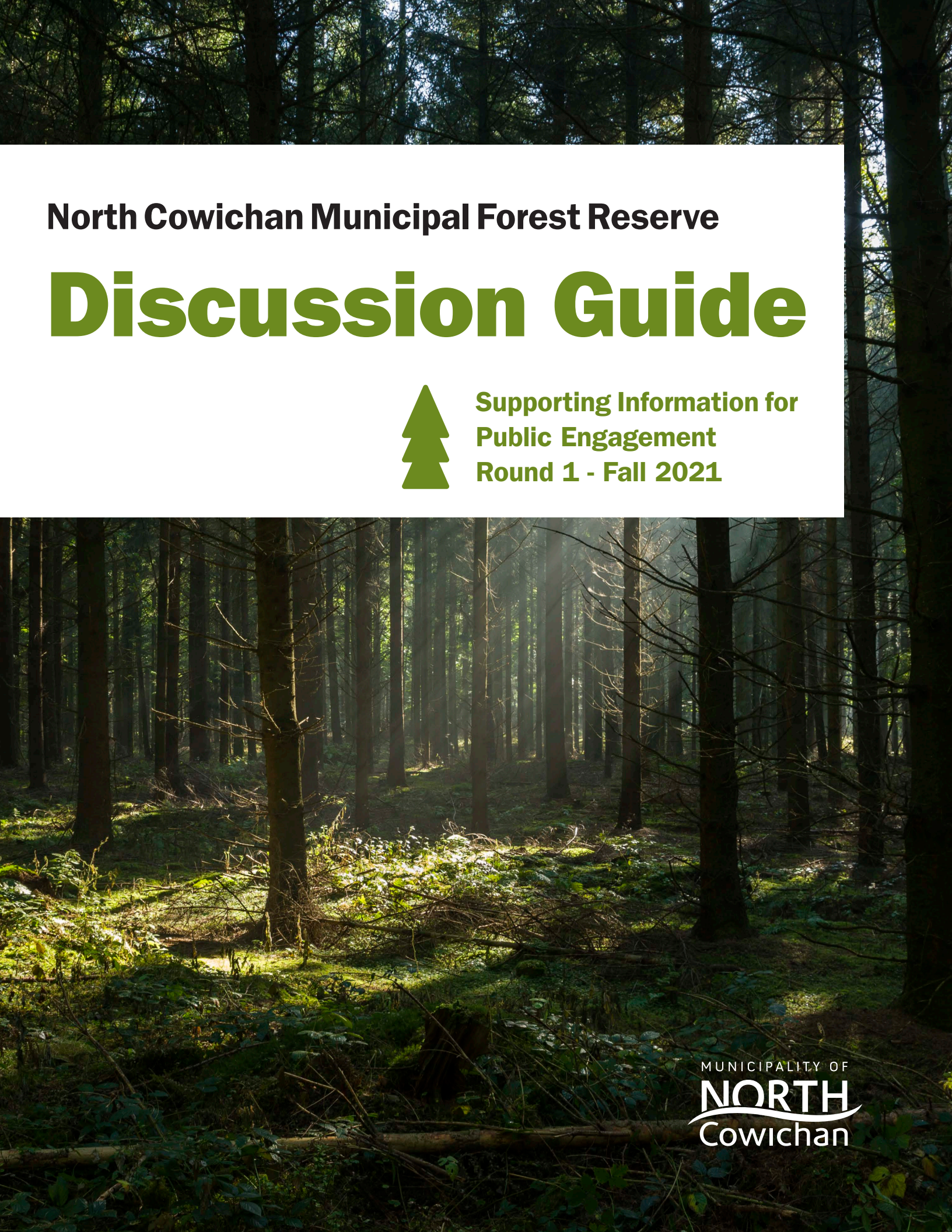


North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve

Discussion Guide

Supporting Information for Public Engagement Round 1 - Fall 2021

MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH Cowichan

The Municipality of North Cowichan would like to thank the EWG for all of their ongoing contributions to the community engagement materials and process

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MUNICIPAL FOREST RESERVE

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Introduction

Purpose of this Document

This document was developed to provide North Cowichan residents with basic information and context as they partake in the first round of engagement on the future of the Municipal Forest Reserve. There are many other sources of information available both from the Municipality of North Cowichan and from other organizations. We have provided links to some important documents, but it is not exhaustive. This document does not include information on the possible management options for the municipal forest reserve. Information on management options will be included in the second round of engagement, following UBC's technical review. We encourage you to think of this as a starting point for the important conversations that will take place over the coming months.

