



British Columbia Community Forest Association Annual General Meeting May 26, 2018

President's Report

Prepared by Jennifer Gunter, Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors by President, Erik Leslie

This time last year, we had a sense that the policy environment within which community forests operate was changing. The provincial election was behind us, but it would be several tumultuous weeks before a new NDP government would be sworn in. And during that time, a provincial state of emergency was declared.

The wildfires of 2017 burned more than 1.2 million hectares and caused the evacuation of 65,000 people. The estimated cost of fighting wildfires in 2017 was \$568 million, a figure that does not begin to address the associated costs of lost tourism, economic disruptions or the social costs.¹ Fires burned on 8 community forests, with Clinton and Harrop-Procter being the hardest hit. Clinton saw 24% of its total area burn, while Harrop-Procter's fire burned 20% of the community forest's total area.

According to the report of the BC Flood and Wildfire Review, the wildfires of 2017 emitted an estimated 190 million tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere – almost triple BC's annual carbon footprint. Co-chairs of the review, George Abbott and Chief Maureen Chapman, explain that "Solutions will be neither easy more inexpensive, but in the absence of substantial new investment we can expect that the costs of wildfire suppression, and losses to citizens and the provincial economy, will continue to grow".

For many years the BCCFA has advocated for a stronger role for communities and community forests in land stewardship and wildfire mitigation. The events of 2017 have strengthened our resolve to promote community forests as a strategy for community economic development and for the mitigation of environmental disasters such as wildfires in the forests around communities.

¹ BC Flood and Wildfire Review. April 2018. "Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia. Report and Findings of the BC Flood and Wildfire Review: an independent review examining the 2017 flood and wildfire seasons.

Given the changes in government, BCCFA staff and directors have focused their energy in the past year on external relations and government policy. Several policy review and stakeholder engagement processes were initiated that were directly relevant to community forests. Areas of focus for us included:

- Wildfire mitigation and how community forests and other community-based and small area-based tenures can play a greater role in community protection and climate change adaptation;
- Indigenous relations and how community forestry can help build better relationships and create partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; and
- Rural development, and the benefits of giving communities the tangible asset of the CFA to leverage into community economic development opportunities

The day to day activities of the Association are detailed in the monthly Executive Directors Reports that are shared with our membership via the newsletter. Please refer to those reports for details, and feel free to follow up with our Executive Director Jennifer Gunter with any questions you may have.

This year the Presidents' Report will highlight the significant opportunities the BCCFA had this past year to engage with the new Government in policy review.

Thank you

As a member driven organization, we thank each member community, as well as our associate and supplier members, for your support and contributions to our work.

President's Report 2018

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1. Public Policy and Stakeholder Engagement of the Past Year

1.1. First Nations Reconciliation

As part of the Government's effort to promote true, lasting reconciliation with First Nations in BC, a new commitment was made to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. All ministers are responsible for moving forward on the calls to action and reviewing policies, programs, and legislation to determine how to bring the principles of the declaration into action in BC. This is an important lens through which community forest management and the growth of the community forest program will be viewed.

1.2. BC Wildfire After Action Review

After the 2107 wildfire season, an after action review was initiated. It included multiple opportunities for input from the BCCFA and our members. According to the B.C. Government, "the after action review process is a critical part of the iterative cycle of emergency management and serves to provide a quality improvement process relating to emergency management activities. The process also serves to recognize the efforts of those involved in the event while avoiding the placement of blame on individuals or organizations." Our input to the after action review is summarized below.

1.3. BC Flood and Wildfire Review

A component of the after action review process was an independent and strategic review of flood and wildfire practices in the Province. It was led by an independent team, co-chaired by George Abbott and Chief Maureen Chapman. The review examined provincial and local government emergency management systems, statutes, regulations, policy, and leadership practices.

The reasons to expand the community forest program by establishing new CFAs and increasing the size of existing ones are numerous. But with the fire season of 2017 front of mind and predictions of hot, dry conditions moving forward, the need to address wildfire hazard is urgent. This connection was made by Co-chairs George Abbott and Chief Maureen Chapman in the BC Flood and Wildfire Review. Their recently published report and findings, "Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia" (April 30, 2018), recommend that the provincial government: "Encourage the establishment of area-based tenures adjacent to Indigenous reserves and non-Indigenous communities, where not already established as community forests, woodlots, tree farm licences or First Nation woodland licences. This recommendation encourages and expansion in the number of community forest tenures adjacent to communities" (P 95). They recommend that government make this "strategic shift" in land stewardship to increase our capacity to mitigate wildfire.

