



Coalition Update

BC Coalition for Implementation of the National Forest Strategy

Mission: *To have BC known as a world leader in sustainable forest management.*

Purpose: *Promote the advancement of sustainable forest management in BC; working with the National Forest Strategy framework.*

This is the second in a series of bi-monthly newsletters from the *BC Coalition for Implementation of the National Forest Strategy*. The first, in September 2005 focused on Ecosystem Based Management and included a commentary article by Dr. Gordon Weetman, Coalition Chair and retired University of BC Professor. In this issue the topic of discussion will be Theme 2 of the National Forest Strategy:

Sustainable Forest Communities.

About the National Forest Strategy:

The National Forest Strategy 2003-2008 is the fifth consecutive national strategy for the forest sector since 1981. The strategy is supported by a broad based group of government and non-government organizations known as the [National Forest Strategy Coalition](#).

The NFS is organized around eight broad strategic themes, each supported by several action items.

1. Ecosystem-based management,
2. Sustainable forest communities,
3. Rights and participation of Aboriginal Peoples,
4. Forest products benefits,
5. Knowledge & innovation for competitiveness and sustainability,
6. The urban forest and public engagement in sustainability,
7. Private woodlots contribution to sustainability,
8. Reporting and accountability.

About Theme #2—Sustainable Forest Communities

The second theme in the National Forest Strategy is **Sustainable Forest Communities**. In 2000, nearly 300 communities in Canada, described as being “heavily forest dependent”, had at least 50% of their employment base in the industrial forest sector. As well, more than 800 Aboriginal communities are

located within Canada’s forested regions and depend on the forest for their well-being. In British Columbia, a report by Simon Fraser University indicates that as many as 89 communities rely heavily on forestry and another 180 rely moderately on forestry.

Several decades ago, most

small and rural communities in forested areas of British Columbia had one or more sawmills at their center, and forestry was the primary source of employment. Over time, transportation links have improved, manufacturing technology

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The information and opinions contained herein are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of all members of the coalition.

Progress “Snapshot”

At a workshop held in Prince George in February 2005 participants were asked to identify accomplishments and gaps in BC’s implementation of the National Forest Strategy. A number of accomplishments were identified, many of which were underway before this strategy was adopted. Some of these accomplishments, and some initiatives that have emerged since are outlined below:

- Regional Land use Plans, Land and Resource Management Plans, and many local-level resource plans have involved an extensive ‘round table’ process that included local communities. Although this process has been highly successful from some perspectives, it has lacked the full participation of Aboriginal Peoples in most cases. The most recent plans have had some success at rectifying this through a combined round-table and ‘government-to-government’ process.
- BC’s Forestry Revitalization Plan and the *Forestry Revitalization Act* increased the volume of timber available for allocation to community forests. As of January 2005 over 245,000 hectares were being managed as community forests and new community forest invitations had been extended for over a quarter million cubic meters of timber.
- Community based trust funds such as the [Columbia Basin Trust](#) in southeastern BC and the [Northern Development Initiative Trust](#) in northern and central BC, as well as the Fraser Basin Trust provide an avenue and financial capacity for communities to work together on processes and initiatives that lead to community sustainability.
- The [Coast Sustainability Strategy](#) focuses on economic diversification in the coastal areas, particularly opportuni-

ties for First Nations communities. Two ecosystem-based forest management pilot projects are underway in the Central Coast with the Gitga’at and Kitasoo First Nations, Interfor and Western Forest Products. The projects will provide information used to help define ecosystem-based forest management for the coastal area.

- The Union of BC Municipalities has a well organized structure, including an active Community Economic Development Committee. The primary focus



Identifying accomplishments and information gaps

for the Committee is to improve the regional economic development opportunities for local governments. As such, the Committee continues to represent and is an advocate for communities on resource issues. It does this by monitoring, developing and making recommendations on policy regarding fish, forests, energy, mining, agriculture and water (as a commodity) that have the potential to impact the stability, viability and sustainability of BC communities. The Committee also works to connect communities to emerging economic development opportunities (e.g., value-added, tourism, technology, etc.).

