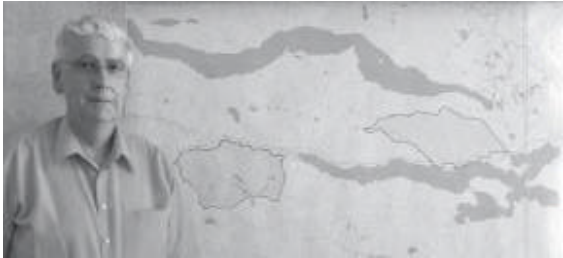


Alberni Valley NEWS

City moves into forestry



By Heather Reid Alberni Valley News

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Port Alberni is closer to having a little piece of the forest to call its own.

Pending provincial government approval, city council's community forest plan would give the town the rights to manage 18,000 cubic metres of standing timber in two areas around Sproat Lake and Taylor River.

Community forest agreements involve a transfer of decision-making powers from the province to municipalities that want to participate in local forest resource stewardship. The B.C. model stems from a global movement toward community involvement in forestry operations that encompass cultural, economic and ecological values of the land.

Darren Hiller, of DRH Forest Consulting, said the project isn't licensed yet, but that "it's going to go forward." DRH is preparing the forestry plan for the city's application.

At the moment, Hiller said the plan is waiting on an announcement about second-growth harvesting expected from Forests Minister Rich Coleman.

On May 24, Coleman indicated that a new set of policies was coming soon — policies that the minister said will shift forestry from old-growth forests to second-growth trees.

Coleman also claimed that the changes in B.C. forestry policies will limit raw log exports.

Hiller said that's good news for the proposed Port Alberni Community Forest, which has smaller Douglas fir suitable for saw logs.

"The profits seem to be in second-growth," he said.

Port Alberni was invited to apply for its own slice of forest in 2004. Gillian Trumper, who was the MLA at the time, said that, "any vision for a community forest is a long-term project." Communities hoping for jobs and revenue have to realize that it takes time, Trumper said.

At a council meeting in mid-May, Mayor Ken McRae said the city is looking at 13 cut blocks in an area that is suitable for year-round logging.

"We expect to be ready for logging next spring and we will be using the highest logging standards under the Canadian Standard Association," McRae said.

Coun. Jack McLeman said that a board of directors selected from the community will oversee forest practices in the community forest. "That's the next step," he said, indicating that the board will include a broad spectrum of interests.

Hiller said that, at a minimum, logging methods on the land will adhere to the current forest practices legislation.

"It's in a community watershed," Hiller added, explaining that another layer of standards comes into play to protect riparian zones.

McLeman says that the intent is to use local contractors and process here as much as possible.

McLeman just returned from the B.C. Community Forest Association annual conference in McBride. "I learned quite a bit," McLeman said. Both McLeman and Hiller said they're looking at existing projects from which to glean ideas.

McLeman said that the McBride Community Forest Corporation generated \$1.4 million last year.

McLeman said he took notes on the Harrop-Procter Community Forest in the Kootenays, too. They implemented an ecosystem-based plan with value-added strategies to maximize community benefits.

The operation ruled out CSA and ISO certification (held by logging giants like Western Forest Products, and TimberWest) in favour of the strictest eco-certification under the Forest Stewardship Council.

Formed in 1999, the community forest in the Kootenays now produces products ranging from organic herbs to flooring, which can be purchased directly on their website (www.hpcommunityforest.org).

"If the price of wood is good, we'll probably make a few bucks," McRae said.

In the long term, McRae estimates that the community forest could provide the municipality with annual revenues in the range of \$250,000, which would provide working capital for community projects.

– With files from Francisco Canjura