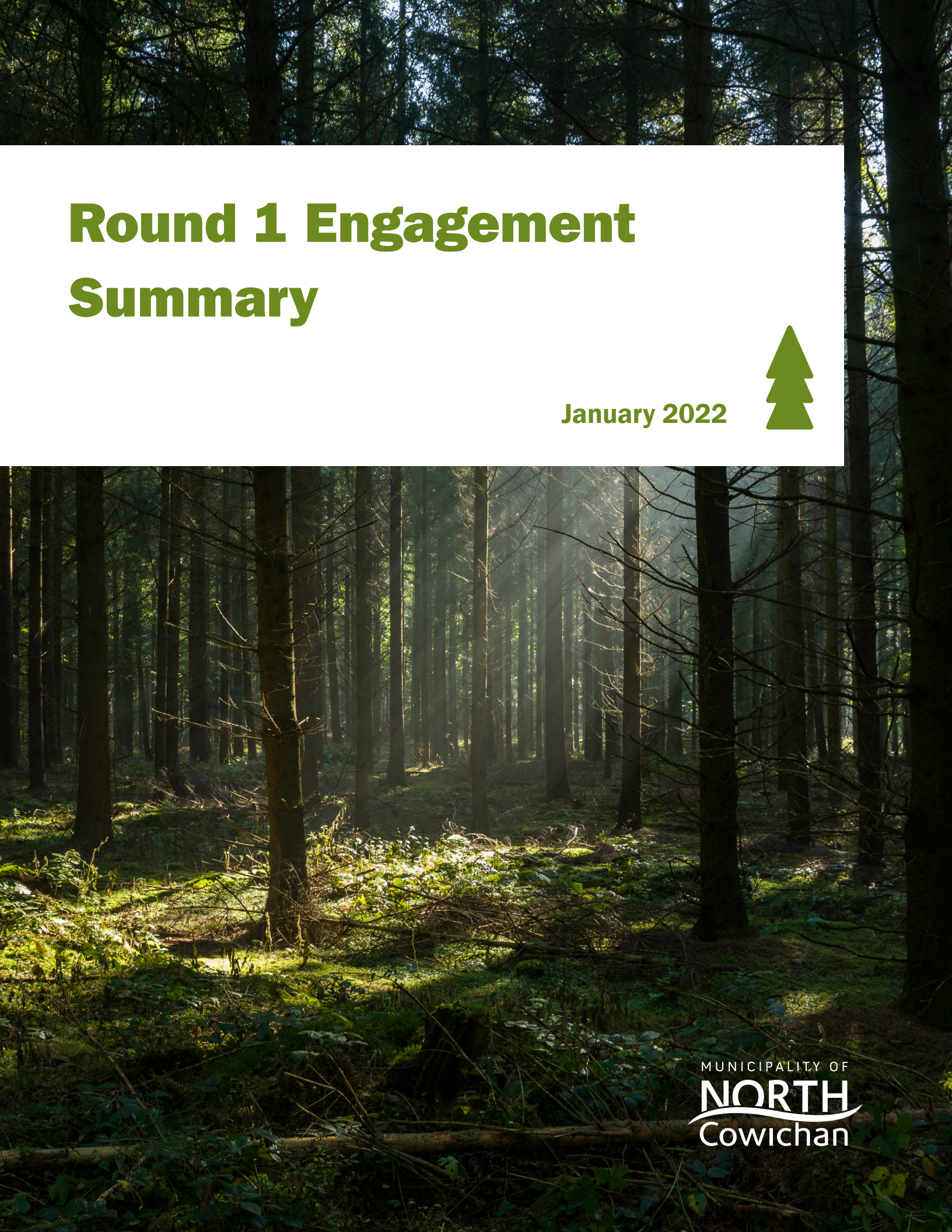
Round 1 Engagement Summary

January 2022



MUNICIPALITY OF
NORTH
Cowichan

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Overview

Introduction

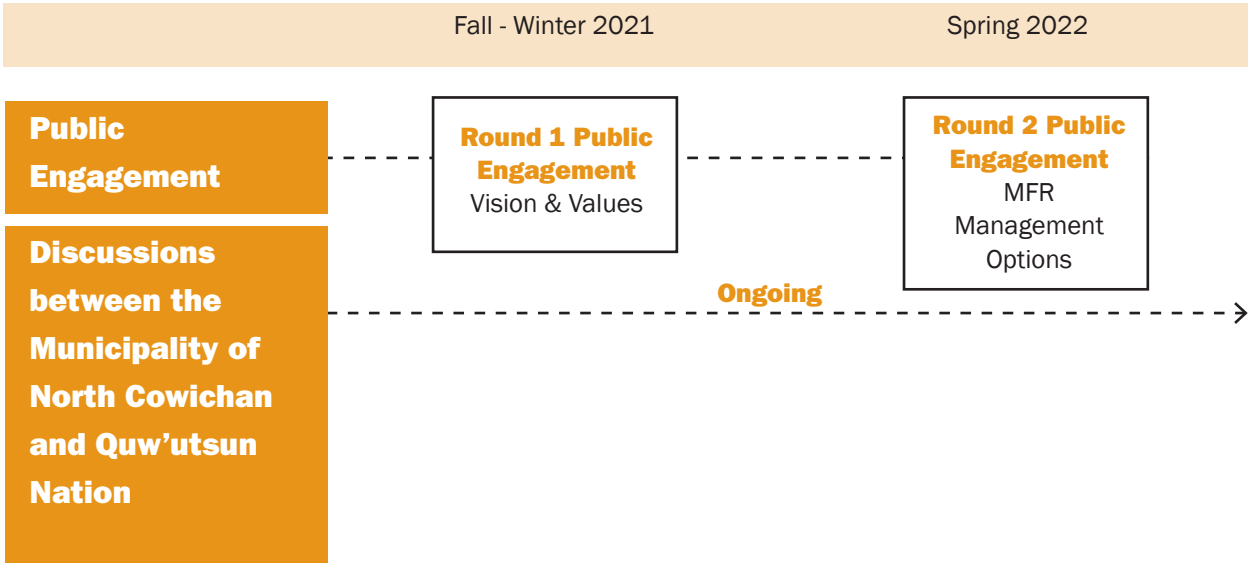
The Municipality of North Cowichan (MNC) is exploring options for the management of the Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR) through a technical review and a broad and deep public engagement process. The public engagement process is taking place in two rounds, the first of which took place in November and December of 2021 and focused on understanding the public's values and vision for the future of the MFR. This report includes a description of the public engagement process, a summary of results from each engagement activities, and overall conclusions that capture the common themes across all the engagement opportunities. Full detailed engagement results are provided in the appendices.

