



## Forestry and Harvesting 2020 – Frequently Asked Questions

This document contains information about harvesting activities that will be occurring in North Cowichan's Municipal Forest Reserve in 2019. In 2019, Council confirmed that harvesting will be limited to completion of 2018 contracts and salvaging blowdown from the December 2018 windstorm.

Questions about technical aspects of 2019 harvesting activities can be sent to [info@northcowichan.ca](mailto:info@northcowichan.ca) and this document will be updated with new questions and answers on a weekly basis.

Opinions or requests about future management of the Municipal Forest Reserve can be sent to [council@northcowichan.ca](mailto:council@northcowichan.ca).

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### May 2020

#### **1. How many direct, full-time-equivalent jobs are created from harvesting activities within the Municipal Forest Reserve?**

The Forestry Department does not specifically track the number of jobs created from harvesting. In the past, there was a tracking sheet that was used to estimate the number of person years based on activity. This tracking sheet was used as a tool to provide an *estimated number of person years* based on productivity assumptions per activity. Given the inaccuracy, outdated assumptions, and lack of Council or Committee direction to accurately track these metrics, the spread sheet for providing estimated person years for employment was not continued.

In 2019, it is estimated that harvesting within the MFR has created 10-12 full-time equivalent jobs. 2019 was a particularly active year, so the estimation is likely conservative. Other than the specific harvesting employment, other activities such road building, road maintenance, increased danger tree removal, silviculture work, and MNC staff forestry positions should be factored into the number of jobs created by the harvesting activity within the MFR. It is also important to note, this estimation does not

factor in the indirect jobs created such as fuel, oil, and equipment purchases, mechanics, accounting services, etc.

## December 2019

2. **What is the status of Public Engagement on the Municipal Forest Reserve?** On November 18, 2019, it was announced that Vancouver-based engagement firm, Lees and Associates, had been awarded the public engagement contract. Out of 8 strong proposals received, Lees and Associates submitted the highest scoring one, showcasing their team's strength and diversity. Since indigenous engagement will be paramount to this project, a separate government to government engagement will take place with First Nations whose traditional territory overlaps with the MFR.
  
3. **What is North Cowichan's policy related to viewscapes, visual quality objectives, etc, within the Municipal Forest Reserve?** There is no written formal policy specific to management of viewscapes. Although, there is currently no formal written policy, visual quality is (and has been) part of the overall planning and review process for a proposed harvest area. This includes incorporating the previous visual quality assessment to aid in the cut-block design and planning process. In the cut-block design stage, strategic considerations to create visual screening to reduce the overall visual impacts include specific placement of retention patches, increase in overall amount/size of leave tree retention patches; and cut-block orientation, shape, size and overall design to reduce any potential visual impacts.

Moving forward, all aspects of forestry, including policies that pertain to viewscapes, will be part of the new management plan that will come from the review process that is currently underway for the MFR. Any such policies will be available for review/comment as part of the public engagement process once we reach that stage and will ultimately need to be reviewed and approved by Council before they are implemented.

4. **Can you please provide me with an update on the interim forest management plan? According to the UBC proposal, this plan kicks in a few days from now, on January 1, 2020?** At the July 3 Special Council Meeting, Council approved a recommendation that included several items, one of which was the interim forestry management strategy timeline. The motion recommended "[t]hat Council support, in principle, North Cowichan collaborating with UBC and the Coastal Douglas Fir

Partnership, to develop an interim forestry management strategy for the estimated period between September 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021.”

The timeline in the UBC proposal simply sets out the period of time that the interim plan covers. UBC has been working on modeling work that will be used in scenario planning. This will inform the interim plan, with future recommendations coming to the FAC for review/comment, and then to Council for consideration and approval.

The UBC group and staff continue to work towards the estimated September 1, 2020 timeline.

## November 2019

5. **North Cowichan cut a lot of trees on Mt Tzouhalem during the week of November 4. These are outside of the identified work area; has the scope of work been expanded, did MNC consult with CTSS?** There has been a few additional small areas where trees that were recently blown over have been harvested concurrently with the previously identified harvest area. These newly identified areas contained both blow down and danger trees impacting the adjacent hiking/biking trails and did not cause any additional long term trail closures.

The contractor is continuing to harvest the blown down/damaged/danger trees within the road side stratum areas which were included as part of Council’s approved harvest plan. These areas include any blown down timber/damaged/danger trees that are within close proximity to the roadways on Mount Tzouhalem with no specific areas identified. Signage showing the “spot closure” areas that are comprised mainly of the roadside areas have been posted in several locations on Mount Tzouhalem throughout the duration of harvesting activity.

It is important to note that some standing trees need to be cut to safely remove the blowdown/damaged trees, especially where blown over trees are entangled with one or more standing trees. This is for both the safety of the hand-fallers and the equipment operators conducting the salvage operation.