Introduction

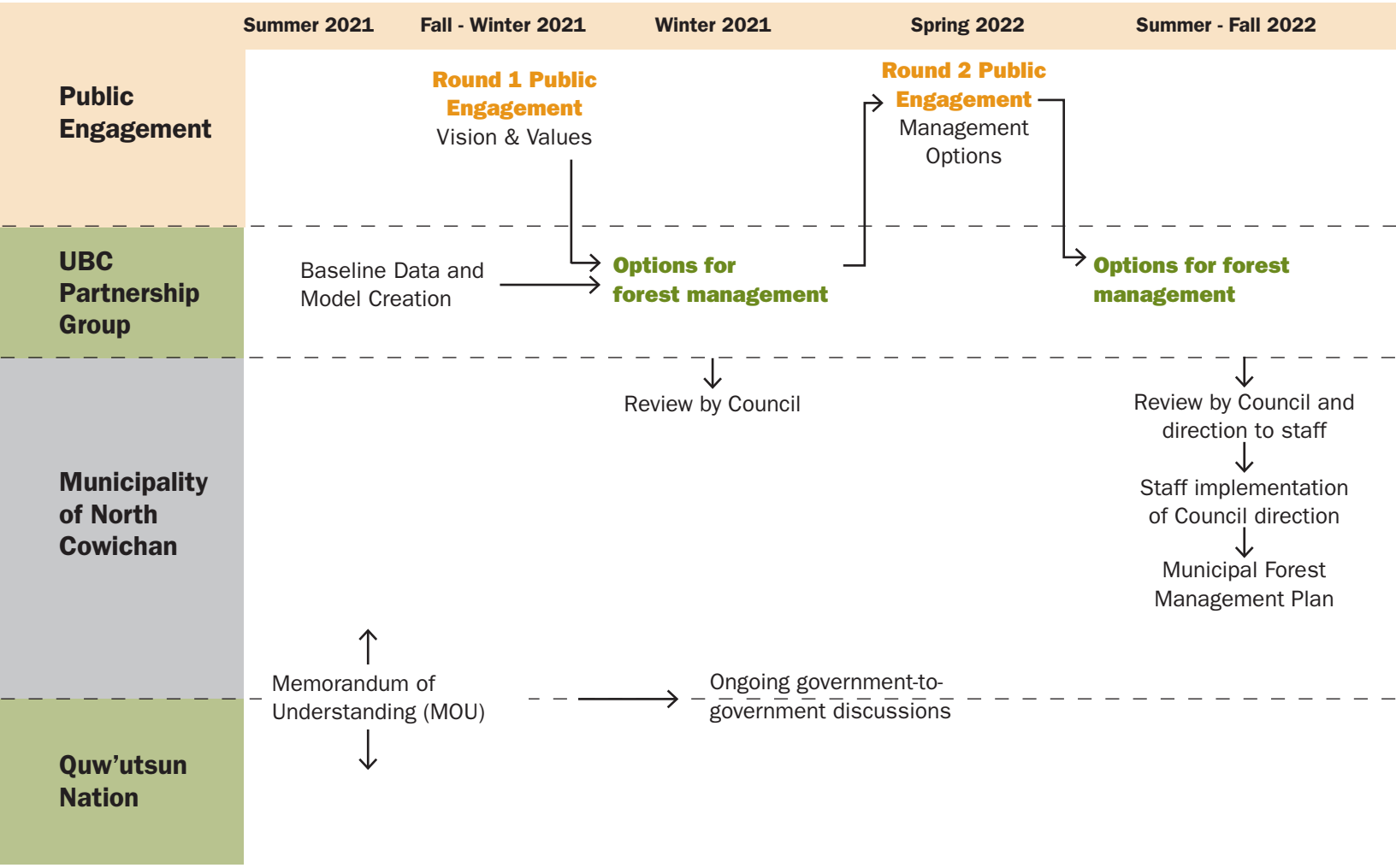
The Municipality of North Cowichan is exploring options for the management of the Municipal Forest Reserve. During this process, stakeholders and the public will be able to share their vision for the forest and influence how the forest will be managed. The engagement process will provide a summary of what the public said and describe how it was reflected in the scenario options by UBC Partnership Group.

