



Fort Nelson Community Forest Update January 19, 2018

Introduction

Work has continued on the Community Forest Application (CFA) since the Community Open House and Forum on Thursday, October 19th, 2017 at the Phoenix Theatre in addition to the Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) Open House on November 29th, 2017 at the Health & Wellness Centre Circle Room. The CFA Process Steps and tentative timetable as distributed at the Forum are available from the contacts identified at the end of this update.

CFA Boundary Area Selection

The single greatest amount of time has been spent by the Partners Technical Team on the CFA area selection process. Community forests are area based tenures. Once the CFA has been issued by the Province, only the Fort Nelson Community Forest (FNCF) can harvest timber within the approved tenure area. The only exception to this would be the case where there is an overlap with BC Timber Sales (BCTS). A resulting “volume reservation” due to overlap would allow BCTS to harvest within the Community Forest.

The Partners Technical Team has been following a rigorous process to identify the areas that would support the 185,000 m³ of allowable annual cut as offered by the province. In addition, the area selection process has largely avoided areas where provincial or First Nation’s Boreal Caribou restrictions are in place. After the mapping exercise was completed the areas were flown over by helicopter to re-confirm the results of the mapping exercise. The potential CFA areas have been “fine-tuned” at every step along the way.

A formal meeting with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (Ministry) was held on November 22nd, 2017 to submit and review the area selection information package prepared by the CFA Partners. The information was well received and led to a second meeting with the Ministry on December 8th, 2017 where formal feedback was received from the Ministry on the proposed CFA area submitted by the Partners.

The area selection package submitted to the Ministry on November 22nd had a significant amount of overlap with BC Timber Sales (BCTS) pricing units. BCTS was founded in 2003 with a mandate to provide the cost and price benchmarks for timber harvested on public lands in BC. BCTS directly manages approximately 20% of the Crown Allowable Annual Cut (AAC). BCTS needed to demonstrate that BC has credible price and cost benchmark data for the Market Pricing System through auctions of timber harvested from public land in BC. This pricing information is used to counter U.S. authorities’ arguments that the public ownership of BC forests leads to subsidies and lower cost timber on BC forested public lands.

The Partners did not try to avoid BCTS pricing units as BCTS had been relatively inactive in the Fort Nelson Timber Supply Area over the last 10 – 12 years. At the December 8th, 2017 meeting, the Ministry informed the CFA Partners that “BCTS operating areas are important provincially and if any of the current BCTS areas are to be included in the CFA boundary, a volume reservation to BCTS in addition to the CFA AAC is required. Alternatively, the BCTS areas may be excluded from the CFA boundary.”

There are significant “pros” and “cons” to having BCTS area/volume included in the CFA AAC. The Partners Technical Team is currently evaluating the BCTS option and how BCTS could be made part of the forest sector revitalization in Fort Nelson.

Management Plan

A significant component of the CFA process is the development of a Management Plan (and Business Plan) for the Fort Nelson Community Forest. This is a defined requirement for the CFA. The Management Plan is all-inclusive and looks at, but is not limited to the following:

- CFA Overview including mapping for the CFA area, description of the CFA, environmental and cultural considerations;
- Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles;
- Short-Term Management Objectives;
- Medium and long-term management objectives;
- Description of the forest resource;
- Managing for non-timber values;
- Community awareness and support;
- Administrative authority and structure; and
- Business Plan.

The development of the Management Plan is happening concurrently with the area selection process. For more information on the CFA process and the Management Plan, in particular, please go to: <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/hth/external/!publish/web/timber-tenures/community/cfa-application-requirements-mar-2017.pdf>.

Legal Agreements

The development of the legal agreements that define a Limited Partnership model between the NRRM and FNFN is 95% complete. The documents making up the Agreement are as follows:

- Limited Partnership Agreement – creating the FNFN/NRRM Community Forest Limited Partnership;
- Shareholder Agreement – between First Nation LP, NRRM and Community Forest(CF) Corp; and
- Articles for the CF Corp.

A final, intensive review of the documents is still required by the Partners prior to the documents going to FNFN Council and NRRM Regional Council for their respective reviews, final approval and sign-off.

Service Provider Evaluation

As demonstrated at the October 19th, 2017 Community Forum, there are various possible arrangements for the management and operation of a Community Forest.

One presentation, made by Jeff Beale of the Little Prairie Community Forest (LPCF) in Chetwynd, described how two First Nations (West Moberly and Salteau) and the District of Chetwynd worked as partners in their community forest venture. The primary service provider for the LPCF is West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd. A second presentation by Jim Atkinson of the McLeod Lake Mackenzie Community Forest (MLMCF) showed a different example whereby the MCMCF had enough expertise on hand in Mackenzie that a service provider was not utilized. Over time the MCMCF has moved to the point where it now has a full-time General Manager.

As part of this study the Partners sent out a formal Request for Expression of Interest to eight (8) mainstream forest products companies in BC, as well as eight (8) forestry consultant companies. Three submissions were received in response, by the submission date of December 15th, 2017. One forest products company and two forestry consulting companies made submissions.

The Partners are in the process of evaluating the best option for the management and operation of the FNCF. Much work and study are still required in this area. At this point we are performing due diligence by exploring all the options available to us.

Next Community Forum

The next Community Forum will take place following completion of the CFA boundary area selection process, and the preparation of a draft Management Plan that has approval from both Councils. The Partners would like to have a significant discussion with the FNFN and NRRM communities and receive input on the draft management plan prior to the CFA application package being submitted to the Ministry for approval and subsequent license issuance.

Questions regarding the joint CFA application can be directed to:

Fort Nelson First Nation

Heather Gairdner
Community Forestry & Wildlife Coordinator
(250) 774.6313
heather.gairdner@fnnation.ca

Northern Rockies Regional Municipality

Jack Stevenson
Regional Development Officer
(250) 774.2541
jstevenson@northernrockies.ca