- The Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic is one of the most significant single

events to impact forests in the interior of British Columbia and is expected to dramatically affect dozens of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Three groups representing local governments in the Cariboo Region, Omineca Region and First Nations have been established to ensure local communities take a strong role in the response to the epidemic.

These initiatives provide capacity and a strong starting point for communities to influence their economic, social and ecological sustainability.

The workshop participants did, however identify some gaps or challenges needing attention in BC.

There is a need for stronger relationships and coordination of activities between Aboriginal communities and other rural and forest dependent communities on matters of economic development and mutual interests in sustainability.

There is considerable opportunity to enhance the role and capacity of local communities in resource management planning and decision making, including a more structured approach to setting resource targets, making choices about development options, and sharing more directly in the costs and benefits of resource development choices.

The linkages between sustainability of rural and forest-dependent communities and prosperity of urban centers is not as well understood or recognized by the citizenry as it once was, and this needs to be restored.

Rural Communities—Ready to Chart Their Own Futures

Commentary by Cindy Pearce



Cindy Pearce

Though we often forget, in the global context, BC is uniquely blessed with a spectacular wealth of ecologically diverse forest resources, and we are located next door to two large markets in the US and Asia. Our forests are the foundation for the sense of place, the quality of life and the economies of BC's rural communities. Our challenge is to figure out how best to thrive in the global economy, while maintaining our quality of life and environmental integrity.

Currently three very different rural economies are emerging in forest-based communities in BC. Communities in the interior, within the eye of the unprecedented mountain pine beetle epidemic, must wisely manage the current boom resulting from the salvaging of damaged timber, while planning for the potential bust when the timber supply falls. On the coast, and in the remainder of the interior, industrial restructuring and the government's tenure reallocation process are prompting widespread mill closures (9 on the coast and 4 in the interior in the past 2 years) and dislocation of contractor workforces and forest management staff. For all, the financial challenges and stresses for companies and individuals are intense, and are quoted as key causes for the tragic fatality rate in the forest industry - 38 forest workers have died to date in 2005, almost twice the already unprecedented average of 25 per year.

The National Forest Strategy does an admi-

nable job of identifying the key priorities for achieving resilient forest-based communities in BC – involvement in forest management decisions, improving access to resources, sharing benefits, enhancing multiple benefits and supporting community capacity. Unfortunately, the objective is limited by its precursor 'Develop legislation and policies..', rather than beginning simply with the words that follow: 'Improve the sustainability of forest-based communities..'. This limitation is curious as no similar limits appear in any other objectives. Rural communities need more than legislation and policies – we also need partnerships, funding, and innovative solutions that we've yet to uncover.

In terms of the priority to involve rural citizens in forest management decisions, the recent addition of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to the National Forest Strategy Coalition is very positive. Rural community membership in the BC Coalition is also needed.

The gaps or challenges identified for BC – links between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, involvement in decisions, and the rural/urban disconnect are valid. On the later point, the [Urban Futures Institute's](#) 2005 analysis of BC's economic base which shows that 'two-thirds of provincial export income is earned by the forestry, mining, fishing, energy and agricultural sectors, sectors which are predominantly non-metropolitan' is a piece of information all rural citizens should quote frequently, and our urban neighbours should become more mindful of.

There are additional gaps and challenges from my point of view:

We need to go beyond linking aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities to demanding that all orders of government work together to resolve aboriginal interests

promptly. It will be difficult to build secure futures for all rural communities with this continuing uncertainty.

The recent provincial and federal government funding for the community coalitions addressing the mountain pine beetle outbreak, and the new northern and southern development initiatives are an encouraging indication of support for rural communities to define their futures. Sorting out overlapping mandates, governance and decision-making approaches will challenge rural communities and organizations to work collectively.

