



Community-Based Forest Management for Northern Ontario: A Discussion and Background Paper

Prepared by the Northern Ontario Sustainable Communities Partnership
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Community-based forest management is a forest management approach conducted on a local forest by local people for the benefit of local people. It is made up of three components: 1) rebuilding economies, 2) sustainable forestry practices, and 3) community management.

While a community forest is managed first and foremost to benefit the local community, forest practices must also meet provincial regulatory requirements.

Rationale for Community-Based Forest Management

The current forestry crisis and lack of economic development in Northern Ontario is commonly blamed on the high Canadian dollar, high energy costs, and global competition. However the fundamental problem is the existing Crown forest tenure system (including the wood allocation system) that does not support community development. This approach has systematically failed to generate progressive, forest-based development in Northern Ontario. Wood-based value-added industry is concentrated in southern Ontario and outside of Canada. The existing tenure system is not capable of producing social and economic development in Northern Ontario because the people of the region have no control of the resource. There will be no change in the forestry situation until there is a shift to a tenure system that is more supportive of local economic development.

Conventional economic analysis provides strong theoretical objections to the existing tenure system and strong theoretical support for community forestry. While corporate ownership (i.e. privatization) has been suggested as a solution to the forestry crisis, only the community forest approach is likely to both support development and be politically acceptable.

The issues of community-based management and community engagement have been highlighted at the international forest policy level as key to the development of any strategy for sustainable development. Working community forests across Canada and around the world have shown that a wide range of benefits are possible including: greater economic benefits, economic diversification, consistent levels of local employment, wildlife conservation, habitat protection, educational and research opportunities, aid in flood and erosion control, scenic and aesthetic benefits, stabilization of local water supply, recreational/eco-tourism opportunities, enhancement of local quality of life.



Options for Community-Based Forest Management:

Just as forests are complex, communities are similarly diverse and dynamic. Community-based forest management should be a reflection of the needs and interests of the range people who live in and nearby that forest. Community forests are governed by an elected management board composed of a workable number of members that represent the diverse range of forest interests within the geographic boundary of the forest. Board members co-operatively make forest management decisions with the help of a general manager and a professional forestry/technical staff.

Such a board should include but not be limited to:

- First Nations representatives
- Municipal representatives
- Economic development representatives
- Representatives from unorganized communities
- Forestry companies (harvest and renewal)
- Tourist operations
- Workers and unions
- Recreational groups
- Environmental representatives
- NGOs
- Others as appropriate (e.g. government reps)

Roles of the community-based forest management board include: setting broad policy; ensuring compliance; ensuring communications and engagement strategies for the range of groups in the area; ensuring the economic viability of the management structure; developing a code of conduct for the board; determining a governance structure (voting, handling of dispute mechanism); and managing specific subcommittees for various tasks/themes (i.e. silviculture, tourism, forest management, planning, etc.)

One of the major tasks of facilitation is to assist communities, First Nations and organizations on the voting process on the board. While no one group or sector should have a controlling interest, how it plays out in each area across the province will need to reflect local dynamics. Dispute resolution mechanisms are required.

While a community forest board is a collective of individuals, the board also needs to build engagement processes and links with other groups in their areas to feed into and communicate with. Such groups could include:

- Regional tourism operators
- Tribal Councils
- Regional Community Futures Committees
- Schools and Training Boards
- Others in the area



Legal Entities for the Administration of Community Forest Management Boards

A community-based forest management board must be a legal entity. As such, it must have the overall responsibility for forest management with benefit to the community as its major objective. Owing to the type of forests in northern Ontario, the governing authority will cover Crown Land.

A community forest management board could be one of the following types of legal entities:

1. Co-operative: A group where everyone has an equal voice.
2. Not-For-Profit Corporation: Limited corporation with a set membership and defined voting rights – these can be based on consensus, majority, equal voting and/or weighted. Retained earnings are kept within the corporation and/or have reduced fees for its members. Can receive donations/grants easily.
3. For-Profit Corporation: Limited corporation with a set membership and defined voting. Usually majority voting or what ever method is available to make the most efficient decision. Aimed at creating a profit for its membership, but cannot readily receive grants/donations.
4. Trust: Organizations established with a defined mandate.
5. Partnership: Coming together of a defined number of partners who have similar goals. Profits are directed back to the partnership based on a determined arrangement between the partners.
6. Authority: Corporate entities which derive their status and powers from legislation as “schedule agencies” (e.g. Algonquin Forest Authority).
7. Other legal arrangements: E.g., society.



Management Structure:

Whatever legal arrangements are selected, management of the forest can be based on several forms:

1. Own Staff: Organizations with staff directly accountable to the Board of Directors;
2. Contracted Staff: Board puts out to tender forest management opportunities that are spelled out in the management agreement with the contactor of duties required, etc.
3. Partnership: Board works with another entity to do work based on an agreement drawn up among the partnership.

Examples of Existing Community Forests on Crown Lands in Canada

B.C.

