

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.

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.
- The income generated from the MFR land base such as logging and communication tower leases within the MFR allows the Municipality to reduce tax rates, enhance recreation opportunities, finance firefighting efforts, purchase additional land and give back to the community.
- One of the ways that the Municipality ensures sustainability of the MFR is by replanting logged areas at the earliest possible time with the best seedling stock available. Replanting is conducted with species that naturally occur in this area, namely Douglas-fir, Western red cedar, and Western White pine. Over the last 34 years, the Municipality has planted nearly 2 million seedlings.
- North Cowichan estimates that the MFR sequesters approximately 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, dramatically contributing to the Municipality's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Maintain roads, access points, gates and clean up roadside garbage throughout the Municipal Forest Reserve.

Financial Facts

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.

We operate as a market logger – when prices are up the objective is to log the full AAC and when prices drop, the cut level is reduced. To account for any future variability and to follow the council mandate to be self-supporting, a Forest Reserve Fund was established to support Forestry Operations when markets were poor. The Forest Reserve also is set up to develop, maintain and expand the Municipal Forest reserve; fight forest fires; replace forestry department vehicles and equipment; award scholarships and bursaries; and aid in capital projects. The Forest Reserve fund Contains \$1.49m as of Dec 31, 2017.

Profits from the Forestry Program support the operational costs but they also allow the Municipality 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
- Annually donating three logging truck loads of firewood to youth-oriented groups in the Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys (approximate value = \$3,000)
- Sponsoring a value-added wood-working contest in secondary schools and providing \$1,000 in prizes
- Provide fundraising opportunities for local groups through the roadside litter pick up program
- Partnership with School District 79 to cut firewood to fund school activities
- Aiding with capital projects such the Chemainus Museum renovation, Mount Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain parking lot expansion and Maple Mountain washroom
- Contributes to special projects as approved by Council (e.g. BC Forest Discovery Centre, Chemainus Visitor Information Centre).
- Of the profits, 30% are allocated to general revenue which contributes towards reducing taxes for the residents of North Cowichan

- Delivering education for public, private, and post-secondary schools on forest management within the Municipal Forest Reserve led by Forestry staff
- Generate 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:

- In 2017, North Cowichan endorsed the 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 helps to clarify the role of the MFR as a recreational asset within North Cowichan.
- 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.
- Two of the best known trails within the MFR are the 23 kilometer Maple Syrup Trail on Maple Mountain, and Double-D on Mount Tzouhalem which draws mountain bikers from all over Vancouver Island.
- 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.
- In 2018, North Cowichan hosted the opening stage of the BC Bike Race on Mount Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain. Because of this success, North Cowichan has been selected again to host the opening stage of this 7-day race in 2019.

Forest Fire Facts:

- North Cowichan pays for the firefighting costs of any wildfires that occur within the Municipal Forest Reserve. The Municipality's four fire departments act as the initial attack crews on wildfires. To aid in forest firefighting, North Cowichan has a Wildfire Response Agreement with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. The agreement specifies that North Cowichan will provide initial attack to a wildfire where possible and the BC Wildfire Service will aid by providing crews, equipment and expertise as best they can with the resources available at no cost to the Municipality.

- 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 contains \$149,000 as of December 31, 2017.
- 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.
- In 2018, North Cowichan will be applying for funding through the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding grant to update the Community Wildfire Protection that was previously completed in 2006.