

Working Towards EBM Planning and Practice in the Sunshine Coast Community Forest

July 2022

SCCF Planning Team

Ecosystem Based Management

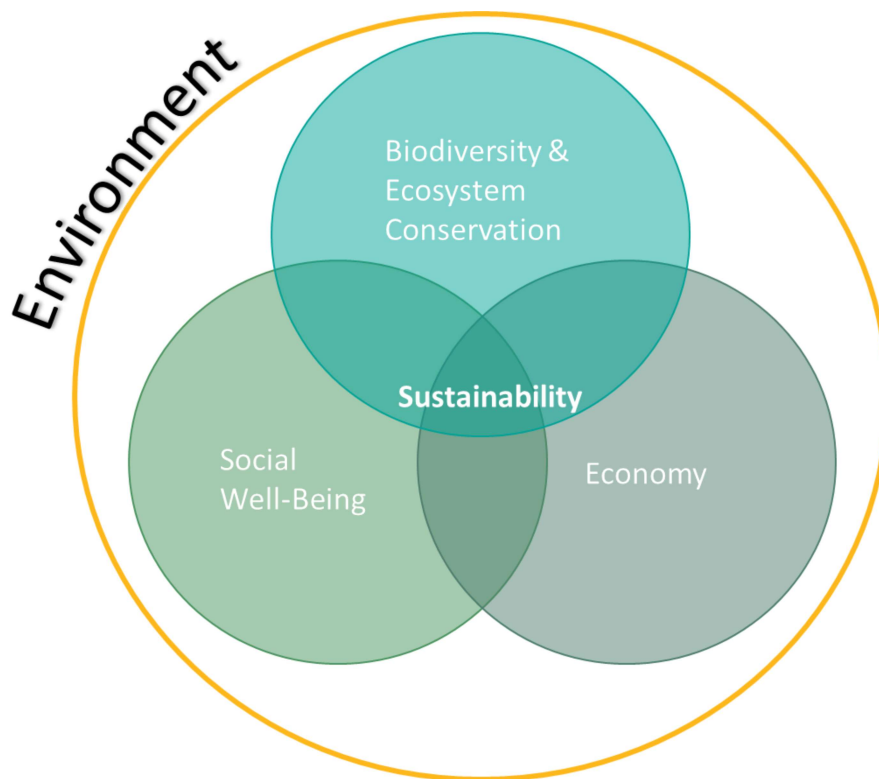
“A process that integrates biological, social and economic factors into a comprehensive strategy aimed at protecting and enhancing sustainability, diversity and productivity of natural resources.”

Ensuring a Resilient Forest and Community

The Sunshine Coast Community Forest is transitioning to Ecosystem Based Management to answer the call for a paradigm shift in forest resource management. This is a voluntary, proactive approach to better manage our local forest, incorporating the best science with community and indigenous values. This methodology aims to sustain healthy ecosystems, maintain and support biodiversity, provide economic opportunity and retain future options both ecological and economic. This is a long-term, iterative and holistic planning process which strives to be truly sustainable, to respect and reflect knowledge and understanding, and to be adaptive to changing conditions.

1. INTRODUCTION

- The Sunshine Coast Community Forest (SCCF) is seeking to adopt an ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach to forestry.
- This summary outlines the intent of EBM and SCCF’s proposed approach. It provides high-level objectives and guidance to assist with informed community engagement to provide input on direction details with respect to EBM.