This engagement summary will be used by the UBC Partnership Group to inform the development of scenario options for forest management.

First Nations Consultation

Separate from the public engagement process and starting in 2020, the Municipality of North Cowichan and the Quw'utsun Nation undertook Government-to-Government discussions. In August 2021, these discussions resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the establishment of a Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR) Working Group to share information in relationship to the stewardship and use of the MFR for the benefit of the community. First Nations interests within the project are also included in discussions through their representation on the Forest Advisory Committee.

Engagement Timeline



Engagement Working Group

Early in the process, an Engagement Working Group (EWG) made up of North Cowichan residents was assembled to help provide input into the engagement process. The members of the EWG participated in four meetings with the consulting team to discuss the engagement process, the information going to the public (discussion guide and online survey), how to get the word out about opportunities, and how to best include everyone. The Municipality of North Cowichan would like to thank the EWG for all of their ongoing contributions to the community engagement materials and process.



4 Engagement Working Group Meetings

Andrew Sawden
Bruce Coates
Dan Williams
Deb Savory Wright
Larry McIntosh
Michael Petereit
Paul Tataryn
Rhonda Hittinger
Rick Martinson
Robert Fullerton
Roger Wiles
Sally Leigh-Spencer
Sharon Horsburgh

Outreach

This project included significant community outreach including:



11 print ads in Cowichan Valley Citizen, Cowichan Valley Voice, and Chemainus Valley Courier

3 updates to project email list

9 social media posts and ads on Facebook and Instagram

8 posts on North Cowichan's Twitter account

2 news articles in Cowichan Valley Citizen and The Discourse

Participation

There were a total of **1,275 public interactions** during Round 1 of engagement on the future management of the Municpal Forest Reserve including:



110 participants in **4** online workshops

IAP2 level: Involve

Workshops were held on:

Wed. Nov. 24	6:30-8:30pm
Sat. Nov. 27	10:00am-12:00pm
Sat. Nov. 27	2:00-4:00pm
Thurs. Dec. 2	6:30-8:30pm



1,145 online survey responses

IAP2 level: Consult

An online survey was open for three weeks - from November 22 to December 13, 2021.



19 interviews with stakeholders

IAP2 level: Consult

Stakeholder interviews were conducted from March to June 2020.

Stakeholder Interview Summary

Overview

19 stakeholder interviews were held between March 10, 2020 and June 29, 2020. The interviews included a wide variety of interested parties and stakeholders to help provide a better understanding of the full range of what people value about the Municipal Forest Reserve, the best ways to reach out to interested parties and the public to make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate, and ask who else should be made aware of this public engagement process.

Participants included:

1. Chemainus Resident's Association, March 10, 2020
2. Quamichan Lake Neighbourhood Association, March 6, 2020
3. Maple Bay Community Association, May 21, 2020
4. Crofton Community Centre Residents Association, May 21, 2020
5. BC Community Forest Association, April 28, 2020
6. Paper Excellence (formerly Catalyst Paper Mill), May 21, 2020
7. Mosaic Log Sort - Crofton and Chemainus, Letter submitted May 7, 2020
8. United Steelworkers Union Local 1-1937, June 8, 2020
9. Bahnmann Timber (secondary producer), June 11, 2020
10. Cowichan Works, May 25, 2020
11. Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce – May 5, 2020
12. Tourism Cowichan, March 10, 2020
13. Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, March 10, 2020
14. Cowichan Community Land Trust, March 10, 2020
15. Where Do We Stand, March 10, 2020
16. Nature Conservancy of Canada, March 10, 2020
17. Cowichan Stewardship Round Table, June 1, 2020
18. Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, June 8, 2020
19. Cowichan Watershed Board, June 29, 2020

Note: The Cowichan Bed and Breakfast Association was invited to participate in an interview but did not accept.

Complete details can be reviewed in **Appendix D.**

Questions

1. We are trying to better understand what people value about the MFR. Can you tell me a little bit about what you and/or your organization value about the MFR?
2. Do you think others share those values? Who?
3. What other things do you think people in North Cowichan value about the MFR?
4. What do you see as the future for the MFR?
5. We are seeking to include a wide range of perspectives. We want to make sure we are inclusive in the public engagement process.
    - What would a robust and fair engagement process look like to you?
    - Do you have any suggestions for organizations we need to notify and include?
    - Do you have any suggestions for locations, events, or outreach opportunities that would help get the word out on the project?
    - Would you be willing to circulate information to your networks?
    - Where do you currently get your information on the Municipal Forest Reserve?
    - Are you aware of the PlaceSpeak topic?
    - Do you follow any of North Cowichan's social media channels? (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram?)

High Level Summary of Interviews

Concerns (in no particular order)

- Visual impacts of logging
- Possible tax implications of less logging
- Possible implications on forestry employment
- Implications to general fund, management, stewardship, and trails if there is less logging
- Need for ongoing engagement, transparency, and decisions published around site selection and cutblocks
- Impacts of climate change on the forest
- Wildfire mitigation and risks
- Impacts of motorized vehicles
- Clear cutting
- Threatened ecosystems
- Protection of sacred and archaeological sites in the MFR
- Indigenous Rights and Title
- Truth and Reconciliation

Values (in no particular order)

- Interest in greater transparency from the Municipal forestry department
- North Cowichan's MFR enjoys greater flexibility, control and financial benefit than community forests or TFLs offer
- MFR is felt to be managed well with good forestry practices.
- Revenue contributes significantly to the trails system and stewardship
- Forest is really important for tourism and economy
- Forest is important to local identity
- Forest is important to local environment, biodiversity, and climate change
- There is recognition that wildfire mitigation is important
- The forest is important to the health of the entire watershed and fish populations
- The health of the forest as a place to harvest medicines
- Low impact recreation opportunities are important
- Everything is connected - An integrated view of the forest is important
- The forest presents an opportunity to build a better future and relationship between the Municipality and Indigenous peoples