In response to public interest in harvesting activities and requests for a review of forest management, Council dramatically limited harvesting in 2019 and initiated two initiatives: 1) undertaking public engagement, both deep and broad, on the future management of the Municipal Forest Reserve and 2) a technical review of forest management practices, options, and scenarios. The technical review will support the public engagement process by providing the information needed for informed public participation, and the public engagement process will inform the evaluation of the technical scenarios and options.

Territory Acknowledgment

The Munipality of North Cowichan respectfully acknowledges that the Municipal Forest Reserve is located on the traditional and unceded lands of Cowichan Tribes, Halalt First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, and Lyackson First Nation.

Municipal Forest Plan Review Process



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.

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Public Engagement on the Municipal Forest Reserve

Purpose

The purpose of the public engagement process is to create an opportunity for members of the public to participate in the development of the management options for the Municipal Forest Reserve. The process must be fulsome and transparent so that Council and community members can rely on the results as a fair and accurate reflection of the community's values and vision for the future.

Engagement Timeline

The Municipality of North Cowichan is providing community members and stakeholders with numerous opportunities to share their vision for the forest and influence how the forest will be managed. The following is a summary of the engagement opportunities. The full public engagement strategy is available on the Municipality's website (northcowichan.ca/forestry).

Round 1 - Fall/Winter 2021

The first round of engagement will gather community input around the range of values and perspectives concerning the Municipal Forest Reserve which will inform the scenario options for forest management.

Round 1 of engagement includes:

- Engagement Working Group Meetings
- Public Outreach
- Online Workshops
- Online Survey

Round 2 - 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.

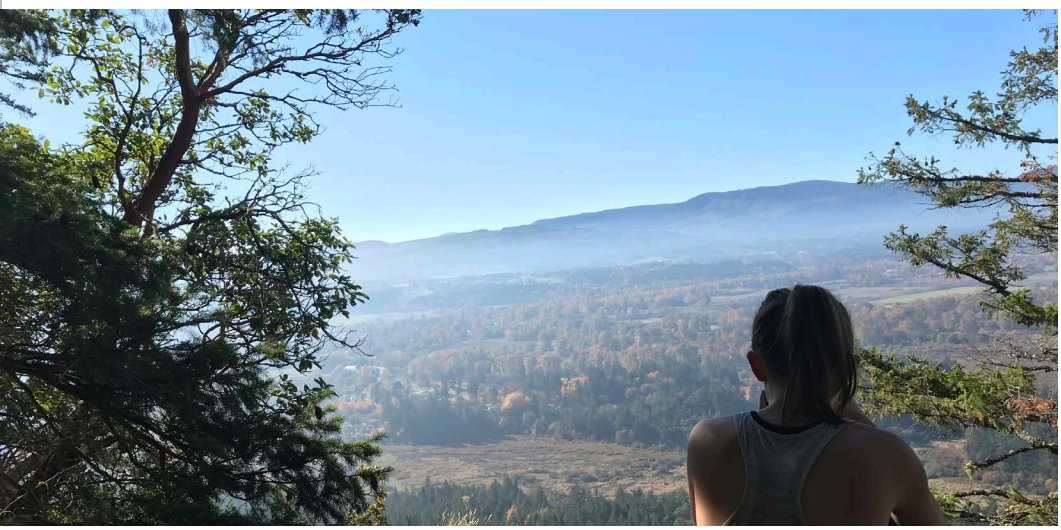
Round 2 of engagement includes:

- Engagement Working Group Meetings
- Public Outreach
- Online Workshops
- Online Survey
- Statistically Valid Phone Survey

Reporting Back

A summary of what we heard from the community will be made available following each round of engagement, and will inform council's decision-making process regarding the future of the MFR.

We want to hear from you! Help us shape future management of the Municipal Forest Reserve.



Stay Informed

For more information on how you can get involved and have your say on the future of the Municipal Forest Reserve, along with upcoming events, visit

www.northcowichan.ca/forestry

For more information:
250-746-3100
forestryreview@northcowichan.ca

How to Participate

Opportunities to get involved with engagement on the Management of North Cowichan's Municipal Forest Reserve will be advertised on the Munipality of North Cowichan's website, local newspapers, and through social media.

