

INITIAL COMMUNITY ACTIONS

March 2012

PROBLEM

During the 2011 *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities: A conversation on BC forests* (HFHC) dialogue sessions, a common theme evolved that **“Communities want more influence on decisions regarding management of local forests.”** Achieving this overall objective will require communities to establish respected consultative structures within the community to act as a primary source of community views on forest management decisions relative to local-regional forest lands.

SUGGESTIONS

Communities will have varying local situations, relationships, etc and may find different ways of achieving the overall objective. The following are presented as ideas-suggestions for consideration by community organizations, local government(s) and concerned citizens:

- **Forest Lands Vision**

A vision, with associated goals to measure performance, for the local-regional forest lands is **essential** and must be developed to guide forest operations and land use decisions, identify barriers and knowledge gaps, etc. It sets the stage for forest lands decisions. Without a clearly defined vision and goals that the majority of the community residents accept as reflective of local community needs, the community input will:

- Result in inefficiency in achieving acceptable community needs
- Send a message to decision-makers there is no general agreement so they can ignore the advice
- Create a situation where “trade-offs” are not understood or not considered

- **Community Forestry Advisory Group/Committee**

Community residents are clearly concerned about their local-regional forests, albeit frequently focused on issues other than forestry. Forestry and forest management is not simple and requires knowledge, both professional and community. An efficient way to bring the forestry issues to all community residents is to establish a group or committee that:

- Builds knowledge about their forest lands and addresses issues in an informed manner
- Communicates efficiently and effectively with local government, decision-makers and community residents
- Creates a draft forest lands vision and goals for review by local community members, First Nations, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO), the forest industry and other local stakeholders

Communities need a means of bringing issues to the forefront, providing an opportunity to share their views as community input to decision-makers. An Advisory Group or Committee is one mechanism to do so. This Group or Committee can be a formal instrument of local

government or advisory to the MFLNRO District office. Regardless of the model, it does need to be respected by local government, MFLNRO and the forest industry.

- **Community Capacity Building Mechanism**

Communities, providing advice on forest lands issues and decisions, need to be informed about forestry, the forest sector, the state of local-regional forests, forest management and forest certification. Although there has been significant resources spent on this issue over the last few decades, a gap in knowledge was identified frequently during the 2011 HFHC Community Dialogue Sessions. There are a number of organizations (e.g., Government, forest industry, professional associations, forest extension organizations, academics) with the mandates to provide information on forestry. However, the funding allocated to this activity has been limited over the recent years and expected to continue through the near future. This suggests a new model is needed involving collaboration between these organizations and encouraging participation of academics and professionals. Partnership support, non-financial and financial, from forest dependent communities along with Government and the forest industry should be encouraged to deliver on the community capacity needs.

- **Provincial forest lands issues**

Communities currently have the opportunity to influence action in a number of local forest lands issues. However, these can be enhanced by changes to Provincial legislation, regulation and/or policies. Communities are best equipped to identify the priorities in these areas, once informed through advice from forest professionals. Communities should encourage these changes by bringing forward priorities and lobbying for UBCM AGM resolutions and following-up regarding assurance Government will take the necessary action(s).

Visit the HFHC website for examples of actual actions taken by BC communities.



HEALTHY FORESTS-HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: A CONVERSATION ON BC FORESTS

2011 ACTIVITIES SUMMARY REPORT

W.W. (Bill) Bourgeois, PhD, RPF
HFHC Coordinator
January 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BC Crown lands represent 94% of the Province. The public expects the Provincial Government to manage these lands in the public's best interest (i.e., management will be done in such a manner as to protect social, cultural and economic values over the long term and provide the BC residents with expected products and services). The demands can be summarized in the overall objective of achieving healthy and resilient communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), which depend on conservation and use of healthy forests. This is commonly reflected in the practice of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). Concerns began in 2009 regarding the future of BC forest lands by groups with a wide range of perspectives. This generated the *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities* initiative (HFHC).

The HFHC was initiated in January 2011 as a non-partisan, volunteer supported initiative to provide an opportunity for communities and concerned citizens to inform decision-makers of their views and concerns regarding management of BC forests. Over 150 volunteers across BC contributed to delivery of the HFHC through providing expert opinions based on experience and science and community views arising from local experiences. Twenty-seven (27) Background Briefs were provided by experts in various fields of forest lands management as information for use by participants in the 20 Community Dialogue Sessions held across all regions of the Province.

The results of the input from experts, communities and concerned citizens included:

- A forest lands vision to guide legislation, regulation, policies, practices and plans
- A framework brief for use in evaluating BC forest lands management
- Twelve (12) key challenges arising from the expert opinion Background Briefs
- Six (6) priority community issues arising from the Dialogue Sessions regarding the management of local-regional forest lands
- A number of suggested actions by decision-makers to address the priority issues

The 2011 HFHC activities generated six (6) conclusions:

- 1) The concern over the future of BC forest lands is shared by a wide range of BC residents (professional foresters and biologists, academics, First Nations, youth and communities), including a move away from a short-term forest industry economic focus to a long-term stewardship focus while addressing current economic challenges
- 2) There is a need for a Government approved vision for BC forest lands to guide legislation, regulation, policies and practices
- 3) Experts in the fields of forest management are of the view more needs to be done regarding forest management to achieve the draft BC forest lands vision and deliver on the needs of communities over the long-term
- 4) The concerns of communities are consistent throughout the Province with key issues related to communities needs
- 5) Decision-makers and communities are confronted with a number of challenges due to the current and foreseeable future provincial economic situation, thereby necessitating innovation and transformative change in the long-term management of BC forest lands
- 6) More specific suggested actions are required to give guidance to decision-makers

Recommendations are:

- 1) Political parties engage in dialogue with communities and concerned citizens regarding community and family long-term needs
- 2) Government review the legislation, regulation and policies to be consistent with the focus on long-term forest lands stewardship
- 3) Government adopt the requirement for a forest lands vision to guide legislation, regulation and policy
- 4) Decision-makers adopt the key messages and challenges identified though the HFHC
- 5) Decision-makers establish opportunities to bring together people to generate innovative ideas to address issues and challenges
- 6) Communities identify initiatives to assist in providing clarity regarding what is needed from local-regional forest lands and mechanisms to become more involved in forest management decisions
- 7) Professional associations and academia consider development of a program to provide assistance to communities

A 2012 activities plan is presented to build on the results from 2011.