Future Vision (in no particular order)

- Forestry management should reflect community values and aspirations
- Need for a balanced approach to forest management
- Need for low impact recreation opportunities that protect the ecological health of the forest
- There should be progressive, ecological forest management
- Need to be sensitive to the environmental sides of the issue
- Need to ensure the visual impacts are considered
- Cutblocks and site selection should be published
- Enhance the efforts to optimize the sustainable mix of benefits
- Need to show and celebrate where funds from MFR are used
- Engagement and communication is everyday work for a municipal forest
- MFR provides opportunity to put reconciliation into action with a co-management framework or a return of the land to First Nations
- Planning for centuries into the future

Engagement (in no particular order)

- Interest in greater transparency from the Municipal forestry department
- Need for a balanced approach to engagement
- Interest in helping get the message out
- PlaceSpeak is a great tool but needs more outreach and promotion
- We don't want black or white questions because there aren't black and white answers
- We want to see the options and consequences

Online Workshop Summary

Overview

A total of **110 participants** joined one of the four online workshops to share their input as part of the Municipal Forest Reserve review. The two hour online workshops included a presentation about the project, small group discussions with a facilitator and note taker, and a report back to everyone from the facilitators. The workshops provided opportunities for people to share what they value about the MFR, their hopes for the future, and what they think are the most important priorities. Workshop notes were captured using an online whiteboard tool, with an example shown on the following page. All workshop notes are included in **Appendix B**.

Key themes that we heard at the workshop:

The thoughtful discussions from participants reflected the deep care people share for their community and the MFR. During the workshops, participants shared what they value about the MFR, the most common themes included:

- The **ecosystem services** provided by the MFR, including cleaner water, cleaner air, slope stabilization, mitigation of heat, and carbon sequestration. Many participants expressed that it is critical for the forest to continue playing this role, particularly given the current and anticipated impacts of climate change.
- The forest's **ecological importance** including watersheds and habitats, as well as the hope to regenerate the forest, enhance habitat and biodiversity, and foster old growth forests for future generations.
- Access to **recreation and enjoyment** of the forest and the contribution to **health and wellness**.
- The contributions of timber harvesting in the MFR to **local jobs** and the **municipal budget** and their hopes that this will continue with timber that is used locally rather than exported.
- The good work that the Municipality has been doing in **forest management** for years, and felt that this approach should continue.
- The **cultural significance** of the mountains, the time-tested stewardship practices, and their hope to see the Quw'utsun Nation taking a lead on managing the forest.
- The importance of **views of the forest** and the desire to see the aesthetic aspects protected.

Looking ahead to the ideal forest of the future, participants said that they would like to see:

- A **healthy and resilient forest** with more old growth and greater biodiversity.
- A forest that is managed with more **community involvement**.
- A forest that contributes to the **local economy** through sale of carbon credits, recreational use, tourism, and eco-forestry.
- A forest that is an example of **sustainable** and non-industrial **timber harvesting** like Wildwood, with multi-age stands.
- A forest that is a place of **learning** and a place for **youth**.
- A forest where **fire risk** is minimized.
- No implications for local **taxes** and financial obligations.
- Expansion of the Municipal Forest Reserve.

While a wide diversity of themes and perspectives were shared at the workshops, most participants felt that **ecological values**, rather than economic values, should hold the highest priority for the future management of the MFR. Recreational benefits were also highly valued.

Exploring the Future Management of the Municipal Forest Reserve

Workshop 4 - Group C

6:30-8:30pm, Dec.2nd

1. Introduce yourself and tell us one thing you think everyone should know about the MFR and what brought you here today.

- Critical part of watershed
- Concerned about water supply and health of our environment
- Public ownership and care. Biodiversity values.
- Critical for climate change resiliency.
- A retreat for people to remember and reflect. Forests are gold because they are still there. Concerns of flooding linked to deforestation
- Recreational benefits to mature forest
- Each mountain has a unique character
- Flooding and farmland affects food supply
- Respect for culture and traditions

2. What do you value about the forest? Think specifically about the MFR.

- Biodiversity, Water retention, Values in terms of climate change. Recreation on the trails, well maintained. Intact, sustainable management.
- Fish, Birdlife, biodiversity. Healthy water. Less development. Love the mature forest.
- Let the forest be. Guiding prinipal: Do less. vulnerable to our choices
- The balance between ecosystems and forest management. "What does the forest value about us?"
- Birds, Mushrooms & Fish.... Intact ecosystem. Long term planning for future generations. Revenue in forest management.
- We need trees to breathe
- The view of the hills. Aesthetic Values. This should be a primary consideration.
- Flood control. Spiritual. Wildlife Corridor. Medicine. Carbon Storage. Habitat.
- Employment through forestry. Good economic resource.
- That is such a good point! What do the animals value? And what about what the children value? Is this being considered?
- As Exec Director of Camp Columbia on Thetis Island, I was told by a Board member that we should remember that our main goal was to spend as little money as possible. My response was that we existed to serve children and families. In other words, financial goals should not be our main motivation (e.g. logging to produce a bit of municipal revenue). There are much greater goals that take precedence.
- NC forests have some of the largest areas of Garry oak ecosystems left in Canada. This is one of the rarest ecosystems in the world.
- my daughter wanted me to tell you that when the trees are cut down there are no homes for the animals