Online Survey

An **online survey** will be open for three weeks from mid-Nov. to early Dec.

Online Workshops

Four online workshops will be held in November and December. Registration details will be posted on the North Cowichan website.

- 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

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Municipal Forest Reserve Overview

Mission of the Municipal Forest Reserve

To maintain and enhance North Cowichan's valuable municipal forest resources for all users through sustainable forestry, ecological stewardship and sound fiscal management.

This mission could change as a result of the public engagement process and technical review.

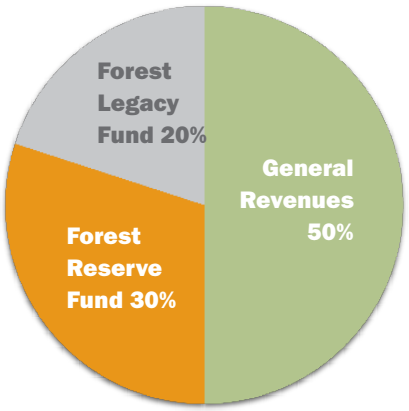
Fast Facts

- The Municipality of North Cowichan is one of the few communities in North America that owns and manages forest lands for the benefit of residents. **North Cowichan's Municipal Forest Reserve is different than community forests or tree farm licenses,** as it is owned by the Municipality and not a licence granted by the Province.
- The Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR) is 5,000+ hectares (ha) and accounts for approximately 25% of the land base in North Cowichan.
- The MFR consists of six major land holdings: Mount Prevost, Mount Sicker, Mount Tzouhalem, Stony Hill, Mount Richards, and Maple Mountain, plus a number of smaller parcels including Grace Road, Chemainus Lake, and Panorama Ridge. See the map on pg. 17.
- Since 1946, the MFR has been owned and managed as a working forest. The current annual harvesting allowance is 20,000 cubic meters.
- Forest management is informed by the the Municipality's Framework for Integrated Forest Resource Management for Maple Mountain (1992) that seeks to balance harvesting, recreation, and conservation.
- One of the ways that the Municipality seeks to ensure sustainability of the MFR is by replanting harvested areas at the earliest possible time with the best seedling stock available. Species that naturally occur in this area are replanted, namely Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and western white pine.

Current Economic Picture

The MFR is financially self-sustaining and provides revenue for the Municipality. Net surplus from management of the MFR goes to the General Revenues of the Municipality (50%), the Forest Reserve Fund (30%), the Forest Legacy Fund (20%).

Between 2015 and 2019 the forestry program generated an average of $288,000 annual net profit, and $130,000 went into the Municipality's general revenue each year. Full details of the revenue and expenses can be found in the annual forestry reports, available online at https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-recreation/forestry/forestry-reports.html



Forest Reserve Fund

The Forest Reserve Fund was established to support forestry operations when markets are poor. The Forest Reserve Fund is also set up to develop, maintain and expand the Municipal Forest Reserve land-base; fight forest fires; replace forestry department vehicles and equipment; award three annual scholarships and bursaries; and aid in capital projects. The Forest Reserve Fund contains $1.74M as of Dec 31, 2020.

During the current significant reduction of forestry activities, for example, the Forest Reserve Fund has and is being used to cover ongoing expenses of management and stewardship of the MFR including replanting and monitoring of harvested sites.



Photo: Highschool wood working projects - one of the community support projects that is funded through the Forest Legacy Fund.

More information can be found on the following North Cowichan website:

Annual Forestry Reports
https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-recreation/forestry/forestry-reports.html

Forest Legacy Fund
https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-recreation/forestry/community-giving-back.html

Municipal Budget
https://www.northcowichan.ca/budget

The Forest Advisory Committee

The official mandate of the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) is to provide Council with advice and recommendations on matters pertaining to the North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve. The FAC is made up of elected officials, municipal staff, and appointed professional foresters who reside in the municipality. In 2019, the membership of the FAC was expanded to include a registered professional biologist, three community members, and representatives from local First Nations.

