2026 - 2030 Operating Plan for the Sunshine Coast Community Forest

Community Forest K3F

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Preamble Summary: Harmonizing Regulation, Strategy, and Operation

This 2026 update to the Community Forest Operating Plan (CFOP) represents a continuous improvement of our planning and forest management of the Sunshine Coast Community Forest (SCCF). Current updates include a commitment to climate adaptation and resilience pathways and continuous forest cover pilot which align with community feedback received over the last year through our last Operating Plan comment period, and ongoing discussions with our Community Advisory Panel.

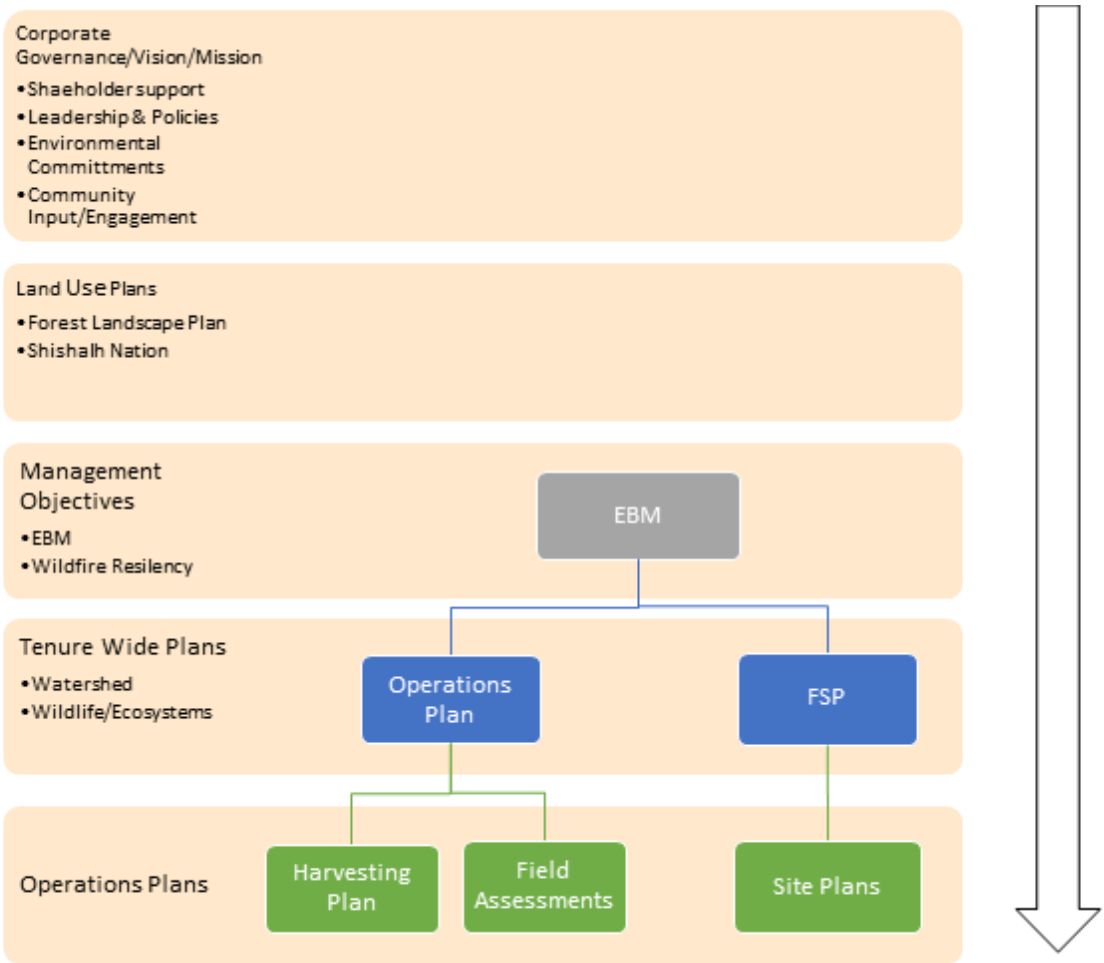


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Planning

This unified framework ensures that every operational decision—from road building to timber selection—is legally compliant, ecologically sound, and socially responsible.

Executive Summary

Since the release of the 2025 Operation Direction, SCCF has implemented harvesting under the direction and received feedback for continuous improvement. Continuous Improvement is a pillar of EBM.

Our Direction is as follows:

1. Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) [1]Integration

- **Conservation Network:** We have designated 42% of the SCCF tenure area to a Conservation Network, with a target of 30% protection for each ecosystem type to protect biodiversity and cultural resources.
- **Management Zones:** Operations are now categorized into five distinct zones (Water Quality, Recreation, Research, Old Growth, and Integrated Forest Management), each with specific dominant objectives that dictate harvest methods.
- **Riparian Protection:** We are adopting an ecologically conservative approach to streams and waterbodies that exceeds the legal minimums, creating wider buffers to protect aquatic ecosystems.

2. Harvesting Strategy & Silviculture

- **Reduced Allowable Annual Cut (AAC):** To support EBM implementation and relieve pressure on the forest, the Board has voluntarily reduced the AAC from our assigned 20,000 m^3, to 15,000 m^3.
- **Variable Retention:** Moving away from clearcutting, 100% of planned blocks in the next five years will utilize Variable Retention principles. This system retains structural elements (large trees, snags) to maintain biodiversity and hasten ecosystem recovery.
- **Old Growth Protection:** We continue our strict policy of not harvesting old-growth forests. 502 hectares of old growth (250+ years) are fully protected, alongside recruitment areas identified for future old-growth characteristics.

3. Community Safety & Wildfire Management

- **Wildfire Mitigation[2]:** Recognizing the risks within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), this plan integrates findings from the SCRD Community Wildfire Protection Plan and the

[1] Learn more - About Ecosystem Based Management | Sunshine Coast Community Forest
[2] Learn more - Forest Stewardship | Sunshine Coast Community Forest | BC Canada

SCCF Wildfire Tactical Planning Report.