Only 10% of the hectares identified as moderate to high-risk have been treated. The estimated cost of treating all remaining areas is \$6.7 billion. A core question the Government of British Columbia faces concerning community safety then is, "How can wildland urban interface areas be treated more quickly and at lower cost on a per hectare basis?" The report states that the expansion of the community forest program should be among the components of new more successful approach.

1.4. Rural Development Engagement

Another significant shift that has occurred is the elevation of rural development in the government's mandate, evidenced by the name change to the Ministry Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

A Rural Development Engagement was launched this past year, and the BCCFA provided input in meetings and in a written submission. "The B.C. Government committed to developing a long-term, durable Rural Development Strategy that works for all rural British Columbians and helps rural and Indigenous communities build their capacity to create resilient, sustainable futures."²

Rural Development, Lands and Innovation Division of MFLRNORD is overseeing the development of the new strategy. Over the past year, they have sought input on topics like youth opportunities, Indigenous partnerships, services and technology, access to capital, and natural resources. A report is expected in Spring 2018, with will be used to "build a framework for the Rural Development Strategy. This framework will support ongoing dialogue in finalizing and implementing the strategy."

1.5. Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation

² <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/ruraldevelopment/>

The Province has initiated an engagement process and bringing stakeholders together in the early stages of a review of provincial policy to improve wildlife management. The areas of discussion are: species at risk legislation, wildlife and habitat conservation, and caribou recovery. The review covers 3 key wildlife initiatives: Caribou Recovery, Species at Risk, Wildlife Management & Habitat Conservation.

2. BCCFA's Key Messages and Recommendations:

The key messages and recommendations the BCCFA made to all these engagement processes were consistent. They are summarized here.

Community forests are a tangible way to promote rural development and forest stewardship. By giving more forest and land management rights to rural and Indigenous communities, the BC Government can help to foster self-reliance, and meet its commitment to rural and Indigenous communities to build their capacity to create a resilient, sustainable future.

Community forests are a powerful tool for:

- Building partnerships with Indigenous communities;
- Energizing rural development;
- Protecting communities from catastrophic wildfire and adapting to climate change.

Given the successes of BC's community forests to date, and the ability of the community forest model to achieve multiple, complimentary goals, we offered the following recommendations to the BC Government:

1. Establish new community forests and expand the size of existing ones. Consider a 10 km zone around communities where community-based tenures - community forests, First Nations woodlands licences and woodlots, are prioritized as a core strategy to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities.
 - A. Approve long-awaited amendments to the Community Tenures Regulation to allow for the expansion of existing CFAs.
 - B. Begin by identifying 6 new or expanded community forests. Issue licences by 2021. We recommend that MFLNRORD, in collaboration with the BCCFA, determine locations where optimum conditions exist for new and expanded community forests: First Nations partnerships and/or support; high & extreme fire threat; local capacity; provincial land; ease of implementation. New community forests must be set up for success, ensuring they can be economically viable businesses from the outset.
 - C. Undertake cost/benefit analysis of community forest program expansion. To gain better understanding of the full scope of outcomes and benefits that rural communities and the province could expect from a broader expansion of the community forest program, a cost/benefit analysis should be completed.
 - D. Include a plan to scale up the community forest program in the BC Rural Development Strategy. State government's intention to increase the size of the community forest program. The strategy can articulate an intention to make the CFA tenure available to all communities in the long term

that can demonstrate capacity and commitment to Provincial Goals of the community forest program. Focusing on the land directly adjacent to these communities, making the community-based tenures a core strategy to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities and support rural development.