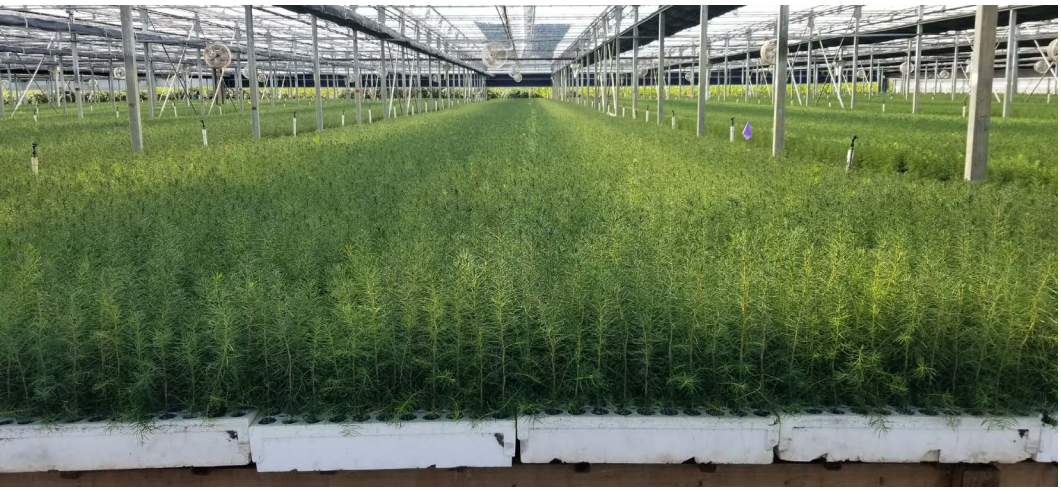


Photo: Growing seedlings for replanting.

Present Forestry Department overview

The Forestry Department manages 25% of the total land base of North Cowichan as the Municipal Forest Reserve.

The Forestry Program is responsible for all aspects of this land including: forest planning, harvesting, silviculture activities, maintaining road systems, fire protection, managing for view-scapes, water, forestry education, jobs and generating a revenue.

Recent events

2019

Council decided to harvest only remaining 2018 contract obligations and they also adopted a revised terms of reference for its Forest Advisory Committee that included the addition of members to the committee.

2018

Council heard from the public, both in a petition and at a Council meeting, to pause further harvesting until the forestry review took place.

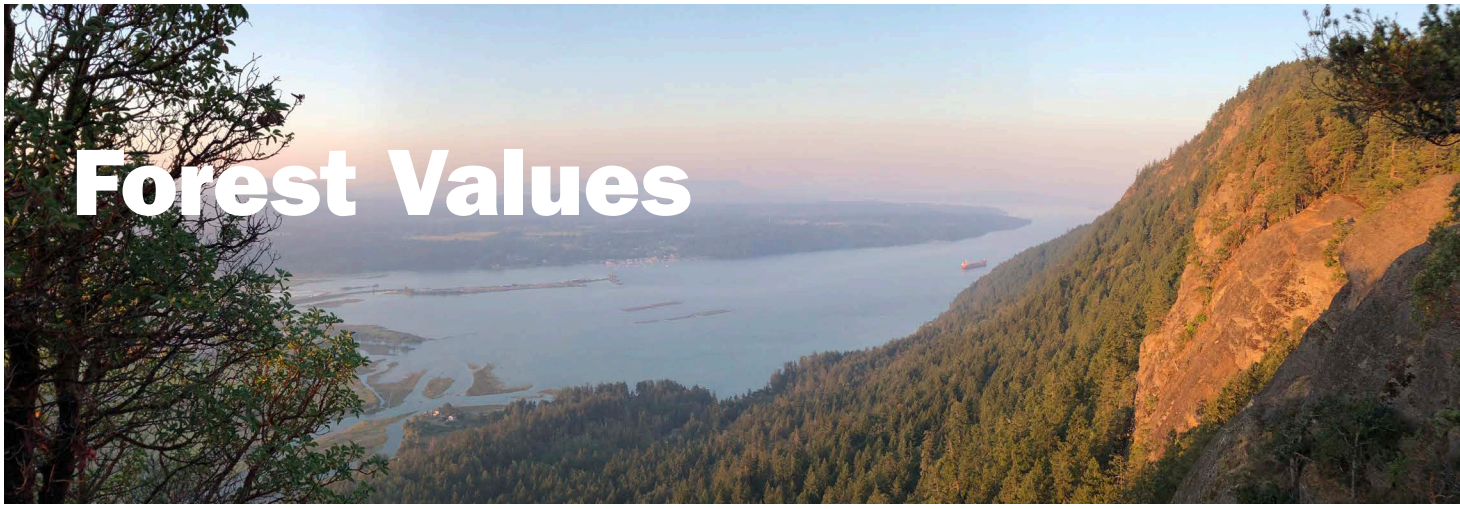
2017

North Cowichan endorsed the Parks and Trails Master Plan[1] to establish a long-term approach to managing and developing its park and trail resources, including resources within the MFR.