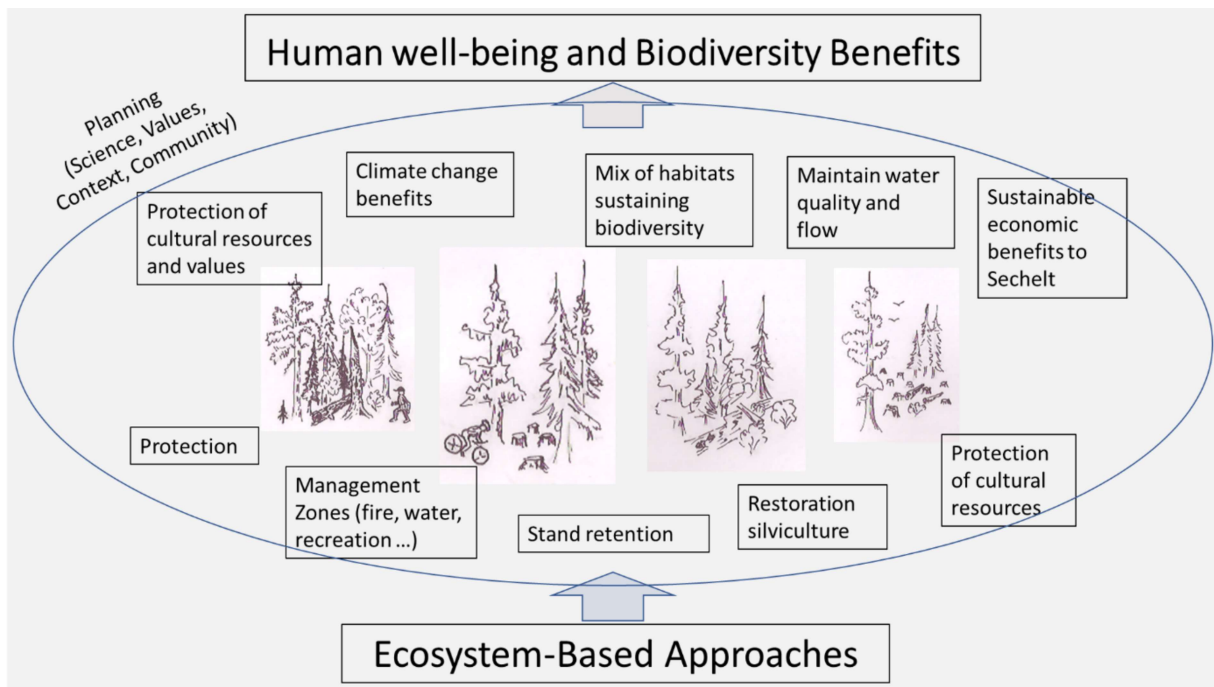
2. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SCCF FORESTS

- The SCCF lies within the swiya of the shíshálh Nation.
- SCCF falls within Natural Disturbance Type 2 (NDT2) – moderately wet ecosystems with infrequent fires occurring over moderate-size areas, with other smaller disturbances of wind, insects, and disease.
- Uplands may be rocky with shallow soils, but lowlands and gentle slopes tend to have deeper soils, providing rich and productive areas for trees, other plants, and animals.
- The SCCF is close to residential communities and heavily used for recreation and tourism, especially walking and mountain biking.
- Its proximity to communities and relatively gentle slopes made it accessible for a long history of logging – there is little old forest left within the SCCF.

3. EBM GOALS AND PHILOSOPHY

A forest management approach that follows EBM principles is intended to:

- Sustain healthy ecosystems,
- Maintain biodiversity,
- Maintain economic opportunity,
- Respect social values and
- Retain future options.



Those bullets are simple, but the ideas are complex:

- 'Ecosystem health' or 'ecosystem integrity' are not strictly scientific terms. Both refer to functioning self-sustaining ecosystems that if maintained, enhanced, or restored, will ensure productive sites in the long term and enable long term economic sustainability while providing resources to meet other human well-being values.
- 'Biodiversity' is a general concept, that encompasses all components of life. Here we refer to the diversity of living things – genes, populations and species, that permits sustained regenerative capacity, adding to ecosystem resilience and ability to adapt to stressors such as climate change.
- Sustainability depends on maintaining ecosystem productivity and functions.
 - Ecosystems are composed of plants and animals whose presence and abundance change over time with succession, competition, and natural disturbance and now even more with climate change. Ecosystems are not static and immutable, the values they support are dynamic and reflect changing conditions.
- Respecting social values is a necessary condition to the success of EBM. Through creating inclusive planning mechanics managers can learn more about the social values of a community and develop practices or propose mitigation measures that reflect the social climate. Social values and socioeconomic needs are inclusive parts achieved through inclusive planning.
- Approaches to EBM-based forest management must be adaptive to ever changing ecosystems, societal conditions and scientific knowledge while always maintaining the important pillars of functioning ecosystems and biodiversity.