- **Fuel Management:** Specific harvest blocks (e.g., AN29-CT, AN14) are designed with a primary emphasis on fuel reduction rather than timber volume.
- **Cultural Burning:** We are actively working with the shíshálh Nation to reintroduce cultural burning practices (e.g., Block EW16) to manage fire-dependent ecosystems and reduce risk.

4. Governance & Public Engagement

- **shíshálh Nation Partnership:** All operations are subject to Shared Decision-Making (SDM) protocols. Every block is reviewed for cultural significance by the shíshálh Nation prior to harvesting.
- **Forest Operations Mapping (FOM):** As of April 1, 2024, the government requires Forestry Licensees to utilize a Forest Operations Map (FOM) to enhance transparency, but the Community Forest continues to rely on its existing **Operating Plan** as the primary and preferred tool for genuine engagement. While the FOM is a mandatory 30-day procedural formality required for permit approvals, the Operating Plan offers a deeper, five-year outlook designed to facilitate meaningful dialogue and solution-seeking early in the planning cycle. Effectively, the Operating Plan functions as a FOM: general feedback is reviewed internally including by the Board and Community Advisory Panel, while comments specific to cutblocks are submitted to the Ministry of Forests to meet regulatory requirements. Community members are encouraged to review these plans and submit their feedback via the Google Form available on the SCCF website.

This CFOP is a living document, subject to "Adaptive Management," ensuring we monitor the effectiveness of our strategies and refine our practices based on ecological results and community feedback.

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1. Introduction

Sunshine Coast Community Forest Ltd (SCCF) is a municipal corporation whose sole shareholder is the District of Sechelt. SCCF has a Community Forest Agreement K3F (Est 2007) with the Ministry of Forests, which provides the opportunity to manage local timber harvesting for the benefit of the community. This creates an Area-Based Tenure where we harvest a replaceable amount of timber each year, known as the Allowable Annual Cut (AAC).

The CFOP is updated annually to consider changes in community priorities, forest conditions, regulations, or harvesting-operations volume. It is a proactive process for the community to participate in operational planning. The **shíshálh Nation** participates in this process as part of our Community and the stewards of their *swiya* in which we operate.

2. Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Framework

The SCCF operates under ecosystem-based management (EBM) principles to ensure sustainable forest management. EBM prioritizes ecosystem health, recognizing that it is fundamental to sustaining economic benefits and human values[3].

2.1 Conservation Network

The Conservation Network (CN) serves as a foundational framework for discussions and decision-making. It currently covers **42% of the SCCF's tenure area**, targeting 30% protection for each ecosystem type. Reserves are established to protect specific resource values while maintaining ecosystem representation, wildlife habitat, and landscape connectivity.

2.2 Management Zones

Zoning is becoming a growing practice in forest management to better meet management objectives for different values within a forest tenure. Zoning divides the tenure into different areas that will be managed for a dominant use or suites of uses, since many values have competing or contradictory needs and require different management practices. For example, while it may be possible to manage for visual quality or recreation in an area primarily managed for timber, aligning areas designated for wildlife with a timber may not be effective management for either value. In BC, zoning is typically implemented at very broad scales. However, due to the small size of SCCF's tenure, zoning will involve smaller, more specific areas. EBM utilizes five management zones to guide practices:

- **Water Quality Zone:** Focuses on maintaining flow and water quality. Harvesting is limited to retention and shelterwood systems to maintain forest influence.

[3] Ecosystem Based Management Planning and Practice in the Sunshine Coast Community Forest,

- **Recreation Zone:** Aims to maintain trail networks and road access while protecting old forests and cultural values.
- **Research Zone:** Located in Roberts Creek, dedicated to collaborative research on alternative silvicultural systems by the Province of BC.
- **Old Growth Zone:** Dedicated to the protection of old forest values.
- **Integrated Forest Management Zone:** Prioritizes economic timber harvest while ensuring ecologically sound practices.

2.3 Implementation & Adaptive Management

- **Streams:** SCCF adopts an ecologically conservative approach to riparian management, exceeding legal minimums to protect waterbodies. Buffers for larger streams typically exceed legal requirements and are included in the Conservation Network.
- **Stand Level Practices:** We emphasize retaining structures (large trees, dead trees, down wood) during harvesting to facilitate rapid ecosystem recovery.
- **Adaptive Management:** We employ **Implementation Monitoring** (did we do what we said?) and **Effectiveness Monitoring** (did it work?) to refine EBM practices continually.

3. Operational Planning & Public Input

3.1 Purpose of the Operational Plan

The CFOP guides the planning and execution of operations in harmony with community values. It provides maps and guidelines regarding conservation areas, harvesting locations, silviculture, and product types. While these are guidelines, site-specific conditions may necessitate changes, which will be documented in Site Plans.

3.2 Forest Operations Mapping (FOM)

As of April 1, 2024, the government requires all Forestry Licensees to share plans via a Forest Operations Map (FOM). The FOM is intended to enhance the transparency of operational planning and provide engagement opportunities for interested members of the public and community stakeholders. Our Operating Plan Map and community engagement process meet the legal requirements of these regulations.

There are, however, nuances between the two processes applicable to the Community Forest:

- **The Operating Plan** is the process for public outreach regarding where our operating activities will occur over the next five years. Once a year, we engage with the community through open houses, meetings, and presentations. The Operating Plan is designed to facilitate comments and meaningful engagement early in the planning cycle. This is a legal requirement of our licence.

- While the **FOM** is a legal requirement—mandating that harvest block maps be posted for 30 days before we can obtain Cutting or Road Permits—we consider it a procedural formality rather than a tool for genuine consultation as extensive investments in planning have typically been made by this point in time. It is a requirement designed to meet regulations, but it is not an opportunity for meaningful dialogue or solution-seeking. For this reason, the Community Forest continues to rely on our **Operating Plan process** as the preferred method for engaging with our community.

How Comments are Handled:

- **Operating Plan:** Comments received during the review period are considered, summarized, and shared with our Board, Community Advisory Panel, and posted on our website.