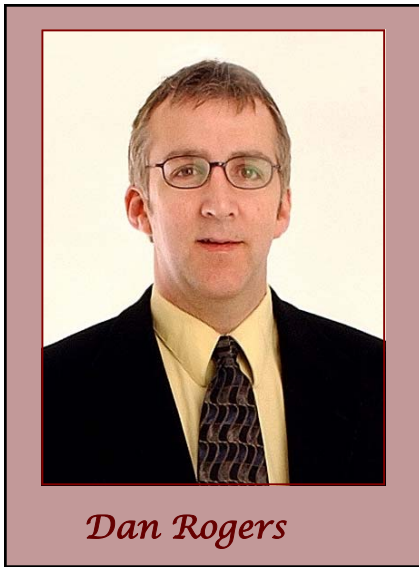
New mechanisms are needed for planning and licensing the broad range of natural resource uses to ensure rural communities can swiftly implement community development plans and secure their fair share of benefits from natural resources. There is an almost immediate need to address growing issues with backcountry recreation and tourism uses. In rural BC these uses are becoming a more prominent component of community development plans, but their implementation is hampered by the lack of planning, tenures and enforcement tools, as well as limited government capacity and perhaps appetite for these often contentious and politically sensitive situations. We risk losing the 'super-natural' BC experience if we don't address these issues very soon.

Rural communities in BC are ready to chart their own futures – governments, industry and other organizations may be surprised by the new directions these communities take.

With a BSc in Forest Management and post-graduate studies in policy analysis at the Faculty of Commerce at UBC, Cindy brings passion to her work in forestry education as well as natural resource planning and creating sustainable futures for forest-based communities.

Does Sustainable Forest Management result in Sustainable Communities?

Commentary by Dan Rogers



Local government leaders from forest dependent communities know all too well the challenges of having a resource-based economy. The forest sector has seen rapid change, both in the legislative framework it operates within and in the competitive environment that has resulted in significant consolidation. There has also been a shift in the way forest resources are used. Expanded access to remote areas, mechanized harvesting and large tenure allocations have reduced the number of jobs per unit of wood harvested and concentrated forestry support services in larger and fewer regional centres.

These changes have impacted many communities and in doing so have created a tenuous relationship between small communities and the industry that has traditionally sustained them. As is the case with any change there are winners, losers, and those that fall in between.

Some communities have benefited from legislative changes and consolidation of

operations but others have found themselves facing an uncertain future. Super mills in Houston and Vanderhoof have sparked increased optimism but such is not the case in communities such as Barriere, that lost a mill as a result of a forest fire and then lost the industry altogether when a corporate decision was made not

“The single significant issuefor all forest-based communities is the mountain pine beetle epidemic and the uncertain future that awaits”

to rebuild. Midway is another community that’s going to be negatively affected when the industry that has provided many jobs in the past, consolidates its operations in Grand Forks.

Despite the goal outlined within this theme of the National Forest Strategy, many small and rural communities continue to ponder their economic future and whether their traditional links to the forest industry will remain. Those communities that have been challenged the most have turned inward, capitalizing on the intellectual capacity of those who are committed to keeping their communities alive. Waiting for assistance from other levels of government through legislative or policy changes has proven to be a disheartening approach.

These mobilized communities have sought innovative approaches to diversify their economy so as to reduce their reliance on the forest sector. Many times they are shifting from trying to expand the local goods-producing sector to in-

stead focusing on attracting employment in the service-producing sector. Ironically this diversification has brought its own unique set of challenges because the new ventures, such as eco-tourism, have the potential to conflict with land use issues that are inherent with traditional resource extraction (forest operations).

The good news is there are a variety of organizations that are attempting to help communities build their capacity and respond to change. These range from the UBCM (Union of BC Municipalities) to organizations such as the McGregor Model Forest. The UBCM, which is the provincial organization that represents all local government in BC, has been a signatory to the National Forest Strategy and continues to provide input to assist in the effort to achieve the NFS objectives at the community level.

The single most significant issue that continues to span the long-term economic horizon for many BC communities is the mountain pine beetle epidemic and the uncertain future that awaits. This uncertainty is most pronounced in the central interior where the epidemic has washed across the landscape. There have been a number of community-based organizations that have been formed to start laying the groundwork for a strategy to respond to the pending reduction in the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC). These coalitions have brought together government officials, industry reps and community leaders. The ability of these coali-

Does Sustainable Forest Management result in Sustainable Communities?

