



# SUNSHINE COAST COMMUNITY FOREST

## Operating Plan 2021-2025 Public Engagement Report

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### PURPOSE

To provide a summary of community engagement activities with local government, community groups, associations, and the public soliciting feedback on our 2021-2025 CFOP

### BACKGROUND

Below is our summary of activities regarding this outreach.

Public Review Period Begins April 15, 2021:

- Our Community Forest Operating Plan was released to the public via our website for download and review on April 15, 2021.
- Advertisements in Coast Reporter on April 16, April 23<sup>rd</sup> and May 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, on Facebook April 21<sup>st</sup> and in our April and May newsletters notified people that the operating plan was available for public review, invited feedback, and invited people to join our open house.
- An online feedback form was created to facilitate comments and concerns.
- Specific letters of engagement were sent to the Sunshine Coast Regional District, District of Sechelt, and the shíshálh Nation.
- Letters were sent to several community associations and groups as follows:
  - Tuwanek Ratepayers Association
  - Sunshine Heights Owners and Residents Association
  - Sandy Hook Community Association
  - Tillicum Bay Community Association
  - Halfmoon Bay Community School
  - Halfmoon Bay Community Association
  - West Sechelt Community Association
  - Halfmoon Bay Environmental Society
  - Davis Bay / Wilson Creek / Selma Park Community Association
  - Sunshine Coast Trails Society
  - Coast Mountain Bike Trails Association
  - Roberts Creek Community Association
  - SCR D Area D OCP Chair
  - Sechelt Groves Society
  - Elphinstone Logging Focus

Zoom meetings presenting and discussing the plan were held with the following organizations:

- Sunshine Coast Trails Society
- District of Sechelt
- Halfmoon Bay Environmental Society
- Elphinstone Logging Focus

- shíshááh Nation – Technical Working Group
- Kim Darwin
- SCRD Area D Director
- Roberts Creek Official Community Planning Committee

An Open House was held virtually on May 13, 2021 with 44 people in attendance. General feedback was overall positive, however public concerns centered around harvesting within the proposed Elphinstone park, and cutting mature forests within biogeoclimatic zones of old growth deficit in both the Chapman and Sechelt Landscape Units.

## **GENERAL FEEDBACK OF THE PLAN**

### Implementation of Old Growth Panel Report

Concerned groups are raising an issue of Old Growth recruitment in areas where there is a lack of available old growth due to historic logging and rural development in the lowlands of the Swiya on the Sechelt Peninsula. Empowered by the provincially initiated Old Growth Strategic Review, these groups are lobbying government to act on Recommendation 6.

These concerned groups have highlighted that the Coastal Western Hemlock subzone (CWHxm1) within the Sechelt Landscape Unit has less than 10% remaining as old growth and ask that our proposed harvesting within CWHxm1 should be deferred in order to be consistent with the Panel's recommendation that subzones that have deficit of old growth be brought up to 10%. They have requested that the District Manager ask for all logging within CWHxm1 to stop until recruitment of mature forests of 10% is attained.

We support any government action/decision in the implementation of the Panel's recommendations. However, we point out that although the Government has accepted the recommendations, there has been no indication from the Sunshine Coast Forest District of stopping any logging where there is a deficit. As well, there is also no guidance/policy, Regulations or Acts that point us to what Old Growth implementation may look like. As our tenure is only a small fraction of the CWHxm1 subzone, SCCF would mostly likely share in setting aside up to 10% of our mature (not old growth) stands.

SCCF has completed a vegetation analysis (February, 2021) of CWHxm and approximately 200ha of CWHxm1 is within the Halfmoon Bay chart area. As a proactive approach, we have reviewed our stands and will provide a 30ha area – 50% more than Recommendation 6 calls for - to be set aside as a voluntary deferral until the regulations and a selection process are established. We have identified a 10-hectare area of Age Class 8 and an additional 20 ha near the Big Trees Recreation Site bordering along Wakefield Creek that has good old-growth characteristics for potential candidate stands. These two areas will be shown as long-term deferrals polygons on our Operating Plan.

Further, in early February, we have engaged Laurie Kremsater, Forest Ecologist with Madrone Environmental to review HM70 for old growth characteristics and conduct a Species at Risk assessment. Ms Kremsater has asked us to consider the small area of HM70 to be deferred as part of timbered corridor connecting with an established Old Growth Management Area.

- **ACTION PLAN** addressing this concern – THAT the Board directs Staff to analyze biogeoclimatic zones within the Chapman/Sechelt Landscape Unit where there is an old-growth deficit of less than 10% and identify candidate stands that could serve as recruitment for Old Growth. Staff can use Madrone Environmental to help choose and verify the best areas to achieve this provincial and community objective.