- **FOM:** Comments are included in the CP or RP application package submitted to the Ministry and may include a description of any resulting changes.

Our Operating Plan Engagement Process effectively functions as a FOM. All comments are shared internally, while comments pertaining to a specific cutblock will be submitted to the Ministry of Forests in our application for a Cutting Permit or Road Permit.

To comment on our Operations Plan, community members must visit the SCCF website and log their comments related to specific blocks using the provided Google Form.

3.3 shíshálh Nation Relationship

On October 4, 2018, the Foundation Agreement was signed by shíshálh Nation and BC, committing the parties to Shared Decision-Making (SDM) for land and resource authorizations throughout the swiya (lands, birthplace, world, "Territory" of the shíshálh Nation).

The shíshálh Nation, as the governing entity for the stewardship of their lands and resources, is engaged in a shared decision-making **(SDM)** process with the province of British Columbia (B.C.). This process, outlined in the Foundation Agreement, involves the joint review of applications for various authorizations related to land and resources within the shíshálh swiya. A joint B.C.-shíshálh Working Group, comprised of representatives from both entities, assesses applications and makes recommendations to a Board, which includes members from shíshálh Nation, B.C. Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR). If consensus cannot be reached, an issue is brought to a Solutions Forum. The overall aim is to incorporate shared decision-making into all provincial authorization decisions within the shíshálh swiya.

Periodic meetings are held with *shíshálh* Nation representatives to discuss forestry-planning issues, cultural and Archaeology site surveys, Cutting Permit issuance, and other current issues. As part of SDM, the *shíshálh* Nation reviews every block for cultural significance prior to harvesting.

4. Management of Resources

4.1 Conservation Areas

Along with EBM, to protect and plan for future non timber opportunities, the Community Forest has defined areas being managed specifically for the various community values present in our management areas.

Conservation areas are long-term deferral areas where management of a value requires timber to be retained for a rotation or more. Examples as follows:

- Old growth and old growth recruitment
- Unstable terrain/steep slope
- Species/plant communities at risk; fragile or rare ecosystems (i.e., marbled murrelet, northern goshawk)
- Water licence intake protection
- Riparian reserves
- High cultural/archeological significance areas

Community values which may require special harvest strategies/techniques to help mitigate concerns:

- Recreation
- Wildfire interface management areas
- Community watershed management
- Community interface areas
- Short-term deferral areas – where deferring timber is required to meet a desired management objective
- Mushroom gathering
- Long-term or Extended rotation strategies
- Visual Quality Objectives (i.e. two pass harvest entries)

There may be areas of overlap with competing values such as preservation of a forest versus wildfire risk to the community. In those areas, community safety takes precedence. However, these conservation areas should be seen as an opportunity to restore these ecosystems to be fire-adapted and wildfire resilient as the guiding principle.

4.2 Water & Community Watersheds

Water resources within the SCCF include lakes, wetlands, and streams. They provide many values:

- Domestic water supply under provincial water licenses
- Aquatic and riparian ecosystems supporting biodiversity, unique and fragile ecosystems
- Aesthetics, scenery, and community setting
- Recreation uses such as swimming, fishing, and boating
- Salmon and resident fish-bearing streams

The CFOP covers only indirect water-management activities—those designed to maintain water quality and aquatic ecosystems by minimizing the impact of other resource uses. The Community Forest considers water to be one of the highest-value resources in the tenure area and will consider various options above and beyond provincial regulations to preserve water quality by following the EBM principles of Stream Management.

Every consideration is given to protecting waterways.

Community Watersheds

There are three Community Watersheds that overlap with the Sunshine Coast Community Forest chart area:

- Milne Creek (includes Trout Lake)
- Chapman Creek
- Gray Creek

The SCCF Board of Directors has committed that no harvesting will take place within the Chapman Creek Community Watershed for the 25-year term of the SCCF (effective 2011). This decision has been made to address the following concerns:

- The Chapman Creek watershed was heavily harvested in the past and needs to hydrologically recover
- Past harvesting and road construction resulted in some slope instability resulting in landslides. Some roads and slopes may still be unstable and new operations could exacerbate these problems. Detailed hydrological studies have been completed (Horel

et al) and recommendations have been accepted by the SCCF Board. More studies are likely to be done to provide better information about the Chapman Creek Community Watershed before any operations will be considered.

Forestry operations will be planned within the Gray Creek and Milne Creek Community Watersheds. These plans will be referred to local governments, shíshálh Nation and the public having an opportunity for input into those plans. These areas will be managed in the "Water Quality Zone". Approaches are as follows:

- **Watershed Assessments**: A Qualified Professional (QP) must conduct a full assessment that accounts for climate change, defines ECA limits, inventories sediment/riparian conditions, and provides a Watershed Report Card. Every proposed cutblock requires a specific Cutblock Hydrology Assessment by a QP to confirm it fits the broader watershed plan. All recommendations must be written into the final Site Plan. Mitigating strategies will ensure that harvest levels will remain at or below very low risk levels to water quality and flow (e.g., EBA 2000).

- **Limited Harvest:** Most areas within the zone will have no harvest (e.g., Chapman Creek Watershed). In areas where harvest can occur, the retention system will be used to maintain forest influence over 100% of the block. This means that all areas of the block will be within a tree height of the block edge, an internal retention patch or individual dispersed retention trees. Shelterwood systems may also be used where forest influence is maintained over the whole block for the entire rotation.

- **Conservation Network:** The conservation network will contribute areas that recruit old forest in the Water Quality Zone, with greater amounts of conservation network focused in these zones than in some other zones.

- **Wildfire Risk Management**: In areas where the Water Quality Zone overlaps with the WUI, management actions will be guided by the Wildfire Risk Reduction Plan currently in preparation, ensuring alignment with BC government directions and regulations.