[1] https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-recreation/parks-and-trails-master-plan.html

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Forest Values

The primary objective of community engagement on the Municipal Forest Reserve is to understand the diversity of values and visions for the future of the MFR. The following topics summarize some of the benefits that the MFR provides to the community other than timber products and revenue to the Municipality. We will be exploring some of these topics through the online survey and workshops this fall and look forward to hearing what other values should be considered.

Recreation

Access to the MFR is free of charge and brings tourism benefits to the local community. The MFR is known throughout Vancouver Island for its range of recreational opportunities, including world-class hiking and mountain biking trails on Maple Mountain, Mount Tzouhalem, and Mount Prevost. There are also equestrian trails on Mount Sicker and Mount Richards. North Cowichan works closely with the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society to ensure that harvesting within the MFR is coordinated with the recreational users of the trails. Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society helps maintain the trail networks.

Ecosystem Services

Our rich natural ecosystems provide many services that are wide-ranging and diverse, from providing food to regulating waste and nutrient supply to supporting cultural and recreational activities. The collective benefits provided by the resources and processes supplied by natural environments are known as ecosystem services or natural asset.[2] If the natural environment did not provide these services, we would have to make significant investments in infrastructure. For example, if we didn't have the natural forests and soils to absorb, clean, and feed the groundwater systems, then significant resources would be required for water storage and purification systems. The MFR provides many ecosystem services to the community of North Cowichan and beyond such as air and water purification and carbon storage.

[2] https://davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/what-is-natural-capital/

Ecological Significance of the MFR

Large sections of the Municipal Forest are located within the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone.[3] This collection of rare ecosystems is found only in a small portion southwestern BC, and it is considered one of the most imperilled ecosystems in Canada. Currently, 80% of the Costal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone is situated in privately managed forest lands. Within the MFR only about 3% of the pre-settlement forest remains intact due to loss from harvesting, conversion to agriculture, and urban development.



Example Forest Values

- Access to trails
- Wilderness recreation
- Timber revenue
- Carbon revenue
- Water quality
- Recreation employment
- Visual quality and views
- Protection of culturally important areas
- Fire risk management
- Sensitive ecosystem conservation
- Wildlife habitat
- Access to nature

More information

Watch the presentation from UBC partnership group explaining the ecological significance of the MFR and their approach to the technical analysis.

Link to the presentation: https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/community/current-topics/municipal-forest-reserve/working-group.html

Link to forest education resources assembled by North Cowichan's Environmental Advisory Committee: https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/community/current-topics/municipal-forest-reserve/background.html

[3] https://www.cdfcp.ca/index.php/about/what-is-the-cdf

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UBC Partnership Technical Analysis

The UBC Partnership Group (UBC, 3GreenTree Consulting, and Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership) is conducting a technical analysis of management options for the North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR).

Public, stakeholder, and First Nation government-to-government engagement will be taking place concurrent to the technical analysis, and will inform the development of forest management options.

Fall 2021/Winter 2022	Winter/Spring 2022	Spring/Summer 2022
Determine baseline mapping and create a model to test options.	Develop criteria that reflect public values, best practices analysis, technical analysis, and scenario options for forest management.	Present options, technical analysis, report writing, and scenario options for the Forest Management Plan.

Approach

The UBC Partnership Group is using spatial data - data that references a specific location - to gauge, calibrate and apply forest planning models to help the North Cowichan community understand how different forest management options and choices may influence the growth and development of the MFR in the future.