3. When you imagine your ideal forest in 20 years, 50 years, 100 years...what comes to your mind?

- Incorporate/preserve old growth. Wildwood is a great precedent project. Garry Oak habitat enhancement.
- A forest that has been left alone, no logging. Humans working in symbiosis with the forest.
- A forest left to mature on it's own. Forest reaching out to other riparian areas, expansion. Natural forest cover for the watershed.
- Sustainable logging, Wildwood a good precedent.
- An intact forest that improves the watershed.
- Beautiful vision - to expand the forests!
- Well said about Stanley Park!
- Put the forest back to its natural state. A recreational resource. "A jewel in the landscape like Stanley Park." Innovation in forest management/ recreation/connection
- Sustains our lives and not our livelihood. Physchological and Spiritual well being.
- mental health and wellness
- Forests looks increasingly like old growth/ re-wilding. Natural regeneration. Intact canopy, less invasive species. Easy and free access to first nations sites. An example and educational show piece. Work with youth.
- Recreation, Trail building, TEK, Protection and education on rare species and sensitive habitats.
- Free access for first nations peoples to native cultural heritage sites
- Yes: Minimal thinning for wildfires and trail clearing
- Lübeck as example - If logging happens it should be happened in very traditional manner - horselogging
- Intact mycelium networks

4. UBC Partnership Group will be developing a series of forest management options; what criteria would you prioritize?

- Support forest revenue, but in a different manner to how it is done now.
- Conservation and enhancement of the environment. management of fire risk.
- Climate resilience. Supporting the creation of Old Forest. Access to cultural heritage sites.
- Think 500 years ahead. Spiritual qualities. Restore logged areas. Conserve natural succession. Alders, Cottonwood, Dogwoods....
- Flood prevention and fire prevention, go hand in hand with conservation values. Community taking care of the forest. Wholistic management.
- Recreation of old growth habitat. Aesthetic and biodiversity. Improve wildfire risk.
- Emphasis on recreational use. Redesignation to Parkland?
- Beautifully said - restoring the areas that have been cleared following the example of Mother Natures. Bringing local youth to do this restoration work to care for the land.
- 2nd growth forest, although originally planted, is now naturally regenerating and supporting diverse species.
- I agree - a 500 or 1,000 year plan for the forests
- Open to development of new management for revenue
- garry oak ecosystems
- Other sources of income to sustain the forest (Whistler as precedent)
- New local jobs for people caring for the forest and trails. Possible municipality income revenue by low cost parking charge for non-residents
- Thinning for fire prevention done without machinery. (horses are used, for example, to remove logs form a forest in a way that does not destroy the forest floor)

MUNICIPAL FOREST RESERVE

MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH Cowichan

Figure 1: **An example** of the online white boards used for note taking during online workshops. See **Appendix B** for full online workshop results.

Online Survey Summary

Overview

Thank you to the **1,145 respondents** who took the online survey. This survey asked about community values, concerns, and hopes related to the MFR and the results will inform the management options being developed by the UBC Partnership Group. The survey results were separated into responses from North Cowichan residents (indicated in the results as NCR) and non-North Cowichan residents (indicated in the results as NR). To generate the summary of survey results, responses to the open ended questions were grouped into common themes. Complete survey details can be reviewed in **Appendix E.**

What we heard:

- Survey respondents are **very familiar with the MFR**, with most residents and many non-residents visiting weekly for activities such as walking, hiking, admiring views, biking, and enjoying nature and wildlife.
- The MFR is a valued community asset that provides multiple **ecological, recreational, economic, and cultural benefits** to residents and visitors.
- Many respondents feel that the health and longevity of MFR is **threatened** due to timber harvesting. To a lesser degree, some respondents feel that the forest is **well managed** and should continue with annual harvests.
- Many respondents support managing the forest to enhance **recreational uses** such as hiking, biking, walking, ATVing, and horseback riding. Some respondents caution about negative ecological impacts of wide-spread recreational use within the MFR.
- A wide array of **ecological aspects** of the MFR such as habitats, waters, ecosystem services, and diverse forests were noted as all being important to many respondents, indicating that these aspects are interconnected.
- Tourism and the economic benefits of recreation in the MFR were most frequently noted as an important **economic aspect** of the MFR, while the revenues from timber harvesting or other sources were less important.
- A wide array of **social and cultural aspects** of the MFR such as opportunities for recreation, access to nature, and contributions to health and well-being were noted as all being important to many respondents.

When thinking about the future:

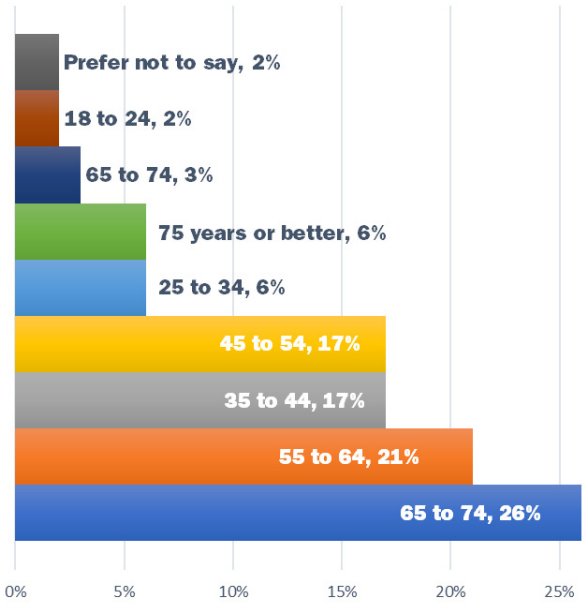
- The top priorities are **protecting and enhancing sensitive ecosystems, water quality, quantity, and watershed health, bird & wildlife habitat, mature forests** and maximizing carbon storage within the forest to help **mitigate climate change**.

Who answered the survey?

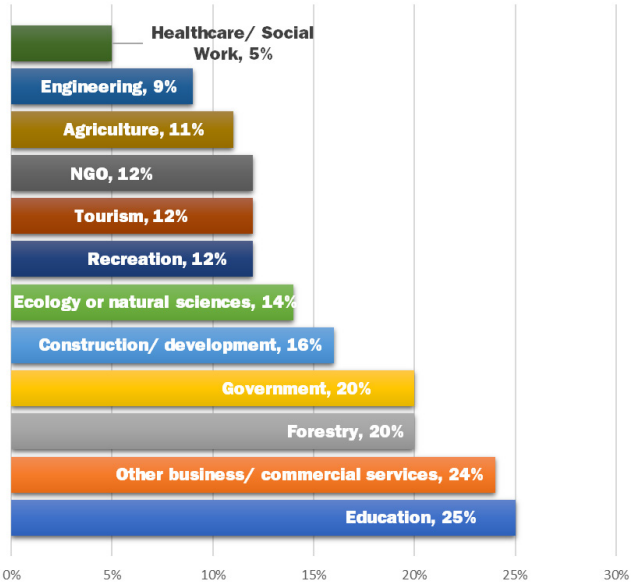
594 North Cowichan Residents and **407*** Non-North Cowichan Residents

* Including 101 respondents from Duncan.