- **Road Management**: Roads will be carefully built and managed according to recommendations in Carson and Maloney (2021) and ABCFP and PENG (2012;2021) standards

Conservation Areas, for the most part, have considered providing buffers on streams based on the presence of a riparian ecosystem and is typically more protective than the current regulatory requirement. All streams have a level of protection the need for, and sizes of,

additional riparian reserve and management zones will be determined in the field by professionals as stated in the SCCF Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP). The size of riparian reserves on streams is specified in our FSP which is above the legal requirement. However, depending on site conditions, these reserves may be modified, as determined by a qualified professional who will consider the following:

(i) the need to buffer the aquatic ecosystem of the stream, wetland, or lake from the potential introduction of materials that are deleterious to water quality or fish habitat;

(ii) the need to conserve the riparian habitat for biodiversity, ecosystem function and wildlife habitat management purposes;

(iii) the need to protect the integrity of the reserve zone by buffering with retention in the management zone;

(iv) the effect of trees and understory vegetation on water quality or fish habitat;

(v) the need to maintain stream bank and stream channel integrity;

(vi) the relative importance and sensitivity of different riparian classes of streams, wetlands, and lakes;

(vii) the type, timing, or intensity of forest practices that are to be carried out;

(viii) worker safety; and

(ix) other factors determined by the professional in the Site Plan.

4.3 Biodiversity & Variable Retention

Biodiversity management is guided by our EBM plan, through conservation areas and stand level practices. It takes into consideration the Landscape Level and extends beyond the SCCF tenure area to include Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs), seral stage (forest-stand age) distribution, and ecosystems at risk. OGMAs and Wildlife Tree Retention Areas (WTRA) retention are implemented within the SCCF tenure area thereby providing additional biodiversity and future old-growth recruitment. All blocks are assessed by a Forest Ecologist to ensure that the EBM guidelines are followed.

The following best management measures will further maintain biodiversity within harvested areas:

- Large snags will be retained within wildlife tree patches where operational safety

allows, as they provide valuable habitat for many animal species.

- Under-represented tree species, such as Sitka spruce and western yew, will be retained within wildlife tree patches. Yew retention patches will include adjacent overstory cedar and maple which current research suggests will provide better outcomes for yew.[4]

- Natural rhododendron patches will be retained.

- Veteran trees will be retained wherever it is operationally feasible.

- Only native tree species will be used for reforestation of timber crops.

- Incorporate irregular boundaries in the cutblock design to improve the interaction of terrestrial species and ecosystems between the non-harvest versus harvest portion of the block.

- Employ a Retention Silviculture System with more than 50% forest influence as dispersed or groups of retained trees in the cutblock.

- Meet the Coarse Woody Debris targets as stated in our FSP.

Variable Retention[5]

As a foundational management direction, in the next 5 years, 100% of SCCF blocks are planned to be non-clearcut using Variable Retention principles (Silviculture Systems-pg. 21). We aim to retain large snags, under-represented tree species (Sitka spruce, western yew), and veteran trees. Variable Retention will be the primary system as long as it's safe, can achieve the biodiversity targets for the site and can re-establish appropriate tree species for the site. There may be blocks as exceptions that may need to be clearcut to achieve other targets such as managing for forest insect and disease.

Areas other than OGMAs may be designated for retention to maintain specific high-biodiversity values.

Other Alternative Forest Management Approaches

Intermediate cuttings (Examples - Commercial thinning, WRR treatments, Single Stem) are the removal of immature trees from a forest stand before the final harvest to improve the health and quality of the remaining trees. This practice, also known as thinning, is a

[4] Snyder, E., Simard, S. W., & Guichon, S. (2025). Scientific reports 15, 39348. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-22917-z
[5] Variable Retention, Wikipedia, 2021/03/25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variable_retention

silvicultural treatment applied after a stand is established but before final harvest, and it can have beneficial effects like enhancing non-timber forest values in addition to managing timber production.

Purposes of intermediate cuttings

- **Improve remaining trees:** Removing some trees creates more space and resources, such as sunlight, water, and nutrients, for the remaining trees to grow healthier and faster.
- **Enhance forest stand quality:** By removing lower-quality or competing trees, intermediate cuttings help the best trees grow into more valuable timber.
- **Manage stand density:** It can be used to reduce dense stands of small trees, reducing fuel load.
- **Increase biodiversity:** Cuttings can be used to improve vertical diversity and ground vegetation, which benefits various animal and bird species.
- **Increase visual and recreational value:** Intermediate cuttings can be used to improve scenic values or reduce safety hazards in recreational areas by felling trees and pruning branches.

Types of intermediate cuttings

- **Thinning:** The most common type of intermediate cutting, which involves removing individual trees from a stand.
- **Improvement cuts:** These are a type of intermediate cutting designed to remove defective, poorly formed, or undesirable trees to improve the overall quality of the stand.

Continuous cover forestry (CCF) is a forest management approach that maintains a permanently irregular, multi-layered structure by selectively harvesting individual trees rather than clearing large areas. It aims to create self-renewing, biodiverse forests that provide timber and a wide range of ecosystem services like improved soil stability, biodiversity, and resilience to climate change. This method differs from traditional forestry's use of clearcutting and monocultures by promoting natural regeneration and keeping the forest canopy intact. The application of this system is very limited and consideration to be applied on areas for community water management, old-growth rehabilitation, ecosystem restoration, biodiversity enhancement and where other values take precedence such as riparian health, drinking water, wildfire risk reduction or recreation.

Key principles and goals

- **Maintain continuous forest cover:** The primary goal is to maintain a continuous forest climate and preserve soil processes with opening sizes a maximum of one tree length.
- **Promote biodiversity:** CCF fosters a mix of species, ages, and structures, which enhances biodiversity compared to traditional reforestation.
- **Promote resilience:** Forests managed with CCF may be more resistant to natural hazards such as extreme climate variability (droughts), wildfires (if managed for fuel loading) due to their structural complexity/diversity and mixed species composition. It can also provide an opportunity to increase the presence of cedar on the landscape where climate change increasingly prohibits successful cedar regeneration in openings, supporting community values and long-term timber value at the same time.
- **Utilize natural regeneration:** CCF relies on natural regeneration to maintain the stand. However, is not suitable for Douglas Fir regeneration due to the shaded/filtered light limiting growth.

