

BC Community Forest Association's Key Recommendations & Priorities

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Community forest agreements (CFAs), managed by local governments, First Nations, and community organizations, are a powerful tool for:

- Building partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities;
- Reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire to communities and building climate-resilient communities; and
- Energizing rural development.

Background

- CFAs allow local communities to manage local forests, incorporating economic, environmental, and cultural values.
- Since 1998, BC has issued 61 CFAs, managed by diverse community entities, comprising 3% of the provincial allowable cut.
- CFAs support Indigenous rights and cooperation, boost local economies, and enhance forest resilience.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Expand the CFA Program

Make CFAs widely available to communities and First Nations, particularly in a proposed 10 km zone around communities for wildfire mitigation and rural development¹. This pragmatic and important vision can be realized through a strategy to re-apportion AAC to create new community forests and to expand existing ones. Recent legislative changes² support this path if coupled with upfront government investment. This expansion will significantly contribute to reducing wildfire risks and fostering local economic growth.

2. Effective Wildfire Risk Reduction

Continue supporting wildfire risk reduction in CFAs by providing multi-year funding and work with the BCCFA to ensure that regulations support effective management of the wildland urban interface. CFAs play a key role in mitigating wildfire risks and should be empowered to strengthen this capacity. Through the BCCFA & BC Wildfire Service Partnership, continue to enhance the positive role of CFAs in wildfire preparedness, prevention, response and recovery.

3. Maintain Stumpage Rates for CFAs

Preserve the current timber pricing policy (tabular rate stumpage), which is crucial for CFAs to operate sustainably, create local jobs, and provide economic benefits while managing for multiple values on the land.

¹ The Union of BC Municipalities and the BC Flood and Wildfire Review made the same recommendation.

² The Forest Amendment Act, 2021

The BCCFA must remain engaged in forest policy reform discussions in BC to ensure new policies support innovation and community forest operations. Empowering Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to build new community forest partnerships and to incorporate Western science and Indigenous knowledge to enhance ecosystem health is essential. A flexible approach to ecosystem management is needed to address natural disturbances, climate change, and community safety, with an emphasis on active forest management. Additionally, investing in improved data and transparency in policy implementation will support informed land use decisions.

The Case for Community Forest Program Expansion

Expansion of the CFA program will empower local forest stewardship and support the development of vibrant rural communities. Creating access for more rural and Indigenous communities to have a community forest will:

- Strengthen the Social Contract: Local resource control and benefits reinforce community connections.
- Boost Partnerships: More Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborations.
- Diversify Tenure: Stabilize local economies and attract manufacturing.
- Increase Domestic Log Supply: Contribute to a steady supply for local processing.

Conclusion

CFAs are crucial for local resource management, sustainability, and resilience. Expanding the number of CFAs will support First Nations reconciliation, help to create a sustainable forest sector, and strengthen community ties. The BCCFA is committed to collaborating on these goals for effective, modern land stewardship.



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