4. EBM PLANNING SCALES

EBM involves multiple levels of planning, usually regional, landscape and site level.

- Regional and Landscape: The SCCF includes only a small portion of the Chapman and Sechelt Landscape Units (LU), approximately 14% of the Chapman LU and 1% of the Sechelt LU, and thus wishes to engage with shísháhlh, BC and Local Governments to identify or be aware of regional and LU objectives that are broader than the SCCF tenure areas.
- Tenure and site: Within the SCCF, consultation and co-planning with shísháhlh and local Ministry of Forests also will be sought. The planning scales within the SCCF include:
 - the tenure as a whole,
 - the three operating areas (Halfmoon Bay, Wilson Creek, and Angus/Chapman/Gray Creek)
 - site level planning for each block to be harvested.
- EBM requires planning through time, then revisiting plans as conditions, values, and knowledge change.

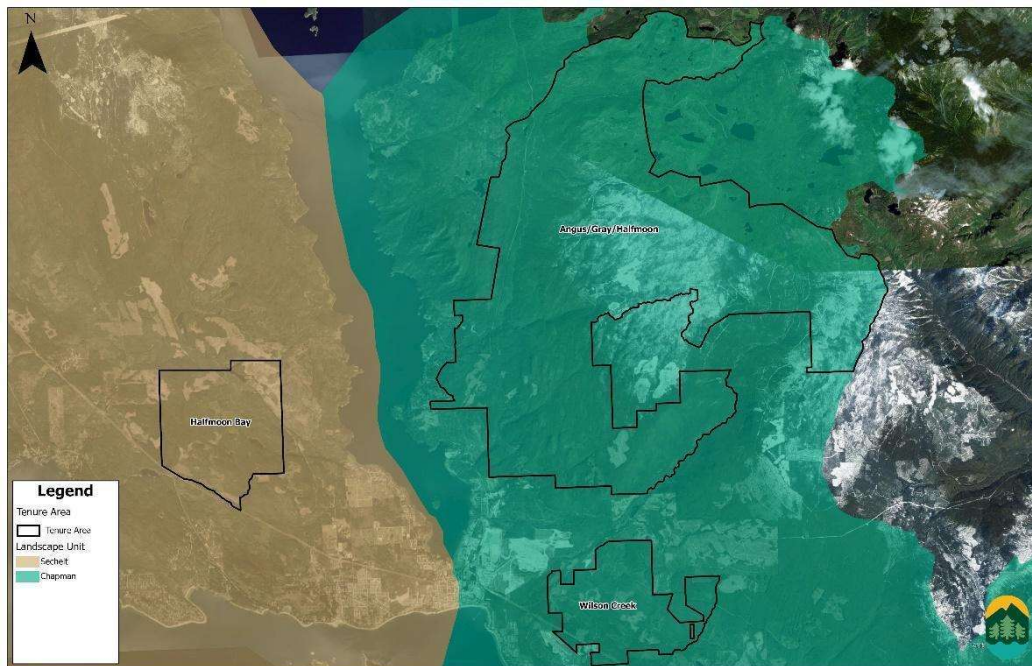


Figure 1: Sechelt and Chapman Landscape Unit overlapping the Sunshine Coast Community Forest.

4.1 Types of EBM planning

EBM Planning in the SCCF will involve identifying areas for protection, areas for special uses, and areas of timber focus.

Areas for protection:

- The SCCF does not harvest old forest (+ 250 years) and has not since 2006. The remaining old forest is protected and will remain protected.

- SCCF's aim is to protect 20% to 30% of the forest in hubs and corridors and to increase protection with stand level retention set aside as blocks are harvested.