Methods and techniques

- **Selective harvesting:** Individual trees or small groups are harvested to promote the growth of remaining trees, understory plants, or planted species.
- **Stand structure management:** The approach uses various silvicultural systems, such as the selection, shelterwood, or group systems, to manage gentle stand conversion that promotes desirable attributes (ie biodiversity, climate resilience).
- **Thinning:** Strategic thinning can remove weaker or susceptible trees to give the best trees more space and resources to thrive.

4.4 Legacy Trees

The Pacific temperate rainforests ecoregion of North America is one of the richest and most diverse temperate forest ecoregions on earth. These coastal rainforests contain enormous trees, referred to as “legacy trees”, which are a result of the area’s favourable growing conditions, including mild year-round temperatures and heavy rainfall. Legacy trees are exceptionally large and old, and a unique feature of British Columbia’s coastal forests.

Our Community Forest recognizes that legacy trees have important cultural, aesthetic and ecological value. These trees play an important role in habitat conservation by bridging old-

growth characteristics into second growth stands. In addition, large trees are increasingly supporting the growing ecotourism economy as valuable destinations in and of themselves. In that context, SCCF's aim is to keep all legacy trees throughout our Community Forest and our protocols for doing so are outlined in our Best Management Practices for Legacy and Special Tree Protection.

4.5 Invasive Species

Noting the extensive range and diversity of invasive plants in our Community Forest, SCCF is focusing on eliminating the potential for invasive plants by grass seeding disturbed soils. Legally the SCCF is required to manage for invasive plants as identified in the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Invasive Plant Regulation. Through the removal of potential seed bed via grass seeding we can eliminate the introduction and/or spread all invasive plants that could threaten Sensitive Sites. Our comprehensive Best Management Practices for Invasive Plants identifies our strategy in detail.

4.6 Wildlife

The only species listed in the Ministry of Environment's Identified Wildlife Management Strategy that exists within the SCCF tenure area is the Marbled Murrelet. There is potential for Northern Goshawk in the area, and a survey was conducted in Summer, 2023, 2024 and 2025 with no recorded observations.

Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat has been identified and mapped within the SCCF and approved by the Ministry of Forests Order specifying the legal set aside of potential Marbled Murrelet has been met outside the Community Forest, and there is no requirement to set more area aside within the Community Forest. However, current areas shown as potential Marbled Murrelet habitat in the Community Forest are protected.

Elk and Deer Management

Large numbers of elk and deer (ungulate) populate the forest in, and surrounding, the SCCF. Habitat areas such as sites of high deer use for winter browse and warming (south-aspect open forest) have been identified and mapped. Continuous forestry operations will open up forest canopies to allow more natural browsing within these forest stands. Stand harvesting and rehabilitation (spacing and thinning) will provide a mosaic of browse areas across the landscape to be used by these and other animals.

Deer and elk populations do not require intensive management in this area. The low elevation sites with mild winter climates and extensive areas of browse supply their needs well.

Elk and deer impact forestry plantations and add a significant cost to silviculture. They spend much of their time in plantation areas because of the increased availability of food in the

newly formed shrub and herbaceous layers that grow following harvesting. Unfortunately, deer and elk often eat the new seedlings and damage young trees as they rub the velvet off their antlers. Mesh enclosures or cones are often required to protect the seedlings.

5. Timber Management Strategy

5.1 The Timber Resource

The legal Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) is 20,000 m^3/year. However, the SCCF Board has voluntarily reduced the AAC to 15,000 m^3/year to relieve harvesting pressure during EBM implementation. Timber is sold at market prices or better, with priority given to local forest products manufacturing.

The AAC will be harvested using a range of retention-harvesting methods suited to the area's ecosystems. The 2026 Operation Plan incorporate new harvesting methods of partial cutting for commercial thinning, research and wildfire treatments. Timber harvesting will be planned and conducted to produce a variety of forest products, some of which are key to local Sunshine Coast value-added customers. Marketing of timber products will be determined prior to annual harvesting to ensure that the best value and use of the timber is achieved.

Timber products that support the local forest products manufacturing industry will be given the highest sales priority. Considerations will vary depending on the specific customer and forest product, and may include harvesting of timber and production of logs that:

- are of specific species, size, and grade;
- require sensitive harvesting techniques to preserve their appearance and grade;
- are of manageable volumes for customers; and
- suit the manufacturing schedule of local value-added industry.

Requests from local customers for specific forest products will be given priority. This will include special harvesting plans and timing to accommodate these requests.

Free to cut firewood will be made available to our community on the block after harvesting or processed and delivered through our community firewood program.

Salvage opportunities will be managed on an individual basis, and salvage proposals will be developed in conjunction with annual harvesting plans.

5.2 Old Growth Policy

In the SCCF, old-growth forest protection exists at strategic and operational decision-making levels. The Board of Directors adopted a policy which has been in place since 2009 which prohibits logging old growth forest (>250 years old), of which there are approximately 502 hectares within the community forest. At the time the policy was adopted, almost a third of this old growth was not yet legally protected. This policy has evolved to call for more than old growth protection, but old growth recruitment achieved through EBM planning principles.

Operational planning at several levels furthers these policy objectives through the representation of Old Growth values in the SCCF Conservation Network (CN), serving as an old growth recruitment strategy. The methodology and fulsome objectives of the CN are described in the EBM Planning and Practice in the SCCF Report. The use of this strategy is confirmed in the 2025 Forest Stewardship Plan, and now in this CFOP.

6. Other Resource Values

6.1 Soils & Karst

- **Soils:** We minimize disturbance by grass-seeding exposed mineral soil, minimizing new road construction, and deactivating non-permanent roads.
- **Karst:** Geological karst features are managed according to Provincial policy, with planning designed to protect significant features.

