

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Province issues long-term licence to Squamish Community Forest

SQUAMISH, B.C. – Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and District of Squamish are celebrating a major milestone for the Squamish Community Forest. A Community Forest Agreement (CFA) was issued by the Province of British Columbia on December 22, 2022. The CFA licence is valid for a period of 25 years with a replacement option every ten years. Squamish joins 60 Community Forest Agreements operating across the province.

“For generations, our forests provided both cultural significance and economic benefits for our people,” says Squamish Nation Spokesperson Wilson Williams (Sxwíxwtn). “Our Indigenous know-how, working in partnership with the District of Squamish, will help create wealth and prosperity for both our communities. More importantly, it is a significant step in the long process of reconciliation as our Nation seeks to reclaim rights that were taken away from us through racist and unjust policies.”

CFAs are area-based forest licences managed by local governments, community groups or First Nations (or a combination of these groups) for the community’s benefit. Each CFA provides the exclusive right to harvest timber in the Community Forest. For the Squamish Community Forest, the annual allowable cut is 20,000 cubic metres. Any profits from forest operations will be equally shared between Squamish Nation and the District of Squamish.

“This initiative represents an amazing opportunity for the District of Squamish to work directly and collaboratively with the Squamish Nation to jointly and sustainably manage local forests in a way that reflects the goals and values identified by our community,” says District of Squamish Mayor and Squamish Community Forest Board Chair Hurford. “A great deal of work has happened to get us to where we are today and we extend our appreciation to the Province of British Columbia for their support in making this possible for Squamish.”

The historic 2019 Community Forest governance agreement was the first partnership agreement signed by the Squamish Nation and the District to co-manage a local asset. The partnership is recognized as a model of reconciliation and seeks to work within the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Squamish Community Forest is managed by the Squamish Community Forest Limited Partnership and governed by a Board of Directors comprised of members appointed by the Squamish Nation and District of Squamish respectfully.

“We look forward to continuing discussion with the Nation’s economic development arm, Nch’káy Development Corporation, and their forestry companies as we move forward to licence implementation,” continues Hurford.

“Increasingly, forestry leadership requires working together to put the interests of the forest ecosystem first. This ensures that communities realize the benefits and make the best use of local knowledge and expertise,” says Bruce Ralston, the British Columbia Minister of Forests. “The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and District of Squamish partnership is a great example of the pursuit of common interests through effective collaboration.”

A Squamish Community Forest offers many benefits including:

- Long-term economic development and local employment;
- Local level decision-making and planning over timber harvesting with consideration of key forest values such as cultural and spiritual sites, watersheds, viewscapes and recreational use;
- Education and research opportunities including increased community awareness of forest management.

About the Squamish Community Forest

The Squamish Community Forest spans 11,303 hectares on the hillsides east and south of Squamish, including portions of the watersheds of Shannon Creek, Raffuse Creek, Stawamus River, Cheekye River, Mashiter Creek, Ring Creek and the lower Mamquam River. The lands are entirely within the Traditional Territory of Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation).

For more information about the Squamish Community Forest visit squamishcommunityforest.org.

For more information about community forests visit bccfa.ca.