Specifically, these modeling tools will provide information with respect to the development of the following forest attributes over space and time:

- canopy cover
- stand age and structure
- forest biomass and carbon storage
- merchantable volume (total tree volume minus the volume of the stump)

- tree species distribution
- forest productivity
- dead wood and shrub cover (important for biodiversity)
- fuel conditions related to fire hazard

This information will be used to evaluate important **measures of sustainable forest management** including:

- protection and enhancement of biodiversity and wildlife habitat
- conservation of sensitive ecosystems
- opportunities for wilderness recreation
- protection of water resources
- opportunities for employment and revenue generation
- protection of viewscapes and visual quality
- protection of culturally important areas
- management of fire risk and hazard

Additional information from UBC Partnership Group

The UBC Partnership Group presented a technical update to the Forest Advisory Committee on June 30, 2020. The Forest Advisory Committee meeting agenda and minutes are posted at the link below (scroll down to the June 2020 meetings)

Forest Advisory Committee meeting agenda package and minutes June 30, 2020
https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/municipal-hall/meeting-agendas.html

Previous relevant plans

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2020)
https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-recreation/forestry/fire-protection.html

Parks and Trails Master Plan (2017)
https://www.northcowichan.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~and~Recreation/PTMP/PTMP_FINAL_2017-02-23.pdf

Official Community Plan 2011
https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/planning-development/official-community-plan/2011-ocp.html

Municipality of North Cowichan Climate Action & Energy Plan (2013)
https://www.northcowichan.ca/assets/Departments/Engineering/PDFs/NC%20CAEP%20final%20report%20v5_reduced.pdf

Maple Mountain Integrated Forest Management Plan 1992
https://www.northcowichan.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-recreation/forestry/forestry-reports.html

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Multi-Objective Scenario Analysis

The UBC partnership group will incorporate the community values identified throughout the engagement process with the information generated through the technical analysis in a process called multi-objective scenario analysis. The aim of this process is to balance values that are difficult to quantify (for example important views or recreational values) with measurable values. The figures below are examples of model outputs. These are not proposals, but simply examples of what the analysis could look like. Figure 2 shows what the analysis might look like if harvesting was prioritized, while Figure 3 illustrates what the analysis might look like if conservation was prioritized.

The examples below are not proposed scenarios, but a way to test the criteria.

