

North Cowichan Municipal Forestry Program Fact Sheet / Background

The Mission statement for North Cowichan's Forestry Program is:

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

The mandate for funding the Forestry Program, as stipulated by Council in 1981, is as follows:

Forestry management expenditures and operational costs will be financed entirely through the cumulative revenues generated by sales of the forest resources.

Fast Facts:

- The Municipality of North Cowichan is one of the few communities in North America that has privately owned forest lands that are managed for the benefit of residents.
- The Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR) is 5,000 ha in size, or 25% of the land base in North Cowichan.
- Targeted logging up to an annual maximum of 2% of the total forested area is conducted as part of sustainable management of the MFR. This model is supported by an integrated forest management plan that balances harvesting, recreation, and conservation. The annual allowable cut (AAC) is 20,000 cubic metres per year.
- One of the ways that the Municipality ensures sustainability of the MFR is by replanting logged areas. Replanting is conducted with species that naturally occur in this area, namely Douglas-fir, Western red cedar, and White pine. Over the last 34 years, the Municipality has planted nearly 2 million seedlings.
- North Cowichan estimates that the MFR sequesters approximately 1,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, dramatically contributing to the Municipality's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- The income generated from the MFR land base such as logging and land communication tower leases within the MFR allows the Municipality to reduce tax rates, purchase additional land, finance firefighting efforts, and give back to the community.

Financial Facts:

The Forestry Program is self-funded, with no costs to the taxpayers of North Cowichan. In fact, since 1987, the Forestry Program has accomplished the following:

- Between 2012 and 2014, generated an average annual profit of \$285,000 for a total of \$854,638 over the last 3 years. Of this profit, \$253,000 has been transferred to the General Revenues fund, where it directly reduces tax rates.
- Enabled North Cowichan to purchase 25 hectares of land (11 hectares in 1999 and 14 hectares in 1995), taken directly from profits from the Forestry Program.
- Contributed \$359,000 to the Forest Legacy Fund to contribute to special projects as approved by Council (e.g. BC Forest Discovery Centre, Chemainus Visitor Information Centre).
- Established a rainy-day fund for the Forestry Program to draw upon during periods when the log market is poor. This fund allows the Municipality to continue maintaining the MFR lands without having to harvest additional volumes to compensate for low timber prices. The fund currently sits at \$1.17 million, of which \$500,000 is designated for new land acquisition and \$670,000 for other unforeseen circumstances.
- Accessed over \$10 million in federal and provincial grants for various job creation programs on the MFR land base.
- Generated 10 to 12 person-years of work annually, depending on activity levels each year. In 2014, the Forestry Program generated 10.8 person years of work.

Recreation Facts:

- The MFR is known throughout the region for its range of recreational opportunities, including world class hiking and mountain biking trails on Maple Mountain, Mount Tzouhalem, and Mount Prevost.
- One of the best known trails within the MFR is the 23 kilometer Maple Syrup Trail on Maple Mountain, which draws mountain bikers from around southern Vancouver Island. Information on this trail system is available here: <http://www.trailforks.com/region/maple-mountain/>
- Throughout 2016, North Cowichan will be building a Parks and Trails Master Plan to establish a long-term approach to managing and developing its park and trail resources, including resources within the MFR. This Master Plan will help clarify the role of the MFR as a recreational asset within North Cowichan. Information on this process is available here: www.northcowichan.ca/parkstrails
- North Cowichan's Forestry staff work closely with the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society to ensure that harvesting within the MFR is coordinated with the recreational users of the trails.

Community Facts:

Profits from the Forestry Program allow the Municipality of North Cowichan to give back to the community in a wide variety of ways. The Forestry Program contributes to our community through:

- Providing an annual scholarship of \$1,200 and two annual bursaries of \$600 to high-school graduates within the Municipality, funded through the Forestry Program's \$56,000 Scholarship & Bursary fund.
- Annually donating three logging truck loads of firewood to youth-oriented groups in the Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys (approximate value = \$2100).
- Sponsoring a value-added wood-working contest in secondary schools and providing \$1,000 in awards.
- Delivering education for public, private, and post-secondary schools on forest management and the Community Forest, led by staff in the Forestry Program.
- Maintaining a program for removal of invasive species within the MFR.

Forest Fire Facts:

- North Cowichan must pay for the firefighting costs of any wildfires that occur on Municipal lands. To minimize these costs, North Cowichan has entered into a cost-sharing agreement with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations. The agreement specifies that North Cowichan will contribute a maximum amount per day and the Province will cover the additional costs to extinguish the fire.
- North Cowichan has established a firefighting contingency fund to pay for a significant fire. The contingency fund sets aside a portion of profits from the Forestry Program each year and currently contains \$149,000.
- North Cowichan has accessed \$41,257 of provincial funds to create: a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for North Cowichan; a UBCM pilot forest fuel reduction project; and an operational fuel reduction project.

More Information:

For more information on North Cowichan's Municipal Forest Reserve, please visit the website at www.northcowichan.ca/forestry or contact Darrell Frank, Municipal Forester at darrell.frank@northcowichan.ca.