The rationale for the levels of protection reflects the existing forest ages in the SCCF, the legal framework, and more recent science:

- Existing situation of forest ages: little old forest remains, particularly at low elevation, so it is important to identify areas to set aside to grow into old forest over time.
- Existing legal objectives: Sechelt and Chapman LUs have protected areas to meet low Biodiversity Emphasis Option (BEOs) targets (9% protected in the CWHxm1 and dm, 13% in the CWHvm, and 19% in the MHmm1).
 - These targets seem low to the SCCF considering public values, recent legal direction in other areas of B.C., and science.
 - If LUs containing the SCCF had been designated as High BEOs, then protection would have been closer to 20%.
 - Science underpinning targets in the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) suggest at least (30%) protection for similar ecosystems in the southern GBR area.

The SCCF has started identifying areas useful for old forest recruitment and protection. Maps, tables and supporting field work are being developed to show areas where harvesting will not happen to protect various values and will be shared to allow input to revise and expand upon the proposed reserve areas.

Special management zones: The SCCF has identified areas where recreation and water supply are main concerns. As well there are likely areas near community interfaces where protection from fire (or fuel control) may be a primary goal for communities. The SCCF envisions identifying zones with particular values that need special forest management approaches. shíshálh and community input will be needed to revise management zones and identify additional concerns that may need special forest management approaches.

Seral stage distribution: The SCCF has a goal of moving to a seral stage distribution recommended by the Biodiversity Guidebook for High BEO in NDT2 by maintaining at least 51% mature and old forest combined. The SCCF acknowledges the importance of having a sustainable seral distribution to support biodiversity and economics and recognizes moving towards that distribution will take time given the extent of past harvesting. Modeling may be necessary to predict timber flows over time to support serial distribution decisions.

Stand retention: Stand-level management will follow a variable retention harvest regime to retain forest structures and habitat elements in harvested stands to provide habitat for forest biota and allow faster recovery of harvested stands. Amounts of retention will depend on the values and context of each cutblock but may also reflect broader planning zones of higher or lower retention (e.g., more retention in recreation areas, less in timber emphasis areas).

4.2 Other Issues

- **Roads:**
 - Minimizing new roads is a goal and deactivating unnecessary roads. Managing existing roads will need to consider keeping access for the many recreation users.
 - Care must be taken to plan management of water pathways given increased storm intensities.
- **Annual Allowable Cut**
 - EBM principles suggest the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) (the amount that is meant to be harvested each year) should not be an a-priori target, but rather flow from the planning process that considers desired economic returns and community values in a context where maintaining ecosystem productivity and biodiversity are of paramount importance. Following EBM often requires Forest Licensees to exceed Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) legal requirements for conservation and thus normally reduces the ability to achieve AACs that were set in absence of EBM planning. Because the SCCF is governed by a board of directors and provides income to the community of Sechelt and employs locals, this adoption of EBM and reduction in AAC requires their approval.
 - Ecosystem Services other than the goods associated with timber tend to be undervalued. Reductions in AAC are offset by increases to ecological function through carbon storage, nutrient cycling, water and air purification and maintenance of wildlife habitat. Additionally, the social and cultural benefits and opportunities, such as recreation, traditional resource use and spirituality can generate AAC offsets. While many of these are intrinsic and can be difficult to finically quantify, valuation models on the financial benefit of ecological function and social and cultural benefits can be derived.

5. Engagement

5.1 Stakeholders:

Stakeholders that should be engaged to inform the SCCF EBM Framework are:

- **Planning Team-** Comprised of representatives made up of SCCF Directors, SCCF Management, our EBM Technical support (L. Kremsater/A. Yuill), and Community Engagement Coordinator Representative (A. LaValle)
- **Governments with Regulatory authority influencing SCCF EBM decisions**
 - BC Government - regulates the forests in which the SCCF operates and thus requires their support for EBM to function as proposed.
 - shíshálh Nation – Chief and elected council. SCCF operates within the swiya (traditional territory) of the shíshálh Nation. SCCF works collaboratively with shíshálh Nation and with the Province on Shared Decisions within the swiya.
- **District of Sechelt** – The sole shareholder of the SCCF.
- **Other Governments** – Some issues important to the community overlap with areas that will be outside our tenure, and therefore are out of scope for SCCF EBM initiative. The SCCF will solicit feedback from these governments during development of the EBM plan.

- Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) – Shares recreation management with the Provincial authority: Recreation, Sites and Trails BC within the SCCF Tenure. The SCRCD also manages regional drinking water supply, and fire planning, and SCCF EBM planning can overlap with SCRCD interests and planning in these topics.
- **Public/Community** - Communication and solicitation of input to the EBM plan is paramount with the SCCF EBM Initiative. As of May 2022, a SCCF Community Engagement Working Group has been established comprised of 3 Board Members, The SCCF Operations Manager (W. Hansen) and Community Engagement contractors (A. LaValle/R. Klady).
- **Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP)** - In 2021 the SCCF Board of Directors approved an initiative to develop a Citizen Advisory Panel comprised of a selected group of citizens that will have an ongoing relationship (2-year commitment), meeting quarterly to provide non-binding recommendations to the SCCF Board. Individuals will be selected as representing a stakeholder typology and with knowledge and expertise in a range of areas (Examples include but are not limited to: different recreational user group representatives, professionals engaged in forestry, ecotourism, or other forest-based business, and shíshálh traditional knowledge keepers; additional information on selection criteria in Section 5.2.

5.2 Engagement Processes:

Beginning in June 2022, a goal of the SCCF Communications Working Group (CWG) is to collaborate on a Strategic Community Engagement Plan ultimately to be SCCF Board approved. We are beginning this process with 1-on-1 interviews with board members, recent Board alumni and key stakeholders to gather information on (a) lessons learned from previous engagement processes, (b) highest ranking priorities from statements made by SCCF leadership (c) ideas for metrics of success of effective community engagement.

Methods recommended and already underway:

- Interviews
- Deep Democracy facilitated events for the SCCF Board and other Group Events
- Outreach and sign-up forms at local events during 2022
- Block walks for upcoming harvest blocks led by SCCF staff/contractors
- Forest walk series led by shíshálh business owner and traditional knowledge keeper (C. Campo)
- New website including interactive maps, EBM research findings, and invitations and registration for events to collect contact information of members of the public interested in events.
- Outreach to local community groups and neighboring jurisdictions to offer presentation and Q/A on EBM during their meetings/event (e.g. SCRCD, SC Labour Council, shíshálh)

Additional methods recommended; being discussed with CWG

- Focus Groups to inform 2022 version of the Ecosystem Based Management Plan.
- Campaigns to increasing newsletter subscribership, website traffic and social media following
- Biweekly or weekly advertorials in the Coast Reporter with history, interviews, and events

Recommendations to be discussed with CWG for the CAP

- Using knowledge captured from all other methods, develop a list of stakeholders who may be appropriate for the longer-term commitment sought from a Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP) for long range planning/research/policy recommendations. The CAP member selection criteria will be based on:
 - Knowledge and leadership in a particular area of expertise (e.g., professional, cultural, recreational use, etc), with a wide range of stakeholder representatives
 - Willingness to engage in a 2-yr commitment to develop recommendations for the Board, and
 - Ability to work collaboratively within a group and commitment to experimenting with practices such as Deep Democracy (developing safe spaces for listening and respect) and Alternative Futures (collective decision making through future modeling and tradeoff analysis).
- The CWG may need to develop a more specifically defined Terms of Reference than currently exists for CAP participants which emphasizes commitments to respectful discourse as well as consider terms CAP participants might want to add. Once established, CAP monthly meetings will focus on long term visioning of the SCCF, and develop evidence-based future scenarios with recommendations, metrics and tradeoffs. SCCF Board of Directors and staff can use options from CAP recommendations and research for future EBM strategic and operations planning.

6. Summary

The SCCF looks forward to shísháhlh Nation and community inputs. We look forward to meeting with interested parties to discuss current levels of protection and old forest in the SCCF and share the starting designs for old forest recruitment, protection, and special management zones so that ideas can be revised and expanded.

EBM Steps

EBM Progress