- Mission Municipal Forest: Formed in 1958. A combination of municipal land and Crown land under Tree Farm License tenure for 25 years. Managed by the municipal structure.
- Revelstoke: A Community Forest Corporation formed in 1993. A city-owned corporation that operates a 120,000 ha Tree Farm License tenure. Managed by a board of directors composed of the mayor, two city councilors, the city administrator, and 3 appointees from the community. A management committee including industry partners provides operational advice to the directors.
- Creston Valley Forest Corporation: Formed in 1997. The corporation has five shareholders: the town, the regional district, the Creston Area Economic Development Corporation, the Lower Kootenay Indian Band, and the East Kootenay Environmental Society. The board of directors is composed of representatives from these groups as well as five representatives from the community.
- Burns Lake Community Forest Corporation: Nine-member board with six seats for nominees from the community, two seats reserved for local First Nations, and one seat for the village of Burns Lake.
- Kaslo and District Community Forest Society: Non-profit organization with a nine-member board including two appointees from local government and seven members chosen by application from the community.



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- Harrop-Proctor Community Forest: Managed by the Harrop-Proctor Community Cooperative. Ecosystem-based management and FSC certified forest.

Quebec

- 22 Territorial management agreements between 1997 and 2002: Regional County Municipality (RCM) is the decision-making authority, consisting of mayors from each of the municipalities within the RCM territory. Each RCM has a multi-resource committee made up of relevant stakeholders (unions, Economic Development Officers, government, First Nations).
- 45 Forest Management contracts with First Nations, businesses, municipalities, or non-profit corporations.

Ontario

- Four pilot projects in early 1990s: No tenure granted; Geraldton Community Forest still exists but as a forest management consultant without tenure.
- Temagami Forest Authority: Initiative began in mid-90s to early 2000s by local First Nations and the municipality of Temagami; never got off the ground.
- Blueprint for Sustainable Communities: 2006 request by the Gordon Cosens Survival Group to Minister of Natural resources for a Community Forestry Corporation for the Gordon Cosens Forest.
- Northeast Superior Forest Community initiative: May 2007 initiative to form a cooperative among six municipalities (Manitouwadge, Hornepayne, Dubreuilville, White River, Wawa, Chapleau) and local First Nations to obtain White River Forest and perhaps other local forests as a community forestry pilot; receipt of Natural Resources Canada Forest Communities funding (June 2007) to help support this initiative

Criteria for Developing Community-Based Forest Management

To move beyond the theory of community-based forest management, several requirements need to be met, including consultation, facilitation, capacity-building, planning, and funding.

Consultation

The policy for developing community-based forest management needs to be discussed on a provincial, regional and local basis. Reforming the tenure of Ontario's forests will take time, energy and human resources. It will involve communications in



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varying forms that include participation from the very inception of policy development leading to the initial information release.

Consultation is required across Ontario on several levels and with a variety of groups to determine how community-based forest management will be implemented, including municipalities located in areas affected by their surrounding forests and citizens groups.

There are many other groups which need to be consulted, including:

- i) Forestry groups
- ii) Tourism operators
- iii) Recreational users
- iv) Environmental groups
- v) Academic groups
- vi) Unions and workers
- vii) Other interested parties

Aboriginal Peoples

There is a legal requirement for provincial and federal governments to consult with First Nations owing to Treaty and Aboriginal rights. Moreover, First Nations do not see themselves as yet "another stakeholder" but rather as Treaty partners.

Recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights is about reconciliation. Crown lands are overlaid with Aboriginal title; treaties and Aboriginal rights recognise this. In the area of forestry tenure, recognizing Aboriginal and treaty rights is about reconciling Aboriginal concepts of sharing the land and Crown concepts of development of the land.

As the stewards of Crown Land, provincial governments have a responsibility to protect the interests of the people of Ontario, as well as to respect and uphold Aboriginal and treaty rights. Consultation is therefore required at both the local, as well as provincial level, on the nature of tenure and management. Groups like Nishnawbe-Aski Nation have developed Aboriginal Consultation Handbooks that can provide guidance.

Facilitation

Part of consultation is facilitation. Facilitation requires bringing people together, explaining and sharing ideas, listening, and working together in order to reach a decision. This can be demanding, time-consuming and expensive. For groups to make informed decisions, all information needs to be made available to them. Staff from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) should be able to assist in this process as a means of building community partnerships.



Capacity-Building

Financial resources are required by Aboriginal peoples, communities and citizen groups to participate effectively in community forestry initiatives. The provision of adequate resources will serve to strengthen the eventual outcome so that all decisions have been given the due diligence required.

Economic and human resources are required for:

- Participation in and travel to meetings;
- Technical staff to assist in information gathering, analysis, and modelling;
- Ongoing support to sustain community-based initiatives; and
- Evaluation and monitoring.

Overall Planning Process

A strong collaborative partnership between the OMNR and communities will be essential for community-based forest management. An intention of community forestry is to strengthen the partnership between OMNR and communities which have many valuable human and technical resources. The regulatory, policy monitoring, and supporting function provided by the OMNR would be supported and strengthened by community forestry.

To facilitate the movement to community-based forestry in Ontario, a joint Community-Based Forest Management Committee would be useful to encourage communications, engagement and oversight while this process is unfolding. Such a committee would encourage a partnership between local OMNR offices to work with all participants. An OMNR Community Forestry Extension Office (as exists in B.C.) is also a possibility.

How will community forestry be paid for?

- Shift funds currently available for forest management in the existing system (obtained from levying a royalty on harvested timber) to the new community-based structure. Funding goes with the license for forest management not the company licensed to access timber.
- Stumpage to be directed back to community forests (all or a portion) instead of going to the provincial consolidated revenue fund.
- Government investments to forestry to be directed to community forests; government needs to invest in forests, recognizing that forests are an asset that goes beyond their value for timber.