

# General Overview

## 1.0 Physical Landscape

The Slocan Valley is a long and narrow valley consisting of approximately 840,000 acres of land and water. It is situated in the West Kootenay region of southeastern British Columbia, Canada. The rugged Valhalla and Kokanee mountains provide spectacular backdrops for Slocan Lake at the north end of the valley, while the Slocan River meanders south to empty into the Kootenay River at Shoreacres. The high elevation terrain of the steep and broken valley walls is home to alpine lakes, ancient glaciers and cascading waterfalls. The vivid collage of mountain forests, jagged peaks, and alpine meadows that crown the crystal clear lake and river, provide a natural vista of stunning beauty.

More and more, the compelling character of this vibrant valley attracts international and domestic travelers alike, seeking a wild and welcoming place to relax and explore. Bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, boat and kayak rentals, bicycling trails, historical sites; all are flourishing as we become better known as a destination playground. Families and eco-tourists are both at home in the wealth of outdoor activities that our natural landscape and resourceful entrepreneurs have to offer.



Enjoyment of the many natural bounties offered by this generous landscape is not exclusive to visitors. Local residents take advantage of berry and mushroom picking, river tubing, hiking, and backcountry skiing, to name but a few of our customary outdoor pleasures.

The landscape is generous in other ways as well. The abundant rainfall of our regional micro-climate results in a diverse interior rainforest, evident immediately to our predecessors of the 1800's, as a resource capable of sustaining communities. The invisible mysteries of streambeds and ore seams held another resource that captured the attention of many a hardy soul, intent on the tough life of prospector and miner. The forest has now eclipsed the heyday of the mines, and continues to provide many local families with a means of livelihood.

These traditional and emerging uses of the local resources are often perceived to be in fierce competition, bringing conflict into the lives of those who seek to manage or protect

what they value; a way of life rooted in what has come before, or driven by a vision of a way that will sustain us into the future. The divergent values need not be in conflict. We intend to create a path that will allow multiple perspectives to co-exist and benefit from this gift of place that we share as home.

## **2.0 Historical Context**

Over the last several decades, the Slocan Valley has become known as a place where communities take tremendous interest in the forests that surround them. The vast majority of local residents' domestic water supplies come directly from small creeks that tumble down the mountain slopes, and fragile springs that arise from hidden aquifers. These are sensitive water sources on which the local population is dependent for both irrigation and domestic needs. For the last 30 years competing demands have been placed on the landscape by divergent interests; domestic water licensees, forest workers, forestry companies, and government. The result has been tense relationships to say the least. Protests and arrests in the valley due to the resulting struggle have sadly become commonplace. Over the last 13 years, and as recently as 2004, over 120 individuals have been arrested, standing for what they believed to be a just cause. While arrestees paid personally for taking a stand, the community has paid with social divisions and a sense that our economic future is tenuous. Many tax dollars have been spent for very little return, and the situation is yet to be resolved.

Concurrently, much has been expended seeking solutions to land use issues. In the mid-seventies over \$50,000 was spent on the "Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project". In its final report, its first recommendation was "that a resource committee, comprised of six local resource management agencies and six local residents be formed and charged with all resource management within the Slocan Valley". In other words, the community should be charged with managing its local forests. This finding rippled through the ensuing decades. In the mid-eighties the "Slocan Valley Planning Program" came to a similar conclusion. Then in the 1990's CORE (Commission on Resources and Environment) selected the Slocan Valley as one of three B.C. pilot projects. Once more, the majority of participating sectors agreed that local authority for forest management would be instrumental in settling the ongoing dispute.

## **3.0 Origin of The Slocan Valley Community Forest Initiative**

The announcement by the provincial government of its intention to offer tenures to Community Forests as part of the tenure reallocation process, was received as the opportunity that we have long awaited. We realized that if we were to be successful in a bid for a community forest, we would have to bring all sides together under one vision. We would need to change the course of history, replacing mistrust with a new direction and goal that would benefit all members of the community.

## **4.0 Participants**

The Slocan Valley Community Forest Initiative (SVCFI) core group has been comprised of representatives from four long-standing organizations, including one village and three residents' associations. These organizations are:

- the Village of Slocan
- the Red Mountain Residents Association (RMRA)
- the Elliot-Anderson-Christian-Trozzo Watershed Committee (EACT)
- the Winlaw Watershed Committee (WWC)

Together these four organizations represent over 70% of the people who live in the communities adjoining the operating land base we are interested in managing. Each group has been well represented in the process of creating this proposal.

## **5.0 An Integral Approach To Forestry**

Our initiative is based on the following points of understanding:

- The residents of the Slocan Valley hold diverse perspectives in relation to the forest that surrounds them.
- These perspectives are guided and influenced by a mix of social, economic, scientific, spiritual, psychological, cultural, political, historical and institutional lenses.
- Our initiative recognizes that each of these perspectives is valuable and pertinent and must therefore be considered and integrated into solutions that will work for all.
- SVCFI believes that by integrating all of these views, the solutions found will be more complete and viable in considering how the community and the forest can interface.