Question 13: What is your age group?



Question 14 - Where do you work, have worked in the past, or have education/training?



1.5% of respondents indicated that they are retired.

Question 1: How familiar are you with the Municipal Forest Reserve?

93% of North Cowichan residents and **87%** of non-residents responded that they are somewhat or very familiar with the MFR.

Question 2a: Generally, how often do you visit the Municipal Forest Reserve?

63% of North Cowichan residents and **44%** of non-residents visit the MFR at least once a week.

Question 2b: If you have visited the Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR), what did you do there?

The top activities include:



Walking/ Hiking	Visiting Viewpoints	Nature Observation	Biking
(88%)	**(50%)**	**(41%)**	**(20%)**

We also heard that:

- Even though off-road vehicles such as ATVs/motor bikes/ snowmobiles are prohibited within the MFR, a number of respondents indicated this was an activity they participated in.
- Some respondents indicated that mobility challenges affects how often they visit.

Question 3: In a few words, what is your general impression of the current state of the Municipal Forest Reserve?

Responses for this open-ended question were reviewed and grouped into themes. The following were the top themes compiled from all the comments. Complete details can be reviewed in **Appendix E.**

A great place for recreation that could be even better (59 comments from NCR and 78 NR)

An ecologically significant place that needs better protection (59 comments from NCR and 72 NR)

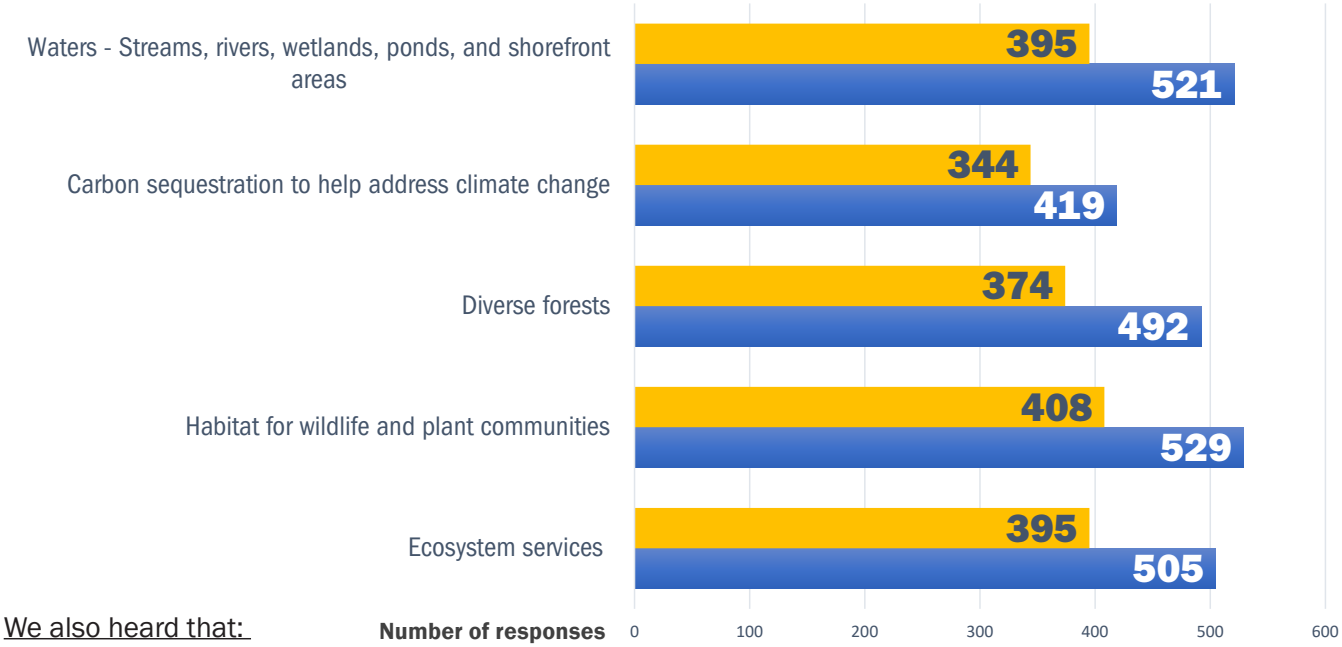
Threatened due to current forestry practices (49 comments from NCR and 68 NR)

A well managed forest (73 NCR and 47 NR)

We also heard that:

- Hiking and biking trails are overcrowded, or that recreational uses have a negative impact on wildlife.
- It is important to limit harvesting to lessen the impacts of climate change.
- Selective logging or eco-forestry should be practiced in the MFR.
- Many respondents are concerned about clear cuts.

