

Forestry Initiatives Program

February 2019

Quesnel is the province's most forest dependent community and the timber supply surrounding Quesnel was one of the hardest hit by both the mountain pine beetle epidemic and the 2017 and 2018 wildfires. The frequency of disturbances and dwindling timber resources will result in highly contentious resource management opportunities in the years to come, unless transformative measures are implemented on a continual basis. The current resource management paradigm attempts to manage complex ecosystems for ascribed values; the main value being "merchantable timber" and consequently we are losing all values to disease and the subsequent flood and fire events.

The 2017 and 2018 wildfires underscore that we do not have the science in place to inform the holistic management of these complex and dynamic ecosystems. We cannot simply resign ourselves to a "new normal;" rather, we must do everything possible to develop a new science based on ecological resiliency to replace the current forest management regime that has made our forests so vulnerable to catastrophic disturbances and so maladapted to climate change.

For this reason, the City of Quesnel convened the Future of Forestry Think Tank in 2018, and created the Forestry Initiatives program in 2019 to address the complex economic, social and ecological problems facing us at this time.

THE FUTURE OF FORESTRY THINK TANK AND ITS OUTCOMES

At the Future of Forestry Think Tank in May 2018, 65 participants convened for a two-day technical working session to explore opportunities to use Quesnel as an incubator to accelerate research and development in the domains of alternate forest management and innovative manufacturing and processing of forest fibre. Recommendations from the session included: advancing a landscape analysis in the western portion of the Quesnel timber supply area (TSA) as a learning laboratory; assessing the market demand for future forest products; optimizing fibre recovery and utilization to realize more value; and expanding training, education, and research at the North Cariboo Community Campus.

Today, the City of Quesnel continues to play a catalyst role of coordinating and convening functions. The City has established a Forestry Initiatives program to not only advance the Forestry Think Tank process, but also implement the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, advocate for a community forest licence, and teach FireSmart principles to strengthen



the public's understanding of the risks and personal responsibilities with living in a fire-maintained ecosystem.

Through the support of the BC Rural Dividend program, the City of Quesnel has created two new staff positions, a Forestry Initiatives Manager and a Forestry Initiatives Coordinator. The City is also using the Rural Dividend funds to advance a manufacturing business case analysis and market analysis to improve the skill, adaptability, and versatility of manufacturing, merchandising, and marketing sectors to respond to what the ecosystems around Quesnel have to offer.

THE FORESTRY INITIATIVES PROGRAM IS WORKING TO:

- Lead a landscape level analysis and restoration project, creating a paradigm shift from managing for timber value to managing the ecosystem for resilience;
- Enable diversification of local wood manufacturing;
- Implement the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), to help protect our community from flood and fire events; and
- Advocate for a community forest.

MANUFACTURING UPDATE

Quesnel is also home to one of the most integrated and diverse concentrations of wood products manufacturing facilities in the world, including many best in class milling and processing operations. Part of the City of Quesnel's Forestry Initiatives program's mandate is to assist in meaningfully diversifying our economy, utilizing the local raw materials and manufacturing infrastructure available. This does not mean stepping back from forestry, but rather finding innovative ways to utilize the available fibre and types of manufacturing potential already here.

Through enabling diversification in manufacturing, as well as research and development, we believe we can support the creation of new and innovative products that serve the ever-changing market demand. Innovative products may include: structural and finishing wood products, pre-fabricated

construction materials, wood composites, bio-fuels, bio-oils, pellets, and/or biodegradable single use wood products. This shift will not only create new jobs in the region, but also help to keep the current workforce employed.

Together with the manufacturing facet of our program, we are assessing the future training and education needs in the forest products manufacturing, as well as machine operating and harvesting practices. The goal is to utilize the North Cariboo Community Campus to its full potential, bringing to the region degree and diploma programs that range from forest management to forest products manufacturing. Providing new education, training, and research opportunities for the region, and in turn creating new opportunities for local people and attracting new residents.



COMMUNITY FOREST

The City of Quesnel continues to advocate for community forest tenure to allow for management of the multiple resources and values on the land (timber and non-timber products, trails, recreation, riparian values, etc.), while ensuring the continued protection and restoration through an ecosystem-based management approach. This approach would include developing management strategies in-line with fuel management, fibre utilization, and job creation, while allowing for more ecologically- and socially-sensitive harvesting, which can be an expensive undertaking that needs public engagement and buy-in. A community forest license is the best tool to enable the best-practices in managing the forest surrounding the community, while taking the necessary steps to mitigate the wildfire risks that exist in the WUI and adjacent landscape.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)

- Quesnel's CWPP identifies 34 fuel treatment units with a total treatment area of 2700 hectares. The overall goal of the program is to implement the CWPP within five years (by 2022), using multiple funding sources, starting with areas within the 2 km wildland urban interface (WUI) and working outwards.
- The City is working with: local area licensees and Provincial agencies, such as BC Parks and all branches of the Ministry of Forest, Land, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development, to identify the potential collaborations and innovative approaches needed for advancing the fuel mitigation work laid out in the CWPP.
- The Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative (SWPI) funding is a separate envelope held by the City for prescription development in 6 areas identified in the CWPP.
- To date, the City of Quesnel has a total of \$1,000,000 from the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC), allocated by \$500,000 per year over two years that is being used for prescription, layout, and treatment of four areas identified in the CWPP.
- The City enables the collaboration and consensus-building needed to carry out large-scale fuel management, and the associated fibre utilization and job creation opportunities.
- The City, along with project partners, have advanced an application for the new Community Resiliency Investment Program (CRIP) for additional areas within municipal boundaries, as well as a comprehensive education and advocacy program based on the FireSmart principles.