#### Call to Address Wildfire Risk within the CFOP

Concerned citizens have raised an issue of lack of consideration for wildfire risk. For the most part, wildfire risk is mitigated by our requirement to follow the BC Wildfire Act and Regulations. With climate change, massive fires in California and the interior of BC, there is a heightened awareness and demand to do more to mitigate wildfire risk. Our CFOP was updated to include more language specifically around wildfire as follows:

#### **Community Interface Wildfire Planning**

*Our CFOP discusses Wildfire Management considerations on P 9, 18, 31, 33. We are notably stepping up our efforts to divert material from slash piles for firewood, reducing fire risk and burning requirements. The Community Forest harvest operations follow the procedures within the Wildfire Act and Regulations and incorporate recommended procedures designed to reduce the risk of wildfires.*

*Beyond our Operating Plan, we hosted the Urban Interface Fire Prevention event in 2019 where we invited our community to a presentation and discussion with experts of fire ecology and interface fire behaviour, and we hosted a private planning session with our expert speakers and local fire departments and emergency planning staff. We also started in 2019 an Earth Day initiative of giving away drought tolerant native Fire Smart plants – in 2019 and 2020 we acquired 442 plants for this, and approximately 80% were given out to our community, with the leftovers being planted by some of our volunteer directors undertaking invasive species removal projects with other community groups. We also funded a Structural Protection Unit for the Sechelt Fire Department in 2019, including training for all Sunshine Coast fire departments.*

*Community Wildfire Planning requires a larger strategy than one tenure holder which is why we have hosted and engaged in public conversations around it. We note with interest that the SCRD has developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan along with 43 prioritized recommendations, some of which appear to provide some high level direction as to the involvement the Community Forest may have in mitigating wildfire risk to our community.*

- **ACTION PLAN** addressing this concern – THAT the Board directs Staff to engage with the SCRD’s Manager of Protective Services to collaborate on addressing their Community Wildfire Protection Plan’s recommendations that fall within the Community Forest.

#### Proposed Blocks within ELF’s Proposed Mt Elphinstone Park

Concerned groups from the Roberts Creek area are against any proposed harvesting within this proposed park area. The guiding principle of the proposal is to link 3 small provincial parks with mature timber. Blocks EW18A, EW18B and EW19 are within it. Although the Provincial Government has stated in 2018 that they do not support a park, BC Timber Sales has deferred their block proposal plans until 2023 allowing for the shíshálh Nation to complete their Modern Land Use Plan.

We note that the Modern Land Use Plan has been in development since 2018, that our entire tenure is in the shíshálh Nation's swiya, and that the Nation has not asked us to defer activity while they complete their Modern Land Use Plan. We must also allow for sufficient time to support meaningful public engagement around these important areas.

- **ACTION PLAN addressing this concern – THAT Staff enhance communication with the shíshálh Nation around these blocks to ensure our plans are aligned with their future planned use of the area, and;**
- **THAT an enhanced public engagement pilot project be initiated including forming an ad-hoc committee of SCCF Directors, Staff and local citizens to plan and develop EW18A, EW18B, and EW19.**

Regarding block EW19. This block is proposed as a research trial with the FLNRORD Research Branch, which is discussing a research strategy that includes slash burning. It is apparent that although research is important aspect of our planning and management of forests, slash burning is not supported by the community. Any research strategy and harvesting will need to be consistent with the goals and aspirations of the community.

- **ACTION PLAN addressing this concern – THAT the Board direct staff to contact the Research Branch to request development of a research trial that meets our goal of an Ecosystem Management Model, and is consistent with our CFOP, and further that the Board considers a committee to support this directive.**

#### Disk Golf Course within EW28

We received feedback from local Disc Golfers expressing support for their disk golf course proposal. It is worth noting that by number of personally written correspondence, this issue was the highest priority expressed by the community, suggesting that the value of recreation within the Community Forest has great potential. Our CFOP supports recreation in principle and use of crown lands other than timber extraction. There is very little precedent set in having a group use the forest in this capacity, but we see this as no different to the many recreation trails, sites and user groups using our forest in different capacity. Supporting this initiative achieves many of community outreach goals of community forest management. By having more people use the forests in a positive way, it reduces negative activities such as dumping or firewood poaching.

- **ACTION PLAN addressing this initiative – THAT the Board direct staff to support the Elk Ridge Proposal with permitting to Rec, Sites and Trails BC, and support funding for road maintenance for continued access to this site.**