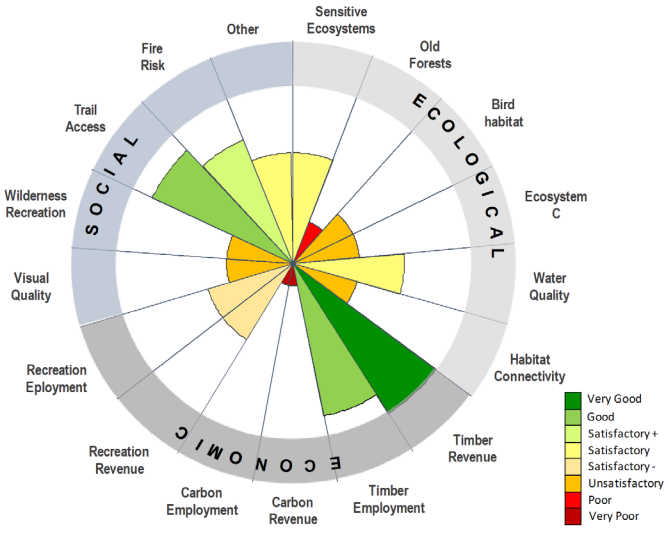


Figure 2: Hypothetical scenario with a focus on maximizing harvesting

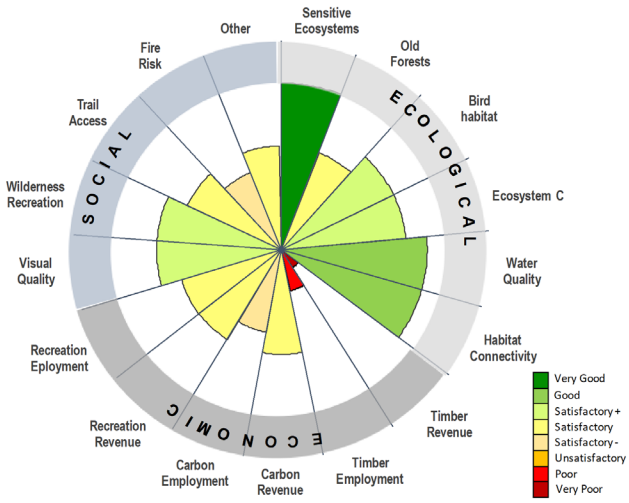
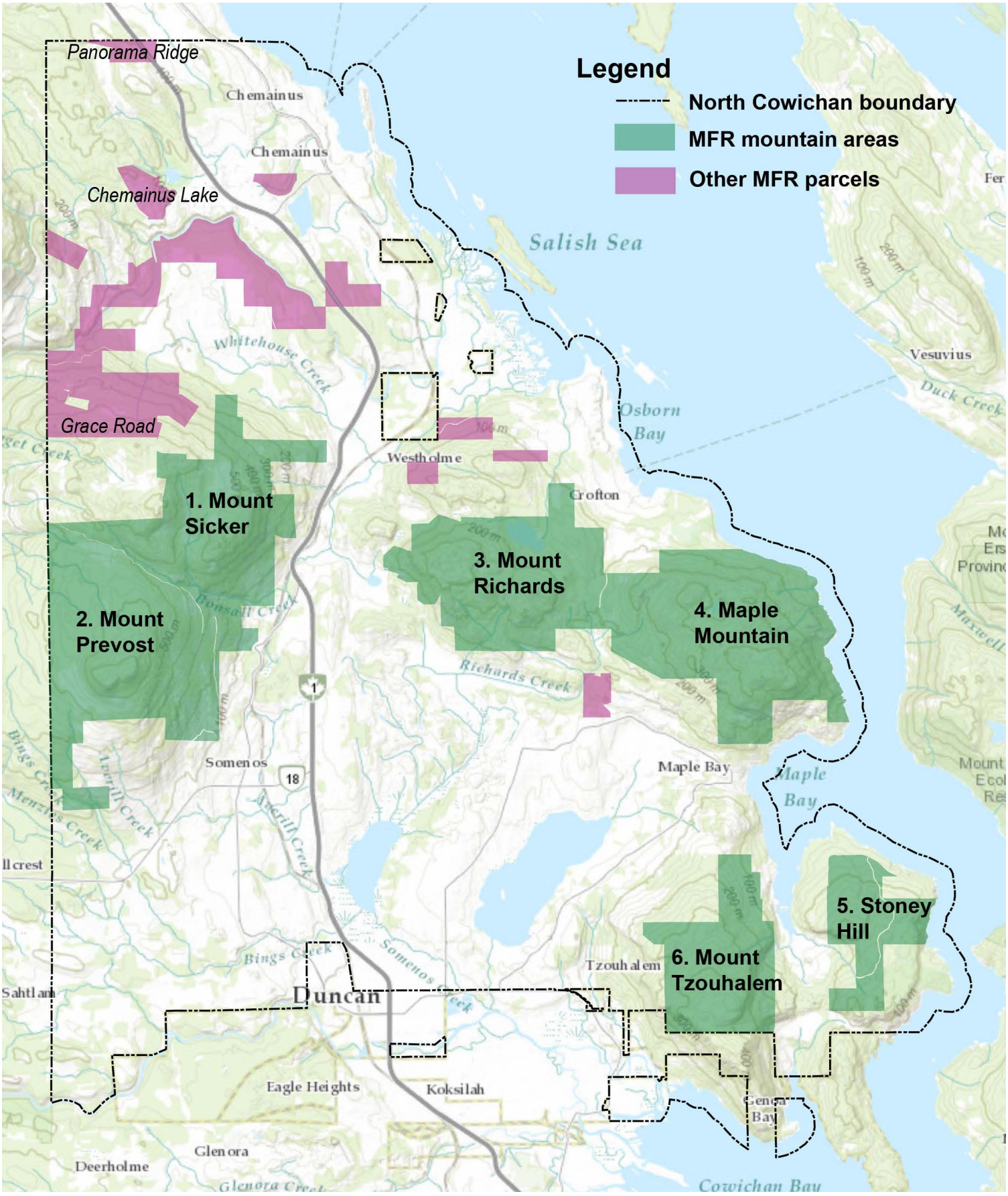


Figure 3: Hypothetical scenario with a focus on maximizing conservation



North Cowichan's Municipal Forest Reserve



For more mapping information, please visit the interactive forestry map online at https://northcowichan.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2346f9fa5669451cad56966546c06239