Over the last ten months we have held three public meetings and numerous kitchen table meetings. SVCFI has received and responded to queries over the phone and by email. Articles have been published in local newspapers. A mail-out including a map and an outline of our proposal was distributed widely throughout the community. SVCFI has met with major stakeholders of the valley, including Canfor and the woodlot operators. SVCFI has consulted with local First Nations, environmental organizations, the local tourism industry, and value-added businesses.

SVCFI perceives the community, in all of its diversity, as a valuable source of knowledge and ideas. Many residents in this valley have dedicated years of service to the dilemma of resource extraction in a populated valley corridor, and are well informed concerning relevant issues. These voices must be taken seriously as we continue to create a plan with community integrity at its core. All feedback and concerns are being acknowledged and recorded, and integrated into our plan when appropriate. SVCFI will continue to educate interested parties about our proposal, and invite participation.

## **6.0 Purpose**

Our purpose is to secure a Community Forest Agreement in the Slocan Valley. This will provide our community with the opportunity to manage, sustain, and enjoy the benefits from local forest resources. SVCFI will create a socially responsible mechanism for including valley residents in planning for forest uses. Keeping jobs and profits local, and supporting local entrepreneurs with opportunities and a variety of forest-based raw materials, will be an integral component of our management plan.

Our planning process will emphasize long-term economic, social, and environmental stability. A diversity of values will be considered in our planning development. These include: timber, water protection (quantity, quality and timing of flow), First Nations, tourism, outdoor recreation, non-timber forest products, wildlife habitat, biological diversity and viewscapes.

It is our goal to be part of creating a healthy and vibrant local community, a community built on respect for one another and respect for a healthy, fully functioning ecosystem.

## **6.1 Mission Statement**

Our mission is to create a financially sound community forest business that fosters community and ecological health.

## **6.2 Specific Objectives**

- 6.2.1** To maintain and to restore over the long-term, healthy functioning ecosystems throughout the Community Forest Land Base.
- 6.2.2** To protect water quality, quantity and timing of flow throughout the Community Forest Land Base.
- 6.2.3** To recognize and acknowledge the different economic, social, ecological and spiritual uses of the forest and to include them in our decision-making process.
- 6.2.4** To facilitate and maintain community authority over our local forest resources.
- 6.2.5** To run as a financially sound business where the revenues are socially and ecologically beneficial, to both community and government.
- 6.2.6** To actively promote, support and participate in the diversification of our local economy in order to provide a strong foundation for our future as a diverse community.
- 6.2.7** To facilitate long-term employment in the forestry sector of the Slocan Valley community.
- 6.2.8** To make raw materials available to locally based companies and individuals.

- 6.2.9** To be an economic engine for local projects that will benefit our community, our recreational opportunities and the environment.
- 6.2.10** To educate the local residents about, and take collective responsibility for, the prevention and control of wildfires.
- 6.2.11** To provide opportunities for research, education and training in ecologically sound and socially responsible forest use, and in the application of an Integral approach to forest management.
- 6.2.12** To become a model for North America of an Integral approach to forestry that works for all involved.
- 6.2.13** To constantly be evolving as an organization, remaining at the leading edge of the creative process of running a sound business that simultaneously enhances our sense of community and our environment. SVCFI believes that this will be one of the main challenges that we will globally face as a human family in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and is eager to demonstrate that it is indeed possible.

## **7.0 Implementation Strategies**

- 7.1** To create meaningful partnerships with locally based water-users groups, forest companies, workers' unions, First Nations, local government, businesses and other stakeholder groups.
- 7.2** To manage the forest in a way that includes meaningful community involvement in all the planning processes.
- 7.3** To create a landscape level plan for the Community Forest Land Base and to use it as a guiding document in the planning processes.
- 7.4** To include community input into the implementation phases of operations.
- 7.5** To provide a seat in our organizational structure to one local resident who will represent his/her community's interests and concerns in regards to the planning and operational processes of a specific watershed area. This will result in giving local communities decision-making power towards determining the management plans for their respective watershed.
- 7.6** To research other niche markets that could enhance our economic revenues.
- 7.7** To manage for a diverse range of products.
- 7.8** To implement innovative approaches to the wildfire hazard in the wild-land and interface areas of the Community Forest Land Base, and to plan harvesting

accordingly. We will use the guidelines outlined in the Fire-Smart initiative of the BC government as a template to ensure that the landscape surrounding our communities becomes 'Fire-Smart'.

- 7.9** To manage Old Growth forest in a way that will bring back historical levels in the Community Forest Land Base.
- 7.10** To utilize innovative harvesting methods that will maintain healthy functioning ecosystems.
- 7.11** To establish programs for research, education and training in integral forestry, and in ecologically sound and socially responsible forest use.
- 7.12** To plan in a way that:
- acknowledges and integrates the values and needs of the tourism sector, the recreation enthusiast, wild-crafters, local residents and the traditional uses of the first-nations,
  - respects and protects wildlife, biological diversity, viewscapes, water (quality, quantity and timing of flow) and spiritual considerations,
  - maintains and diversifies our workforce.