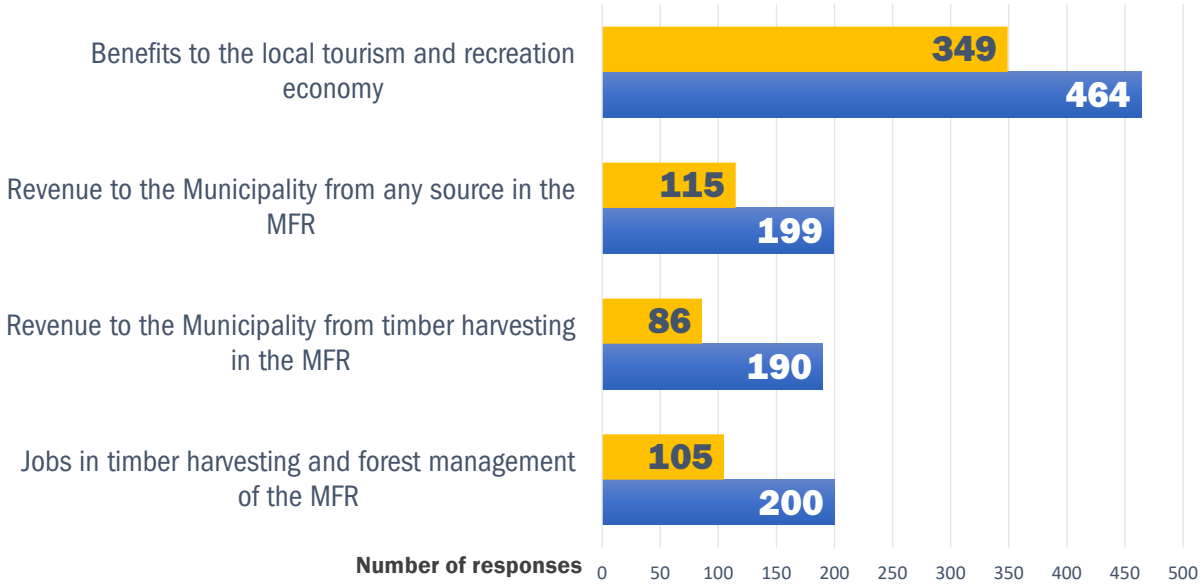
Question 4: Ecology: What ecological aspects of the Municipal Forest Reserve are important to you? Select all that apply.



We also heard that:

- Old growth is important.
- Traditional Indigenous knowledge is critical.
- Managing invasive species within the MFR is important.
- Nature has intrinsic value outside of its uses for people.

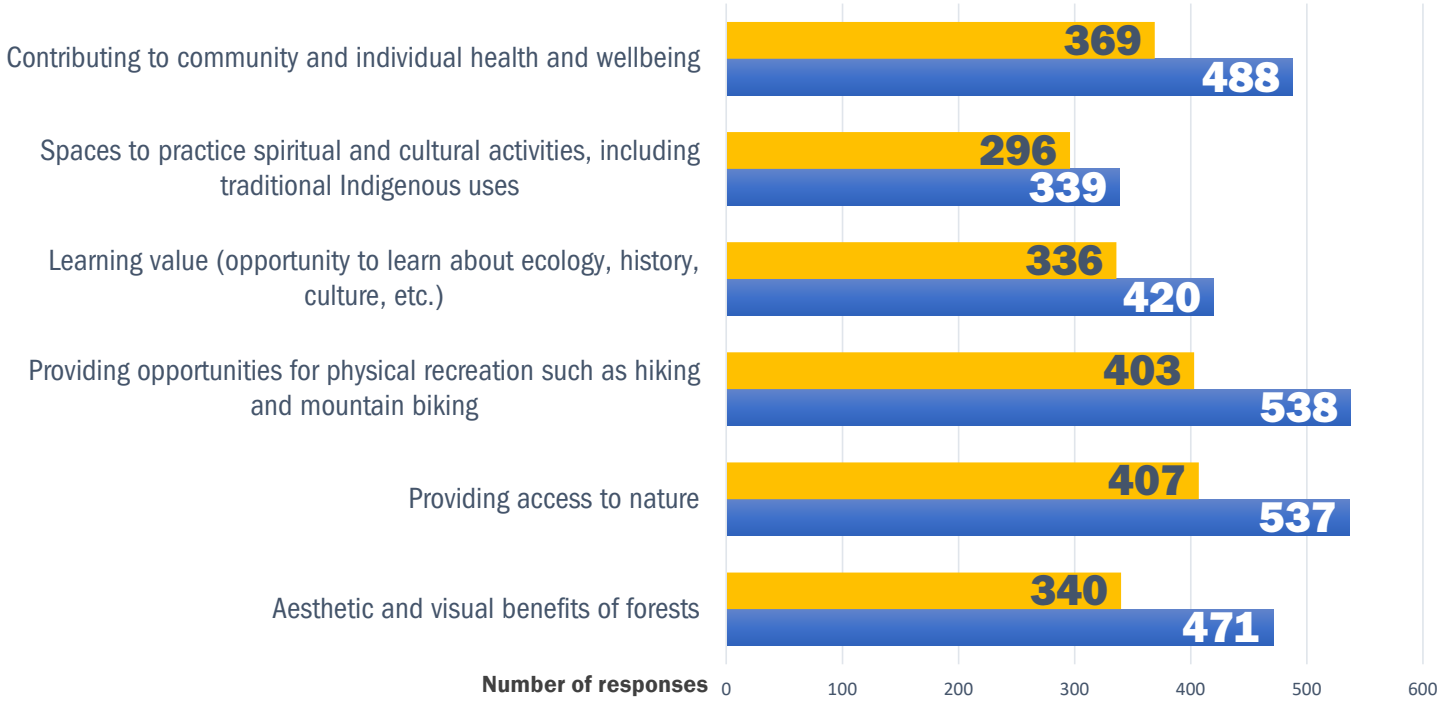
Question 5: Economy: What economic aspects of the Municipal Forest Reserve are important to you?



We also heard that:

- The municipality should consider carbon offsets as a source of revenue from the MFR.
- Some respondents are opposed to viewing the MFR as a economic resource.
- Employment in forest management and ecotourism should be expanded.

Question 6: Society/Culture: What social and cultural aspects of the Municipal Forest Reserve are important to you?