6.2 Recreation & Trails

The SCCF areas include a wide spectrum of outdoor recreational opportunities. Our community greatly values forest-based recreation, which is also a tourist attraction for some visitors to the Sunshine Coast. The extensive network of trails in the Sechelt area is a particularly valuable resource. They are mostly used for hiking, mountain biking, horses, motorcycles, and ATV's; access for harvesting of non-timber resources; and cross-country skiing. Harvesting of timber on or near trails may occur and the management of those trails may include:

- moving the trail,
- inclusion in retention of buffer zones,
- redesigning the block,
- restoring the trail following harvesting,
- minimizing damage by fall-away-yard-away, or

- variations of post-harvest retention density.

The management of trails will occur on a site-specific basis rather than by one broad policy applied to all situations.

The appropriate management of recreational resources is a goal of the SCCF. A recreational resource is a landscape feature with the potential to be used for a specific recreational activity. This potential must be recognized and options for continued future use considered in forest management planning.

The SCCF will continue to develop an inventory of recreation values and implement specific planning over time. This inventory lists natural and historical features for any recreational use within the SCCF tenure area; it will be used to ensure that areas of high recreation value are recognized and managed so as not to decrease their value. To date, the SCCF has mapped known trails in and around the SCCF tenure area. Some trails have been GPS mapped by the public and we greatly appreciate this information. This trail inventory will record types of usage, specific recreational or ecological importance, and other information regarding appropriate management techniques for the trail area.

Sechelt Heritage Forest/Hidden Groves

The Sunshine Coast Forest District has a Co-operative Management Agreement with the District of Sechelt for maintaining the Sechelt Heritage Forest recreation site (FRPA Section 56), and the SCCF is not involved in the management. Objectives for the Sechelt Coast Heritage Interpretive Forest Site, set by the District Manager, Ministry of Forests, Sunshine Coast Forest District, recreation project 16660-6206—locally known as the Sechelt Heritage Forest—are as follows:

The objectives are to manage the Sechelt Coast Heritage Interpretive Forest Site, for a road access, non-motorized recreation experience. Opportunities for forest education, interpretive walking, and exploring activities will be available. Natural and social history of the Sandy Hook area shall be provided through the educational and interpretive component of the management of the site.

The Sechelt Heritage Forest is also designated as an OGMA and is excluded from timber harvesting as described in the Chapman Landscape Unit Plan.

Hidden Groves

Included within REC 16660-6206 is Hidden Groves which has been designated a high-value recreational area on the urban interface. It is managed by the Sechelt Groves Society in cooperation with the Recreation Sites and Trails BC and SCCF. It consists of approximately 60 ha of forest along the east side of Sechelt Inlet Road, across from the Sandy Hook Road

intersection. Many excellent trails have been built to enable people of varying abilities to view a wide range of old and second-growth forest ecosystems. Work continues on these trails in order to improve access and to lead to additional natural and managed forest features. The Hidden Groves website can be viewed at: www.hiddengroves.ca

6.3 Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

The SCCF contains valuable vegetation that may have the potential to be commercially harvested in the future for products such as:

- decorative foliage,
- edible mushrooms and other fungi,
- natural oils,
- medicinal ingredients,
- food, and
- branch furniture components.

The *shíshálh* Nation harvests many non-timber resources for traditional uses as food and for producing baskets, tools, and other art and craftwork.

The harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFP's), such as those listed above, is unregulated within the province at this time. It has been found difficult to license, plan, enforce, and monitor in BC because there are no provincial policies in place. There are no SCCF operational or management plans for these resources at the present time, except to identify and map any exceptional resource areas. If there are commercially viable proposals, management strategies would be added to the Forest Management Plan.

Personal Harvest of Food and Craft Supplies

As with commercial vegetation harvesting, personal gathering and use of food and craft supplies products is not currently managed, and there are no plans to manage these items at this time. The public can go out and harvest any non-timber forest products wherever they desire.

6.4 Aesthetics

The forest surrounding Sechelt provides a beautiful setting for the community as both a scenic backdrop and at the forest-stand level. Timber harvesting has a temporary potential to change the viewscape of the SCCF wherever visible from Sechelt. The result of harvesting

could be either unattractive colour changes (such as a solid brown colour) or too angular a shape. These views are short-lived, as the vegetation comes back quickly as the seedlings get taller. Within five years, the view again takes on a green colour.

Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) have been set by the MOF for the SCCF area. These VQOs are, however, general in nature, and more detailed assessments of the visual effects of harvesting may be required on a block-by-block basis.

Harvesting operations are planned to minimize their visual impact, not by attempting to make harvesting invisible, but by utilizing landscape design techniques to blend in the harvesting pattern with the natural forest landscape mosaic. This is accomplished by utilizing tree retention, following irregular-shaped natural features for harvest boundaries, and by minimizing the size of road right-of-ways. Potentially visible blocks planned in highly visible areas will have visual impact assessment images produced to assist in their visual landscape design.

7. Wildfire Management

7.1 Wildfire Risk

Wildfire Risk to Forests and Community

The beautiful neighbourhoods peppered with large trees, rustic cabins nestled in forests, and the beautiful beaches that characterize life on the Sunshine Coast, also contribute to its vulnerability to wildfire. This area where community intermingles with the natural environment is called the wildland urban interface. It is at a greater risk of catastrophic wildfire, and on the Sunshine Coast makes up a staggering 441 km2. Mountainous geography and water restrict most areas to one or sometimes two points of access, both on a neighbourhood and on a regional scale, and this challenges emergency response planning. As our climate changes, our communities are increasingly aware of this risk, and interested in seeing it addressed. As a community-led organization with a forest stewardship mandate, this is a high priority for the Sunshine Coast Community Forest.

The SCRD partnered with the shíshálh Nation, Town of Gibsons, and the District of Sechelt to commission a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) with funding from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Community Resiliency Investment Program. This work included wildfire risk assessments on public land within the wildland urban interface. The consultants identified extensive areas at high risk of wildfire including in Egmont, Pender Harbour, Halfmoon Bay, West Sechelt, Sechelt Inlet, Roberts Creek, Port Mellon, and Gambier Island. The plan included 43 recommendations towards making our communities more resilient to wildfire. Many of these have been done or are underway.