## **8.0 Area Of Interest**

Our proposal is land base specific (see Section V; Area of Interest Maps and Charts). SVCFI maintains that the area outlined on the map is the best place for a community forest to be established in the Slocan Valley as it includes some of the most contentious areas. In fact, it is focused entirely on areas that provide domestic water supplies, critical viewscapes, and many other local values. These are areas that have been historically very controversial.

### **8.1 BCTS Operating Areas currently within the Area of Interest**

The majority of the area we are applying for is in Canfor's Arrow District Forest License area, and is subject to their tenure give-back, and therefore clearly eligible for reallocation to a PCFA. There are also two areas within our proposed PCFA area that are currently BCTS operating areas.

One of these BCTS areas is composed of relatively small, isolated fragments, and is located at the north end of our proposed area adjacent to Slocan Lake. This area has been previously logged, and contains a high recreation value, including the widely utilized Bannock Point recreation area. We expect this area is not of much consequence to BCTS, and we suggest that it is reasonable for BCTS to relinquish it for inclusion in the PCFA area, as it is more appropriate for the Community Forest to manage what is primarily a recreation area with high lakeside viewscape values.

The second BCTS operating area contains Winlaw Creek watershed, which represents 4306 hectares of crown forest. BCTS, and formerly the MoF Small Business Program, conducted planning for this area during the past several years, and presently has an active MPB salvage operation. BCTS's operations in this area have been highly contentious. Woodlot 1832, also within Winlaw Creek watershed, has operated over the past few years, without controversy in the community. The woodlot operators are local, trusted residents; they are applying management objectives consistent with community values, and have offered extensive public involvement.

SVCFI has included Winlaw Creek watershed in its area of interest for the following reasons:

- The Winlaw Watershed Committee (WWC) was established as a non-profit organization over two decades ago. It has undertaken a number of watershed stewardship projects including mapping, water monitoring, commissioning of scientific studies, watershed restoration projects and community outreach. The WWC has amassed an extensive database from its stream monitoring program, the many scientific studies it has commissioned, and the mapping project it has recently completed. The WWC commissioned a Management Options study in 2004 for the purpose of a PCFA application, which led to the WWC's participation in this PCFA proposal. The WWC has been an active participant on the core PCFA proposal development committee, contributing much knowledge and experience to the process. The Slocan Valley PCFA will benefit greatly from the WWC's existing database as well as the skills and knowledge of its members.
- The community of Winlaw, including but not limited to the WWC, has a high concentration of forestry professionals, including those doing our mapping and analysis to date. They will be an important resource for the PCFA.
- Winlaw Creek is the most heavily allocated stream in the proposed PCFA area in terms of domestic and agricultural water licenses. A public school, fire department, many small businesses, and the whole community of Winlaw depend on the high quality water sources that are provided by Winlaw Creek watershed.
- The community of Winlaw is the cultural/social nexus of the mid-valley area. To resolve the controversy over watershed forestry in the Slocan Valley, it is wise to include Winlaw Creek watershed in the PCFA operating area.

There are three watersheds, within Canfor's license area and therefore eligible for reallocation, that SVCFI has removed from its original area of interest. They are the Lemon Creek, Enterprise Creek and upper Springer Creek drainages. All of these areas are better suited to BCTS's mandate and operations than Winlaw Creek watershed. They are extensively roaded, and have undergone a management regime similar to BCTS practices. They would seem to be ideal for the BCTS mandate to carry out conventional harvesting operations to calibrate the market value of crown timber resources for stumpage appraisal calculations. Winlaw Creek watershed, on the other hand, is less characteristic of Crown Forests for this purpose, due to its diverse local forest uses and values, the inevitable controversy over BCTS style operations, and the large number of licensed domestic water sources on its watercourses and springs.

We have removed Lemon and Enterprise Creeks, and a major portion of Springer Creek watershed from our maps in order to provide an application in line with government parameters. The portion of Springer Creek watershed that has been retained in our area of interest contains the lower watershed slopes that encompass important community interests that SVCFI will respect; tourism viewscapes, a Village of Slocan hydro/irrigation water project, and a backcountry recreation tenure.

## **9.0 Annual Allowable Cut (AAC)**

Ultimately, SVCFI wants to base its harvest volume on sound science, and at the same time enable our stated objectives to be realized, so that the controversy over watershed forestry in the Slocan Valley is truly resolved. A detailed analysis undertaken by qualified professionals will flesh out the many variables, and generate robust conclusions that both government and community can have confidence in. We have been advised that government prefers this detailed analysis to be post-invitation, to be part of the formalizing of the final PCFA application. Timber volumes and financial projections will be calculated utilizing current data and appropriate methodology during the allotted time period following our receipt of a formal invitation to apply for a PCFA. Following a conversation with Blair Suffredine our MLA we understand that government is informally offering us an AAC of 10 000 cubic metres per year. Our preliminary analysis suggests that, under the management regime we are proposing, our area of interest could support that volume or possibly more.

