
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2009FOR0079-000869
April 9, 2009

Ministry of Forests and Range
Ministry of Community Development

SQUAMISH-LIL'WAT-WHISTLER CELEBRATE COMMUNITY FOREST

WHISTLER – A joint community forest agreement issued to the Lil'wat First Nation, Squamish First Nation and Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) will allow the partners to manage the landbase, protect culturally significant areas and help diversify the local economy, West Vancouver-Garibaldi MLA Joan McIntyre announced on behalf of Forests and Range Minister Pat Bell today.

“This agreement will allow the partners to sustainably manage the forests, for this generation and those to come,” said McIntyre. “This area of forest is rich with cultural tradition and natural beauty, and those values will be reflected in the managing principles.”

“The community forest will recognize the importance of managing the forest for cultural, recreational and visual values, allow for the pursuit of everything from silviculture enhancements to value added products, and support local jobs and businesses,” said Bell. “The strong partnership exemplifies the success forestry brings when people work together.”

Upon the approval of a management plan, the community forest agreement grants the partners the right to harvest up to 20,000 cubic metres of timber per year from 30,000 hectares of Crown land, of which about 6,500 hectares is productive working forest land. The remaining area includes alpine lands, wildland zones, cultural management areas and recreation sites.

The community forest surrounds the Resort Municipality of Whistler, and includes the Callaghan and Brandywine valleys, the Wedge, 16, 19 and 21 Mile valleys and the Cheakamus valley. The agreement is renewable and for a term of 25 years. The Lil'wat First Nation, Squamish First Nation and RMOW are equal partners in the society that will manage the community forest.

“The community forest is a valuable cooperative tool which will add cultural values to the backbone of the B.C. economy,” said Squamish First Nation Chief Bill Williams. “Squamish Nation is proud to be partners with the RMOW and Lil'wat in this important business venture.”

“This agreement is part of what we are striving towards to create partnership, sustainability and protection of cultural areas within part of our territory that is overlapped by the Squamish First Nation and also within the Resort Municipality of Whistler,” said Chief Leonard Andrew of the Lil'wat Nation.

The partnership is working towards Forest Stewardship Council certification and will also harvest non-timber forest products such as salal and medicinal plants.

”We are so pleased to partner with the Lil’wat and Squamish First Nations,” says Whistler Mayor Ken Melamed. “We are firm believers that through partnership and cooperation we can effectively manage our natural and cultural resources for future generations. The signing of today’s agreement took years of hard work by a diverse group of committed individuals and we are honoured to be a part of this major success.”

“We congratulate the partners in the successful launch of this unique community forest initiative,” said B.C. Community Forest Association executive director Jennifer Gunter. “As part of the growing community forest movement in B.C., this agreement demonstrates the opportunities that can be created through the collaboration of aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities.”

Community forest agreements are a form of legal tenure that enable communities to more fully participate in the stewardship of local Crown forest resources. They are area-based, and give communities exclusive rights to harvest timber, as well as the opportunity to manage other forest resources such as botanical products, recreation, wildlife, water and scenic viewscapes. There are more than 50 community forests operating or in the planning stages in British Columbia.

Contact:	Jennifer McLarty Public Affairs Officer Ministry of Forests and Range 250 387-4592	Jessica Delaney Media Relations Resort Municipality of Whistler 604 935-8104
	Chief Bill Williams Squamish First Nation 604 982-8646	Chief Leonard Andrew Lil’wat First Nation 604 894-6115

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at www.gov.bc.ca.