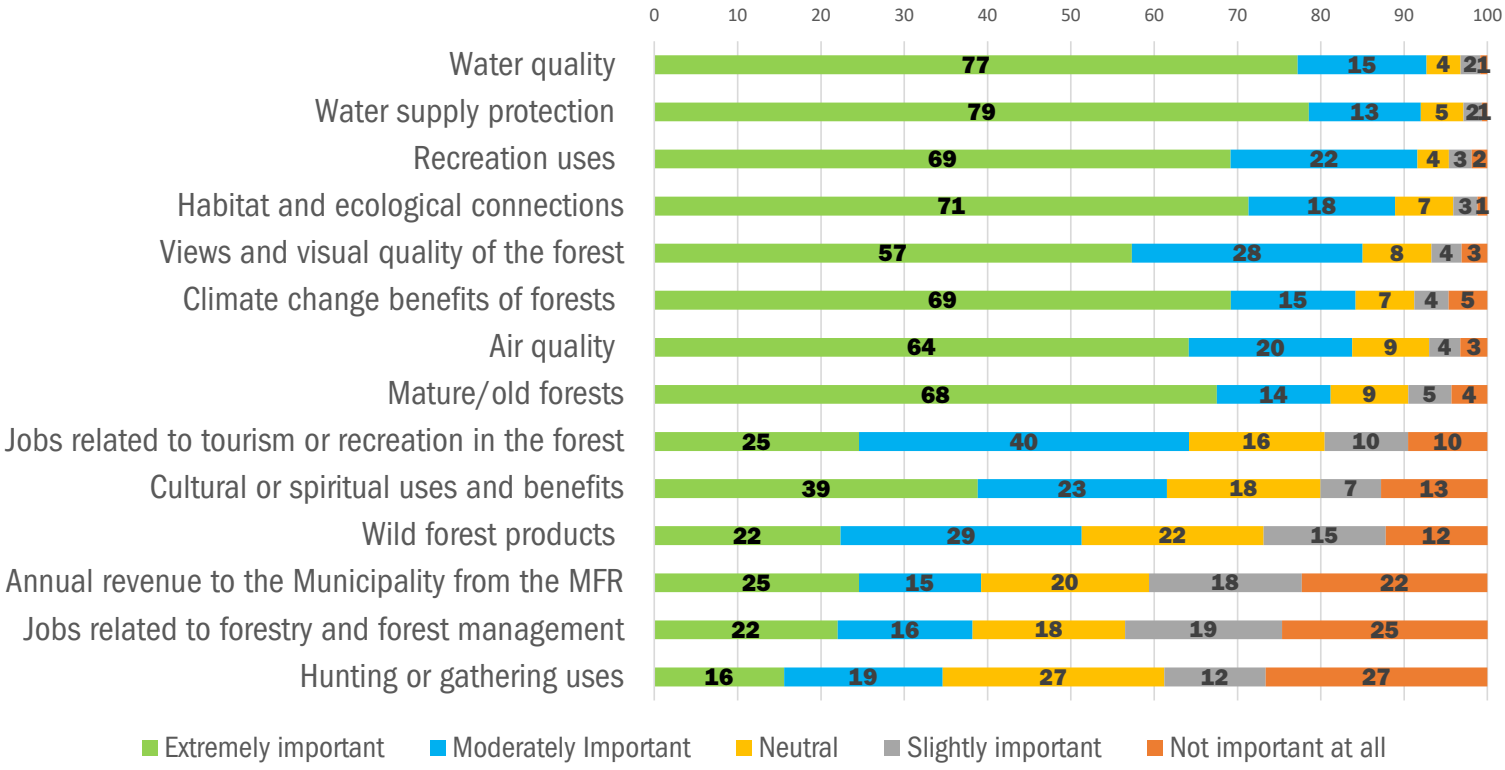
We also heard that:

- Hunting, fishing and gathering are important cultural activities.

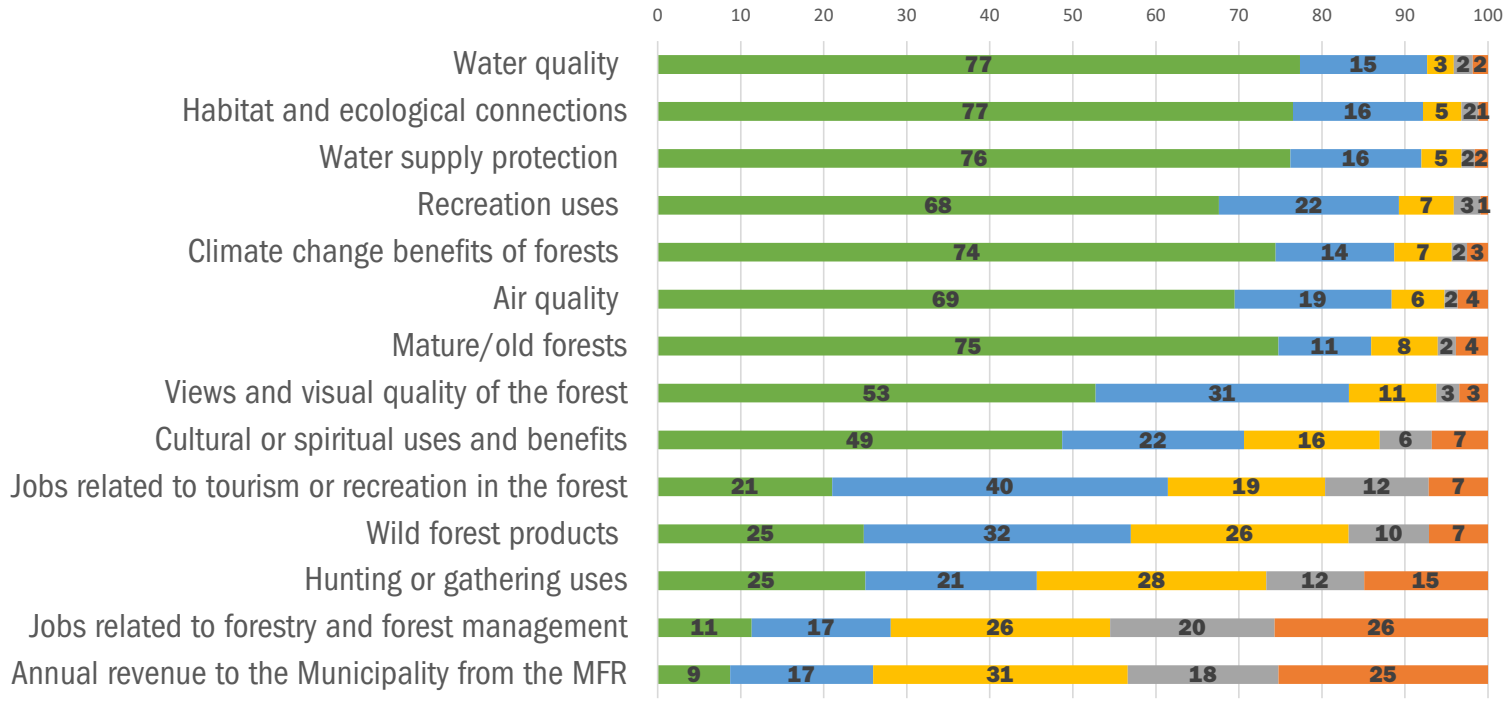
Question 7: From your perspective, how important are each of the following aspects of the Municipal Forest Reserve to you?