North Cowichan has toured and reviewed the blowdown salvage harvesting on Mount Tzouhalem on two separate occasions with a CTSS representative. CTSS has provided ongoing support as we continue salvage harvesting.

## October 2019

### **1. What is the status of the harvest of 2018 contracts and blowdown?**

The salvage work continues on Mount Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain with work estimated to be completed early November. Mount Richards (Escarpment Way) started the week of Oct 21 and the estimated completion is mid/late November. The blowdown salvage work on Mount Prevost/Sicker has been tendered and the successful contractor was Millstone Contracting. Work is anticipated to begin mid-November and be completed by Dec 31 – weather depending. In regard to 2018 Contracts – One cutblock remains on Mount Richards with work anticipated to begin early November and be completed by Dec 31.

### **2. What is the status of engagement on the MFR?**

North Cowichan has issued a request for proposals to procure an engagement team to help engage the public on the Municipal Forestry Reserve. The RFP has closed, submissions have been evaluated, and North Cowichan hopes to award the tender and begin engagement in November. The consultant will help support development of an interim and long-term forest management plan with public feedback.

### **3. Has there been a Forest Advisory Committee meeting lately?**

Currently, there are no meetings scheduled; however, the FAC will play a role during the public engagement process and forestry review.

## March 2019

### **1. Will there be an opportunity for the public to review the 2019 Forestry Plan before it is put to tender?**

On February 15, 2019, Council approved harvesting the remaining 2018 contract obligations and the salvaging blowdown from the December 2018 windstorm. As part of this decision, Council confirmed that all harvest plans will be provided to the Forestry Advisory Committee (FAC), and their recommendations will be forwarded to Council for review and approval. Therefore, any harvest plans will be part of the agenda for FAC meetings and the public can review and provide comment to the FAC and/or Council for consideration. FAC and Council

agendas are posted here, typically a few days before each scheduled meeting:

<https://www.northcowichan.ca/custom/council-meetings.aspx>.

Council has not requested public consultation on the 2019 harvesting plans other than through the expanded FAC and through public input at open Council meetings.

**2. The 2019 Blow-down Harvesting Plan seems to address less than 20% of the blow-down. The salvage operations are concentrated in 3 to 7 acre cut blocks leaving most of the trees on the forest floor. Does this really address the beetle and fire risk issues?**

The 2019 harvest plans that have been approved cover the significant areas of blow down/damaged trees within respective areas. Due to weather constraints, Forest Engineers were not able to complete their initial assessments in the other identified areas throughout the MFR but they are currently working on them now. All future blow down harvest summaries will be completed once the information is obtained and will be submitted to the FAC for review, prior to approval by Council.

**3. We think most people viewed the blow-down salvage operation as a fallen tree removal operation and are surprised to see maps with cut blocks. To the untrained eye, these cut blocks will end up looking like clear-cuts with some trees left standing. The fact that there is replanting means that the canopy is going to be opened. Opening the canopy brings broom and dries out the forest floor and increases the risk of fire. Are we sure that this is the most effective way to salvage the fallen trees?**

There are varying degrees of blow down scattered throughout the MFR. Maple Mountain, for example, has extensive blow down and there are already extensive openings with disturbed soils from up-turned roots. Removing damaged timber in these areas will result in openings similar in size to those already created naturally, and we want to ensure it is re-planted to get a healthy crop of trees established. This is one of several reasons for this approach, and the risk of broom establishment is one of them. The FAC is made up people with a broad range of professional backgrounds/expertise and they unanimously voted in favor of the 2019 Blow-down Harvesting Plan as proposed, with minor additions unrelated to harvesting methods. We are confident this is the most effective way to salvage the fallen trees.

**4. Shouldn't we cleanup the clear-cuts filled with broom on Stoney Hill before we cut 5 new patches within walking distance of the old cuts? What assurances do we have that they won't become broom patches in the near future?**

We could cut and remove the broom as indicated but this would be very costly and time consuming with no guarantee for success. The best defense for broom is a proactive approach and that is what we intend to do. This includes washing machinery before entering uncontaminated sites, prompt replanting of seedlings, grass-seeding areas with exposed soils where it makes sense, and continual monitoring for broom establishment.

**5. In areas of blowdown that have riparian areas, will those riparian areas be left alone?**

This is part of the forest engineering assessments. Thus far, no riparian areas have been identified and/or suggested for salvage. If such areas are identified, further considerations and required assessments will be done. There are some trees down on Maple Mountain that are close to a non-fish bearing small water course. This area will need to be further evaluated, but given the small size and it being directly off the road, it was not considered as part of the initial package.

