed to include only a key area of 3,582 ha as Phase I in the pilot tenure, and then include the balance of the area (29,918 ha) as a part of a proposal for Phase II a continuing tenure at the conclusion of the five year period. Such a phased-in strategy will enable the community to demonstrate its capability and commitment on the smaller and less complex area, as well as to assemble the financial resources (from operations and from volunteer sources) necessary for prudent management of contingencies and future operations, and, most importantly, so that it will be able to discharge its significant stewardship responsibilities on the larger area. (6. 1. Contains a map of the proposed areas)

The initial five years of the pilot agreement will also enable the community to commence investments in the inventories and assessments on the entire area. It intends to accomplish this by allocating all net cash flows (from operations, donations, equity contributions, and other funding proposals) towards this end. A companion activity to be carried out in tandem with these investments will be ongoing discussions with agencies currently responsible for stewardship of resources outside of the mandate of the Ministry of Forests. Given the extreme importance of genuinely collaborative and sustainable working relationships between community and government agencies, the proposal seeks to establish these based on a time frame which is fully adequate to the task and its own developing capacity and credibility.

A key innovative measure will be the reliance on voluntarism for all aspects of management. We feel that a proposal to include only moderate AAC's will greatly facilitate this and thus create a viable mechanism where it does not currently exist. A key principle espoused by previous community forests has been the critical linkage between long-term area based stewardship and voluntary contributions from individuals in the community.

Notable benefits to the community certainly do include the mobilization of voluntary contributions, as well as several outlined earlier in this executive summary. The human resources and skills within this community are entirely adequate to the challenge.

It is noteworthy that the community has over many years been an active steward of resource values. Many resources and values within the proposed area (including the Fort St James National Historic Park) have been preserved and enhanced because of the community and its residents. A community forest pilot tenure is thus a logical legal framework which will build on this tradition and sincere commitment.

A notable benefit that will accrue to the Province is a functional, viable, and demonstrably sustainable and effective management model. In turn, this can serve as a resource for other communities. Revenues to the Crown are forecasted at.

The proposed community forest landbase and AAC are summarized in Section two commencing on page 3. Section three page 10 presents a detailed overview of Stewardship and Management Objectives and Regimes. Section four page 26 reviews community involvement.

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Section five page 28 details Administrative Authority and Structure. The measures that the community proposes to mitigate a serious shortage of capital, significant market risks and cost pressures, while maintaining and developing its capacity and commencing stewardship responsibilities on the larger landbase are recommended to the readers' consideration.

It is the communities sincere concern that its own constrained financial capacity and significant unspecified risks should not detract or nullify its commitment to exemplary stewardship. Voluntary contributions are a key strategy intended to resolve this paradox of aspiring to demonstrate stewardship and responsible financial management.

The proponent commits fully to compliance with the Forest Practices Code, the Forest Act, and Community Forest Regulations. We also commit to work in concert with the Land and Resource Management Plan implementation strategy, other licensees the MoF, MOELP, and DFO.

There are a number of serious challenges in this proposal. Management of Visual Quality while managing beetle infestations. Conducting resource inventories. Resourcing stewardship activities. The community sees these challenges instead as opportunities.