The top four responses were the same for both residents and non-residents.

Resident Responses



Non- Resident Responses



Question 8: In a few words or sentences, what are your concerns about the future management of the Municipal Forest Reserve?

The top responses to this open-ended question include:

Concerns about loss of the forest and clear cutting
(155 comments from NCR and 115 NR)

Managing the forest for recreation
(52 comments from NCR and 32 NR)

Concerns about the impacts of climate change
(44 comments from NCR and 30 NR)

We also heard that:

- There are concerns about short-term benefits being prioritized over long-term planning.
- Development and urban sprawl are a concern for some.
- There are concerns about the financial and tax implications of pausing timber harvesting.

Question 9: In a few words or sentences, what are your hopes for the future management of the Municipal Forest Reserve?

The top responses to this open-ended question include:

Protecting and enhancing ecosystems/ environmental value
(97 comments from NCR and 87 NR)

Effective management of forest to support recreation/tourism
(97 comments from NCR and 82 NR)

Less industrial-style forestry & clear cutting within the MFR
(68 comments from NCR and 51 NR)

More selective harvesting/ sustainable forestry
(32 comments from NCR and 39 NR)

We also heard that:

- An approach that balances ecology, economy and culture is important.
- Economic development & possible tax burdens are a concern.
- It's important to include Indigenous perspectives in the future management of the MFR.
- That it is important to consider climate resiliency when considering the future management of the MFR.

Question 10: What priorities should guide the future management of the MFR?

The top 5 priorities include
(both NCR and NR combined):

Protect and enhance sensitive ecosystems (77%)

Protect water quality, quantity, and watershed health (73%)

Protect and enhance bird & wildlife habitat (65%)

Protect and enhance mature forest (64%)

Maximize carbon storage within the forest to help mitigate climate change (45%)

Other priorities include:

- Provide opportunities for recreation (i.e. forestry roads, trails, and trailheads).
- Reduce wildfire risk.
- Demonstrate innovative, sustainable, and eco-friendly forestry practices.
- Work to find a balance of benefits for everyone.
- Maximize tourism and recreation-related revenue and employment.

Question 11: Do you have any other comments about the Municipal Forest Reserve?

The top responses to this open-ended question include:

Forest management for ecology and education rather than timber
(36 comments from NCR and 31 RN)

Innovative & sustainable stewardship is needed
(19 comments from NCR and 19 RN)

Focus on recreation benefits
(16 comments from NCR and 7 RN)

MFR is a community treasure
(15 comments from NCR and 9 RN)

We also heard that:

- Consider any cost implications to taxpayers.
- Concerns about the impacts of recreation on the MFR.
- That the management of MFR is good and should continue as is.
- That the MFR presents an opportunity to take action on climate change.
- Concerns about wildfire.
- Interest in continued community

Key Takeaways

Overview

During the first round of engagement on the future management of the MFR, we heard a diverse range of perspectives from over **1,275 community members**. The thoughtful input from participants in this first round of engagement reflects the deep care people share for their community and the forest reserve in particular. There was agreement that the MFR is a valued community asset, and many are in favour of an approach to forest management that shifts the primary management focus of the MFR toward the ecological and recreational benefits.

Key takeaways:

- The importance of protecting and enhancing the **ecological benefits** of the MFR was a strong theme. Many expressed concern with the health of the forest, and indicated that the **ecosystem services** provided by the forest outweigh the potential revenue from harvesting.
- Many expressed that the MFR is a valued **recreational asset** and are in favour of forest management that supports hiking, biking, walking, ATVing, and horseback riding. There was also significant support for recreation as it relates to **tourism**.
- Many community members expressed concern about harvesting practices, particularly the impact of **clear cutting.** Some respondents feel that cut blocks negatively impact views on the mountains, recreational experiences, and the ecological health of the forest.
- Some participants are supportive of the current management of the MFR. Of those in favour of harvesting, many are supportive of a shift towards **eco-forestry** and more sustainable forms of harvesting.
- Concern about **climate change**, and the impacts of wildfires, flooding and extreme weather emerged as a key theme. Many expressed the importance of managing the forest to increase resiliency to climate change.
- We also heard a wide range of perspectives on the **cultural significance** of the MFR. Many noted the importance of the forest for recreation, access to nature, health and well-being as well as education. Some respondents also expressed the importance of consulting the **Quw'utsun Nation** on the future management of the MFR.

Next Steps

This engagement process is part of other important processes that will chart the path forward. The technical review by the UBC Partnership Group will provide further technical analysis, while ongoing discussions with the Quw'utsun Nation, who hold significant traditional and ongoing interests in the unceded lands that comprise that MFR, will continue to be part of the conversation through Government-to-Government dicussions.

The UBC Partnership Group will be developing forest management scenario options to bring forward for the public to consider in Spring 2022. What these management options include has not yet been determined, but they will be linked to the engagement findings in this report, as well as the technical expertise around forest management, ecology, and carbon offset projects.

Round 2 Engagement - Spring 2022

Round 2 of engagement will build upon the feedback gathered in the first round of engagement and focus on identifying the community's preferred options for forest management. Through an online survey, statistically valid phone survey, and public workshops, everyone in the community will have an opportunity to have their voice heard.

How to Get Involved:



- Sign up for project updates and information on the next round of engagement at northcowichan.ca/forestry
- Participate in the Round 2 online survey
- Participate in a Round 2 public workshop
- Provide feedback if you receive a call to participate in the statistically valid phone survey



Appendices

Appendix A: Outreach Details and Metrics

Appendix D: Detailed Stakeholder Interview Notes

Appendix C: Engagement Working Group Meeting Notes

Appendix B: Full Online Workshop Results

Appendix E: Full Online Survey Results