How to reduce the risk of wildfire spreading through the Community Forest

Using the groundwork laid by this Community Wildfire Protection Plan as an information springboard, we have engaged the foremost experts in BC to look at the role the Community Forest can play. We have engaged Frontera Forest Solutions specializes in fuel management, fire risk assessment, fire ecology and restoration, and prescribed fire planning. They have partnerships with the University of British Columbia which is leading forest fire mitigation research, and have worked with other community-based forest stewards like First Nations and Community Forests around the province. Locally managed forests like these are at the forefront of implementing wildfire mitigation projects, including the iconic story of the Logan Lake Community Forest's success.

Areas for recommended mitigation work were identified, several are complete, and several more will be completed in the coming years.

Coastal forests see fewer fires than the interior, however the risk of large fires on the coast increases with the longer, drier summers. Projects that reduce fire risk usually involve removing "Fuel", such as small logs on the forest floor and dead lower branches on trees. With EBM on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Conservation, "dead" wood is one of the six measurable attributes of old forest conditions, and an important part of forest habitat and large logs that contribute to moisture retention and rebuilding soil more than they increase fire risk, are generally not removed as part of any mitigation treatments.

Our Operations Plan includes proposed Wildfire Risk Reduction treatments with a timber production element. Block AN29-CT and TU5 are harvest blocks with an emphasis on managing fuel to reduce wildfire risk reduction.

7.2 Mitigation Strategies

SCCF has engaged experts (Frontera Forest Solutions) to implement fuel management planning.

- **Fuel Management:** Projects involve removing "fuel" like logs and dead branches. Blocks **AN29-CT** and **TU5** are harvest blocks with an emphasis on wildfire risk reduction.
- **Cultural Burning:** SCCF is committed to developing cultural burning opportunities with the shíshálh Nation (e.g., Block EW16) to manage fire-dependent ecosystems.
- **Slash Management:** We are seeking ways to reduce slash burning, such as mulching or grinding debris.

8. Access & Silviculture Treatments

8.1 Access Management (Roads)

Existing roads are permanent assets. Access management includes:

- Leaving main haul roads open (potentially seasonally deactivated).
- Using rock fill "Squamish" culverts.
- De-building temporary roads into trails.
- Retaining roads for fire suppression access.

8.2 Silvicultural Treatments

Treatments include spacing (reducing tree density), fertilization (increasing growth, except in watersheds), brushing (removing competing vegetation), and stand rehabilitation (replacing poor quality stands).

- Pesticides: Will not be used for silvicultural purposes within the SCCF.
- Browse Protection: We use protective cones or "Plantskydd" repellent to protect seedlings from deer and elk.

8.3 Firewood

Free-to-cut firewood is made available on blocks after harvesting. We also operate a Firewood Program that processes and delivers wood, providing employment to people with barriers to traditional employment and reducing illegal timber poaching.

Appendix A: Ecosystem Based Management Planning and Practice in the Sunshine Coast Community Forest

The Sunshine Coast Community Forest (SCCF) holds significance for people, encompassing cultural, spiritual, ecological, recreational, scenic, and tourism value. As well, many residents depend on the forest for their economic well-being and income from forest harvesting contributes to community initiatives. The SCCF sees ecosystem-based management (EBM) principles and practice as a way to define balanced forest management for these varied values, prioritizing ecosystem health as all the other values rely upon it. By adopting practices that sustain ecological integrity, the SCCF hopes to maintain economic benefits and human values for current and future generations. This requires collaborative planning with shíshálh, provincial, regional governments, and interested community groups.

This document:

- Provides a brief background on how EBM is being used in forest planning in British Columbia (BC),
- Outlines the intent of EBM and SCCF's approach, and
- Provides high-level objectives and guidance for SCCF operations.

Further details will be necessary to translate broad EBM objectives to operational planning. This document is intended to provide enough direction to allow informed community engagement for the SCCF. SCCF recognizes the rights and title of shíshálh and importance of co-planning with shíshálh.

Appendix B: Matrix of Consistency

Purpose: This matrix illustrates the relationship between the regulatory requirements and the voluntary, value-driven commitments of the SCCF's Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP), Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) Plan, and 2025 Community Forest Operating Plan (CFOP).

Resource Value	Legal Objective / Regulatory Minimum	FSP, CFOP & EBM Operational Guideline (Implementation)
Allowable Annual Cut (AAC)	**20,000 m^3:** The legal harvesting target established for the Community Forest Agreement K3F.	**15,000 m^3:** A voluntary reduction by the Board to relieve harvesting pressure while implementing EBM and strategic initiatives.
Old Growth Management	**Protect OGMAs:** Adherence to provincially designated Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs) and Landscape Unit plans.	**No Harvest Policy:** Strict internal policy to not harvest any old-growth forests (defined as >250 years old), regardless of legal designation.
Riparian (Stream) Buffers	**FPPR Standards:** Buffer widths determined by *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation* (sections 47-49) based on stream class.	**Exceeds Minimums:** Adopts an ecologically conservative approach where buffers typically exceed legal requirements based on site-specific biodiversity needs.
Silviculture System	**Various Systems Permitted:** Clearcutting is a legally permitted system provided stocking	**100% Variable Retention:** For the next 5 years, 100% of planned blocks will use Variable Retention (non-

	standards are met.	clearcut) principles.
Wildlife Habitat (Marbled Murrelet)	**No Protection Required:** Legal set-asides for Marbled Murrelet were met outside the Community Forest boundary.	**Voluntary Protection:** Current areas identified as potential Marbled Murrelet habitat within the Community Forest will remain standing and unharvested.
Conservation & Biodiversity	**Stand Level Retention:** Implementation of Wildlife Tree Retention Areas (WTRA) 9-13% protection on a block by block basis, and Coarse Woody Debris targets.	**30% Target:** Implementation of an interconnected Conservation Network covering 42% of the tenure, with a target of 30% protection for each ecosystem type planned at the landscape level.
Invasive Species	**FRPA Regulation:** Manage invasive plants as identified in the *Forest and Range Practices Act* Invasive Plant Regulation.	**Proactive Seeding:** Operational focus on grass seeding disturbed soils immediately to eliminate seed beds for invasive plants, exceeding basic compliance.
First Nations Consultation	**Consultation:** Standard referral and consultation processes required by the Ministry.	**Shared Decision-Making:** Adherence to the Foundation Agreement and Shared Decision-Making (SDM) process where the shíshálh Nation reviews *every* block for cultural significance prior to harvest.

