

2020 FORESTRY REVIEW & ENGAGEMENT FAQs

1. How Much Does MFR Forestry Operations Contribute Yearly?

The MFR is self-sustaining and provides a source of 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%), and the Forest Legacy Fund (20%).

Over the last 5 years (2015-2019), the Forestry Program has generated an average of \$288,000 annual net profit and an average of \$130,000 went directly to General Revenue each year which helps reduce the municipal tax burden on residents.

2. What is the Municipal Forest Reserve?

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. Selective harvesting is carried out in the MFR. Each year, generally under 50 hectares is harvested, which is approximately equivalent to harvesting 1% of the total MFR area.

What Is This Engagement Project About?

In response to public interest in harvesting activities, North Cowichan Municipal Council launched two initiatives:

- A public engagement process, both deep and broad, on the future of the Municipal Forest Reserve, and
- A technical review of forest management practices, options, and scenarios that is being conducted by the UBC Partnership Group and will be informed by the outcomes of the public engagement.

This FAQ and the public engagements mentioned are part of the public engagement process.



3. How Can I Stay in the Loop with the Forestry Review and Engagement?

Opportunities to get involved with Engagement on the North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve Management Plan will be posted on the District of North Cowichan's website, PlaceSpeak, and on social media. You can contact Megan Jordan, Manager, Communications and Public Engagement to be added to the project email list, or sign up yourself at www.northcowichan.ca/subscribe.

Notes from the Working Group meetings as well as any presentations given to the Working Group will be available on North Cowichan's website and PlaceSpeak Topic within 10 business days after each meeting.

4. Is the Public Engagement Process Continuing during the Pandemic?

Yes. After an initial pause on engagement, Council decided to move ahead with a primarily digital engagement plan to enable people to participate by telephone, email, an online survey and remote workshops.

5. Are Local First Nations Being Consulted?

North Cowichan respectfully acknowledges that the Municipal Forest Reserve is located on the traditional and unceded lands of Cowichan Tribes, Penelakut Tribe, and Halalt, Stz'uminus, Lyackson and Snuneymuxw First Nations. As such, local First Nations are being consulted through a separate process led by an Indigenous engagement consultant. First Nations Consultation is occurring on a government-to-government basis. Under legislation in the *Community Charter* and FOIPPA, this is a confidential process and any meetings held during the consultation will be closed to the public, unless the First Nation and municipality decide otherwise.

6. How were members of the Working Group Selected?

Approximately 70 applications were received either through Simple Survey or as PDFs downloaded from North Cowichan's website and emailed directly to Lees + Associates. There were a few duplicates, which were consolidated. There were also a few incomplete applications,

but all of those were rectified or resubmitted, so as not to exclude anyone as a result of technical difficulties.

Applications were each reviewed separately by Erik Lees, Megan Turnock, and Eileen Finn of LEES + Associates and Dr. Stephen Sheppard of the UBC Partnership Group. To help create a balanced working group, they noted the applicants' interest and background as:

- general
- recreation
- environmental/conservation
- economy
- industry/forestry

They also noted those who indicated they had experience in communication or engagement and land use planning. Many people had overlapping interests, so applicants were not limited to interest in only one category. Lees was sure to consider gender and strove to reach a gender balance in the group. Connections to community groups or networks that will help to improve the public engagement process were also considered assets.

Applicants who live outside of the Municipality of North Cowichan were not eligible; however, non-residents will have the opportunity to participate through the online survey and can attend in-person events.

Although Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) members were considered, Lees + Associates concluded that the FAC members will have other opportunities for participation and wanted to make an effort to avoid the Working Group becoming a second technical group.

Since the initial formation of the Working Group, two members are no longer able to participate. Replacement members are being chosen from the original applicant list. [The Working Group](#) membership will be updated throughout the process.

7. What is the primary role of the Working Group?

The working group will help influence the public engagement process, and help determine if any key stakeholders have been missed through a stakeholder mapping exercise. While the group will not be a decision-making body, they will provide key input to Lees + Associates on the future of the Municipal Forest Reserve. Input from any one group or person does not carry more weight than input from the general public, or the next person. All feedback is extremely valuable and we hope to engage as many residents as possible throughout this process. It is important to North Cowichan that residents feel heard and valued.

8. How was the larger list of Stakeholders identified

An initial list of approximately 50 stakeholders were compiled by North Cowichan staff, this list was given to Lees + Associates to determine who should be included in the stakeholder calls. This list is a draft, and a living document, to be continually updated throughout the project. Stakeholders will continue to be informed of all opportunities to engage throughout the project.

9. How were stakeholders selected for an interview with Lees + Associates?

Lees + Associates, in collaboration with the UBC Partnership Group, chose the stakeholders who would participate in the stakeholder interviews.

10. What is the primary role of stakeholders in the engagement process?

Stakeholders interviews were intended to help Lees + Associates better understand the range of perspectives in the community.

11. What will Lees + Associates be asking?

Interviewees will be asked about:

- Themselves and their roles at any organizations that may be relevant to the MFR;

- their familiarity with the MFR,
- what they value about the MFR,
- their sense of whether others share those values,
- what they see as the future for the MFR,
- feedback on how to what a fair and robust engagement process would look like for them,
- others that should be notified and involved.

12. How will answers be used?

Answers will be used to help Lees + Associates make sure they identify key topics of interest so they can create a process that is inclusive of the variety of perspectives within the community.

13. Who are the stakeholders selected for interviews representing?

Lees + Associates is interviewing people from a range of organizations including neighbourhood associations, conservation and environmental groups, forest industry and workers representatives, recreation organizations, and economic organizations (i.e. chambers of commerce, for example). The key points from these interviews will be compiled and summarized and will be included in the engagement summary report. Stakeholders who were interviewed will be included in this report, excluding any who wish to remain anonymous.

14. Why is the stakeholder list for interviews not being released before the interviews take place?

Out of respect for the interviewee's privacy, those included in the interviews will not be announced publicly. Some stakeholders who have been contacted have already expressed concern over being able to freely share information, and as a result, some may want to remain anonymous.

15. What Issues Have Stakeholders Discussed in the Interviews?

Stakeholders raised a wide variety of issues and concerns, while also discussing a wide variety of elements that they valued about the Municipal Forest Reserve. The most common sentiment expressed was that there was a need to find a balance between different uses and benefits.

Other issues raised included:

- Concern about watershed health and clean water
- Concern about adherence to 30m stream setbacks as minimums
- Interest in ensuring MFR supports local mills, woodworkers, jobs, and secondary producers
- Need to take the Natural Asset Value of intact forest into consideration
- Need to support local economic vitality
- Concerns over tax implications of changing forestry within the MFR
- Importance of Indigenous traditional uses and cultural sites within MFR
- Consultation and consent of local First Nations
- Interest in continued access to MFR for recreation, sightseeing
- Concerns over harvesting practices, particularly clearcutting
- Appreciation of improved harvesting practices within the MFR
- Appreciation for the sustainability of harvesting
- Need to adapt to climate change
- Concern about visual impact of harvesting
- Understanding that tourism is enhanced by the forest
- Appreciation for the recreational trails and amenities within the MFR, and their contributions to the local economy
- Appreciation for forestry and forestry-related jobs as vital, family supporting jobs
- Appreciation for the contributions of MFR funds to the community
- Appreciation for the diminished tax burden
- Concerns over transparency of the management of the MFR
- Appreciation for improved transparency within the management of the MFR
- Understanding that the forest is vital to local identity
- Concerns about wildfire mitigation
- Concerns about wildlife habitat
- Need to cultivate “social licence” for any forestry within the MFR