**6. The 7000 cubic meters scheduled to be cut on Tzouhalem, Maple and Stoney Hill will remove quite a few blow-down trees, but only a small fraction of the entire blow-down. It appears, based on visual observation on the 3 mountains, that we are only looking to recover 10 to 20% of the blow-down (maybe less). Is that correct?**

There are significant areas of blown-down timber that are not part of the MFR and on private property. Not knowing where these visual observations came from makes it difficult to answer specifically, but over the 3 mountains with areas within the MFR, we are looking to recover all significant areas that are easily accessible, which is well over 10-20%.

**7. The cut blocks planned for Tzouhalem, Maple and Stoney Hill seem to fall under the definition of a clear-cut. Most are between 1 and 3 hectares with most of the trees removed and they will require replanting. By my math based on the supplied hectares and cubic meter harvest we will be removing approx. 75% of the trees in these cut-blocks. Are these basically clear-cuts with a 25% retention?**

We won't know what will need to be removed to reduce the safety/fire risks in the identified blown-down areas so it is not possible to comment on opening sizes nor what retention might be left.

**8. I think there is a misunderstanding in the public about blow-down salvage. I pictured the blow-down trees being extracted from the forest individually (mainly the ones visible on the side of trails and the roads) - not block patch cuts. From the Municipal Forester's presentation to the Forest Advisory Committee, I assume that this is not realistic.**

Below is a picture from Maple Mountain – the majority of the area is blown-down and it is like this in other areas throughout the MFR. There are tangled up trees with standing live ones, there are trees that are at 45 degree angles into standing trees – the safety of the contractor and for the people hiking/biking in these areas is the top priority and individually extracting timber in this case is not possible. In areas where it is safe and feasible to do so, trees will be extracted individually.



**9. The Forestry Experts at the Performing Arts Center meeting discussed the beetle problem and were unconvinced that there was a risk of infestation beyond the fallen trees - does this deserve more investigation?**

We know the Province is looking into the risks associated with having significant blow-down in Parks and other areas. We have reached out to the Provincial Forest Entomologist asking for more information on what the Province is doing and hoping they can provide more information on associated risk. Here is a link to more information on the Douglas Fir Beetle: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/managing-our-forest-resources/forest-health/forest-pests/bark-beetles/douglas-fir-beetle>

**10. Is it true that we are actually increasing our patch-cutting in 2019 over 2017 (last forestry report online)? It looks to me like we are increasing our patch cuts by almost 50%. From 10,500 cubic meters to over 16,000 cubic meters.**

North Cowichan's annual allowable cut is 20,000m<sup>3</sup>. In the last several years, this has not been achieved. North Cowichan's harvesting plans for 2018, which were not completed for several reasons, would have been around the 20,000m<sup>3</sup> mark. Given the latest direction from Council, for 2019, we are going to finish the 2018 outstanding contract obligations and target the blown-down areas that are approved by Council. The Municipal Forester has provided rough estimates on these volumes within the harvest summaries for the blow-down, but predicting recoverable volume and what extra trees may need to be taken to safety extract the blown down/damaged timber is impossible to predict accurately.

**11. How can we add more patch cuts to Stoney Hill before cleaning up the Broom in the existing cut blocks? Once you open the canopy on Stoney Hill, the Broom will come. I have walked most of the recent clear-cuts on Stoney Hill - they are overrun with Broom. Which is a greater fire risk: trees down in the forest or dry exposed Broom?**

We suggest talking to the BC Wildfire Service on which has a greater fire risk. Broom is tough to predict in some cases – for example, there is another cutblock on Stoney Hill that you pass before you get to the cutblock you are referring to, logged 5 years before in 2001 that is full of nice healthy Douglas Fir with no broom directly along the main road access. It's important to be aware that exposed soils from the blow-down also pose a risk of broom

establishment. The knowledge around the risk of broom establishment has changed a lot in the last 10-12 years and this is something the Municipal Forester will be watching very closely in all areas throughout the MFR.

**12. In what ways does leaving trees down increase fire risk? Can this risk be mitigated without removing the downed trees, such as by bucking them so they are on the ground?**

Leaving the trees down increases fuel loading in the forest. Bucking the trees on the ground still leaves the fuel on/close to the ground, but could reduce the hazard as elevated fuel is a higher risk.

**13. Why are we still awarding Municipal logging contracts without a competitive bidding process?**

All of the 2018 harvest contracts were tendered according to North Cowichan's [Procurement Policy](#), with the exception of the Maple Mountain Fire Salvage. The Maple Mountain Blowdown salvage was intended to be direct awarded for the reasons outlined in the Notice of Intent (NOI). Under North Cowichan's Procurement Policy, an NOI has to be advertised for 10 days, during which anyone that is qualified can state they want the opportunity to bid on the project, after which, the project is tendered for public bid. A contractor did inquire and express interest in bidding on the Maple Mountain blow-down salvage project within the 10 day time frame. Under the Procurement Policy, the Maple Mountain project will now be going out for public competitive bid. The rest of the approved blow-down salvage areas will be put out for public bid when ready to do so.