Appendix C: Key Definitions & Terminology

Purpose: To define key terms used within the Community Forest Operating Plan (CFOP) and Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) Plan to ensure clarity regarding operational, strategic, and governance concepts.

1. Operational & Silviculture Terms

- **Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)**
  A forest management approach that maintains a permanently irregular, multi-layered structure by selectively harvesting individual trees rather than clearing large areas. It aims to create self-renewing, biodiverse forests and is distinct from traditional clearcutting.
- **Extended Rotation Management**
  A management regime where trees are grown beyond the standard economic rotation age (typically to 120–160 years) to produce high-value products such as clear lumber and poles.
- **Forest Influence**
  The biophysical effect of standing trees on the adjacent harvested area. In the context of SCCF Water Quality Zones, maintaining "forest influence" means all harvested areas must be within one tree height of a block edge or internal retention patch.
- **Intermediate Cuttings**
  Also known as thinning, this is the removal of immature trees from a forest stand before the final harvest to improve the health and quality of the remaining trees. This includes techniques such as commercial thinning, improvement cuts, and single stem harvesting.
- **Legacy Trees**
  Exceptionally large and old trees that are a unique feature of the coastal rainforest and a result of the area's favourable growing conditions. SCCF aim and protocol dictate the retention of all legacy trees throughout the Community Forest.
- **Silvicultural Treatments**
  Activities aimed at managing forest growth and health, including spacing (reducing tree density), fertilization (increasing growth), brushing (removing competing vegetation), and stand rehabilitation (replacing poor quality stands).
- **Variable Retention (VR)**
  A silvicultural harvesting system that retains structural elements of the previous stand

for at least one rotation. Unlike clearcutting, VR focuses on what is retained rather than what is removed, preserving biological legacies such as snags, large trees, and coarse woody debris.

2. Strategic Planning Terms

- **Community Forest Operating Plan (CFOP)**
  The operational execution arm of the planning hierarchy that translates broad objectives into specific harvesting schedules, road plans, and silvicultural treatments for the next five years. It acts as the practical application of the FSP rules and EBM vision.
- **Conservation Network (CN)**
  A foundational framework of reserves currently covering approximately 42% of the SCCF's tenure area. The strategic target is to achieve 30% protection for each ecosystem type within the tenure.
- **Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM)**
  A management framework that prioritizes ecosystem health, recognizing that it is fundamental to sustaining economic benefits and human values. It voluntarily exceeds legal minimums to ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Forest Operations Map (FOM)**
  A provincial mapping process required as of April 1, 2024, which allows the public to view and comment on planned forest operations (Cutting Permits or Road Permits) for a 30-day period before they are issued.
- **Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP)**
  The regulatory foundation that serves as the legal bedrock for operations, outlining objectives required by the Provincial Government under the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA).
- **Management Zones**
  Distinct geographic areas within the tenure where specific objectives take precedence. These zones are: Water Quality, Recreation, Research, Old Growth, and Integrated Forest Management.
- **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**
  The area where the community intermingles with the natural environment. These areas are often prioritized for wildfire risk reduction treatments over timber volume.

3. Governance & Relationship Terms

- **Allowable Annual Cut (AAC)**
  The volume of timber that may be harvested annually. While the legal AAC for the SCCF tenure is 20,000 m^3, the SCCF Board has voluntarily reduced the operational AAC to 15,000 m^3 to support EBM implementation.
- **Foundation Agreement**
  The agreement signed on October 4, 2018, by the shíshálh Nation and British Columbia, committing the parties to Shared Decision-Making for land and resource authorizations.
- **Shared Decision-Making (SDM)**
  The process outlined in the Foundation Agreement involving the joint review of applications for various authorizations related to land and resources. Under this process, the shíshálh Nation reviews every block for cultural significance prior to harvesting.
- **Swiya**
  The definition for the "Territory" of the shíshálh Nation, translating to lands, birthplace, and world.

Appendix D: Public Engagement Workflow & Checklist

Purpose: To guide SCCF staff through the consultation lifecycle, ensuring compliance with new provincial FOM requirements.

Phase 1: Pre-Engagement & Cultural Review

- ☐ **Shared Decision-Making (SDM) Review:** Submit all proposed blocks to the *shíshálh* Nation–B.C. Working Group for review.
- ☐ **Cultural Significance Check:** Ensure every block has been reviewed by the *shíshálh* Nation for cultural significance prior to harvesting planning.
- ☐ **Internal Block Validation:** Confirm proposed blocks match the "Block Proposed" or "Block Engineered" status.

Phase 2: Community Outreach (The "SCCF Standard")

- ☐ **Advertise:** Place notifications in local newspapers and on the SCCF website.
- ☐ **Direct Referrals:** Send the CFOP and map links to the District of Sechelt, SCRD, and Community Associations (Sandy Hook, Halfmoon Bay, West Sechelt, Roberts Creek, Tuwanek, Davis Bay/Wilson Creek/Selma Park).
- ☐ **Host Open Houses:** Schedule face-to-face meetings for concerned stakeholders.
- ☐ **General Comment Management:** Solicit "Non-Block Specific" comments and concerns in addition to block-specific comments.

Phase 3: Feedback Processing & Finalization

- ☐ **FOM Comment Review:** Comments from the FOM portal must be considered before permit issuance.
- ☐ **Compile Public Summary:** Aggregate feedback into a summary document.
- ☐ **Board Approval:** Present the Operational Plan to the SCCF Board for approval.
- ☐ **Public Reporting:** Publish Operating Plan Comments from the public on the SCCF website.
- ☐ **Final Sign-Off:** Ensure the final CFOP is signed by the Managing Forester (RPF), and Board Chair.