Commentary by Dan Rogers (cont'd)

tions to bring multiple parties to the table, to think strategically and map out a clear path, will ultimately determine the future viability of many small communities.

It is important to recognize that there are also financial resources to assist communities as they pursue economic sustainability. A number of region-based trust funds have been established by the province including the [Northern Development Initiative](#) (Northern Trust) that provide financial resources to assist in economic development initiatives aimed at mitigating the potential negative affects of the pine beetle.

Community based organizations and financial resources can combine to build a positive future but all those involved in the management of our forests should not lose site of the need to ask tough questions about policy decisions and how they impact the communities that will live and die off the benefits that flow from the forests. For their long-term viability, these resource-based communities must lead the discussion so that *community sustainability* becomes the priority and influences all future forest policy decisions.

Dan Rogers spent 12 years on Prince George City Council. During his time in local government he served on the executive of the North Central Municipal Association for six years where he held several positions including President. Dan also served on the executive of the Union of BC Municipalities for several years where he was a part of the Community and Resources Committee and Chair of the Community Economic Development Committee.

Dan is currently the Director of Marketing & Communications with Concept Design Ltd. in Prince George.

About Theme #2—Sustainable Forest Communities (cont'd from Page 1)



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has advanced and industry consolidation has occurred. The result is a fewer number of large manufacturing centers and fewer jobs for each unit of timber harvested and manufactured. While following this trend has been important to industry competitiveness, it has had a profound effect on many forest-based communities.

Forest-based communities need to participate in resource and land management deci-

sion making processes, and in the development of new economic opportunities. Although the involvement of local communities and Aboriginal Peoples in resource planning has increased in recent years, strengthening their role and capacity needs to be a high priority.

The Objective set out in Theme 2 of the National Forest Strategy is to “develop legislation and policies to improve the sustainability (social, environmental and economic) of forest-based communities by:

- Fostering participation and involvement in decision making;
- Improving access to resources;
- Sharing benefits;
- Enhancing multiple benefits; and
- Supporting community resilience and adaptive capacity.

The BC Coalition supports these objectives as the foundation for further work in British Columbia.

Membership in the Coalition

The Coalition is an informal organization without a charter or legal standing. The intent of the members is that it remains this way unless a need arises to incorporate or otherwise take a more structured approach.

A chair (Dr. Gordon Weetman) has been appointed and a steering committee has been struck to move the business of the Coalition forward. Meetings are convened and facilitated by an administrative secretariat. The secretariat is provided by the McGregor Model Forest Association.

New participants are encouraged to join the Coalition provided that they:

- Have signed the Canada Forest Accord, or espouse support for the National Forest Strategy (2003-2008) and membership conditions by letter and or communiqué; and
- Express a commitment to implement the strategy in a way that is appropriate to their circumstances and capabilities, through the delivery of action plans and/or involvement in strategic theme processes; or

- Express support for the Mission and Purpose of the BC Coalition, including its relationship with the National Forest Strategy Coalition.

Members of the coalition decided at an early meeting that a simple procedure is required to guide Coalition actions. As a Coalition of governmental and non-governmental organizations from across BC, it is important that the Coalition speak consistently on crucial matters that the majority of Coalition members agree to, and that the process to make decisions is clear, concise, open and transparent.

Steering Committee Members

The Steering Committee is made up of the Coalition Chair and at least three other coalition members. The mandate of the steering committee is to oversee planning, implementation, communications and reporting of the Coalition activities, and provide direction to the Secretariat on behalf of the members.

Current members of the Steering Committee are:

- **Gordon Weetman** - UBC (Chair)
- **Bill Bourgeois** - Consultant
- **Chris Hollstedt** - FORREX
- **Mike Apsey** - Past Chair, National Forest Strategy Coalition
- **Ken Baker** - Forestry Innovation Investment Ltd.
- **Jim Snetsinger** - Ministry of Forests and Range
- **Dirk Brinkman** - Brinkman & Associates
- **Al Gorley** - McGregor Model Forest Association
- **Mike Millard** - MMFA - Secretary



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