2. Support community forests to invest in wildfire hazard reduction by increasing the funding directly available to them and streamlining the administrative process. This must include removing the inefficiencies within the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative and reconciling overlaps with funding from the Forest Enhancement Society.
3. Support community forest agreement holders to also invest in activities such as rehabilitation, carbon sequestration, intensive silviculture, and economic diversification by continuing to provide access to provincial funding programs.
4. Review the legal and regulatory frameworks to prioritize community protection in the Wildland Urban Interface. The risk of wildfire must be considered when carrying out forest planning and practices in the WUI and at the landscape scale.
5. Engage with the BCCFA to identify long-term solutions that will create fire adapted communities and fire-resilient ecosystems and landscapes.
6. Prioritize reliable, fast internet connectivity for rural and remote communities. Communication infrastructure is critical for rural development, and it is also vital to forest managers as new technology is developed.

We have met directly with Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to convey these messages and look forward to his address at our 2018 Conference.

3. Highlights of Other BCCFA Activities

3.1. Indicators Survey

Among the best measures of success for the BCCFA are the accomplishments of our members. The Community Forest Indicators Report summarizes the broad range of creative and innovative things our members are doing, and the substantial contributions they are making to their communities.

This year we completed our fourth annual survey. The BCCFA initiated this project in 2013, working with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, independent advisors and community forest practitioners, to come up with 18 indicators that provide tangible information on benefits that community forests bring to their communities and to the province. We identified the most common and easy to measure indicators that can be applied regardless of the organizational structure of a community forest or the location and ecosystem characteristics of the land base.

A summary of the results of the survey will be shared during our conference in Burns Lake, and the full results published in the coming months. The data collected is pivotal to our Association's advocacy work.

3.2. Extension Materials

With support from MFLNRORD, we published a new resource entitled “Building Relationships and Cultivating Social Licence: A Guide for Small Tenure Holders In BC”

This guide for small tenure holders (CFAs, First Nations Woodlands Licences and Woodlot Licences) identifies opportunities to cultivate social licence and provides a variety of tools that can be used in communities to better engage and cooperate with community members and interest groups. Engagement beyond the legal requirements for small tenures requires an investment in time, resources, and personal effort. However, the benefits of stronger and more enduring outcomes and relationships can be worth the investment.

The guide was developed for managers of small tenures in BC who are working closely with local communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as well as provincial, federal, and municipal agencies. It provides examples of lessons learned and key concepts that will help guide managers in the process of cultivating social licence using a range of participatory approaches.

3.3. Funding for CFAs

Through the year, we made sure that community forests had up to date information about and access to funding available through a number of programs, including Land Based Investment - Forests of Tomorrow; Forest Enhancement Society BC and the Rural Dividend. This work continues, with emphasis on the message that funding administration be streamlined.

3.4. Annual Conference & AGM

The BCCFA’s annual conferences & AGM are an essential tool for sharing information, learning new skills, discussing provincial policy and charting the future of community forestry in BC. We are grateful to the Tumbler Ridge Community Forest hosting a terrific conference last year.

The Conference Report which includes a summary of all the presentations, links to the presentations and a collections of conference photos is posted on the BCCFA website at

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/8d3c1795fbd9c194ca5007d5b/files/b19dc111-1111-425e-9b53-adcfef484a10/donaldson_mandate.pdf

4. BCCFA Workplan Topics

The following is a list of topics that comprise BCCFA's ongoing work, organized according to the focus areas of our Strategic Plan.

External Relations and Government Policy

Files in this focus area included:

- Wildfire Management
- Rural Development
- CFA Program Expansion
- Community Forest Indicators Survey
- Board & FLNRO meetings
- Tabular Rates
- Legislation & Regulation on Reduced Volume Condition Licences
- Land Based Investment & funding opportunities including Forest Enhancement Society BC
- Woodlot and Community Forest Safety Advisory Committee
- Logging Residue and Waste Measurement Review Project
- Community Tenures Regulation – enabling CFA size increases

Member Services

Files in this focus area included:

- Fee for Service Program
- New guide on Cultivating Social Licence
- Annual BCCFA Conference
- Extension services – general member support
- Communications – website & newsletters
- Membership management & recruitment
- UBC Extension Project
- UBC Forest Internship Program

Education

Files in this focus area included

- Union of BC Municipalities 2017 Convention & Tradeshow
- Presentations at events like the Vancouver Island Wood Forum
- National Forest Week
- Indicators Report

Operations and Governance

Files in this focus area included:

- Association Financial Sustainability
- Proposed bylaw changes to transition to the new Societies Act
- Board policy development
- Strategic Plan review