

Squamish Community Forest Information Summary for Proposed Harvest Blocks LAVA1, LAVA4, LAVA5, LAVA9, LAVA11, LAVA13

Overview

Squamish Community Forest is preparing six small blocks (LAVA1, LAVA4, LAVA5, LAVA9, LAVA11, LAVA13) for harvest in the Lava Flow portion of the Mamquam River watershed. Pending issuance of permits and status of markets, road work and harvest may begin as early as late October 2025, through early 2026.

The proposed blocks range in size from 0.6 hectares (ha) to 7.8ha, for a total of 23.8ha. They consist of second growth coniferous forest that is approximately 70-75 years old, on gentle slopes. The blocks will be harvested from existing roads which require minor upgrades and maintenance and from sections of proposed roads which will require new construction.

One objective of the harvest area layout was to design cutblocks adjacent to the existing privately owned hydro electric transmission (Tx) line so that removal of the trees within 60m of the line location is completed to reduce the potential for wildfire ignition from tree falldown hitting the live line. The main access road coming up from the Mamquam Powerhouse will be upgraded to a hauling standard which will also facilitate improved access to the area for wildfire suppression or transmission line security work.

The forestry activities would take place under Community Forest Agreement K5Y licence (CFA K5Y - Squamish Community Forest) and be consistent with the CFA K5Y Forest Stewardship Plan and Management Plan.

Squamish Community Forest is a collaboration between Squamish Nation and the District of Squamish.

Proposed Harvest Area Location

Proposed blocks LAVA1, LAVA4, LAVA5, LAVA9, LAVA11 and LAVA13 are located in the Lava Flow portion of the Mamquam River watershed, accessed from 3.5km along the Mamquam River Forest Service Road (FSR) via existing roads, including Powerhouse Springs Road, MAM1150 forestry road and Ring Creek South FSR. The blocks are located 500m north of the Mamquam River, and 750m south of Ring Creek.

The proposed blocks and associated roads are located within Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) Traditional Territory, and within the səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) Consultation Area.

The proposed blocks are located within the District of Squamish municipal boundary.

Wildfire Risk Mitigation Context

The blocks planned for harvest are immediately adjacent to the existing, privately owned, hydro electric transmission (Tx) line which traverses the Lava Flow area. The blocks are planned as small patch clearcuts for all areas that are within ~60m (1.5 tree lengths) of the line location.

Clearcut of these narrow bands adjacent to the Tx line will serve to reduce wildfire ignition risk in the vicinity of the Tx line should blowdown events occur. Upgrade of the road system accessing the Lava Flow area will also serve to improve access for wildfire response, should it be needed.

Areas beyond 60m from the transmission lines will be harvested under a retention system consisting of small group and individual stem retention marked at densities ranging from 5 to 30 stems per ha.

Forest Stand Description

The proposed harvest areas (LAVA blocks) consist of second growth coniferous forest that is approximately 70-75 years old. The terrain is flat to gently rolling with high levels of surface rock and high coarse fragment content soils present on the lava flow landform. Planned harvest areas contain gentle slopes (10% to 30%). Forest type and ecology is generally uniform across all blocks with the majority of the sites trending drier than zonal. There are no riparian features (streams / wetlands) found within or adjacent to any of the proposed blocks.

The dominant canopy trees consist of approximately 50% Western Hemlock, 40% Douglas Fir and 10% Western Redcedar with approximate heights of 35-40 meters and diameters at breast height of 30-50 centimetres. There is a co-dominant / suppressed layer that is stocked at high density with Western hemlock and minor western Red cedar. This understory layer is experiencing inter-tree competition resulting in mortality of understory stems and buildup of woody debris in the understory. Due to the lack of light reaching the forest floor the proposed harvest areas have very sparse to nil vegetation established in the ground layer understory. The ground layers are occupied primarily by moss cover.

There is heavy infection from dwarf mistletoe found on the hemlock stems across all stands. Removal by cutting of the infected hemlock will reduce the incidence of mistletoe regenerating stands after harvesting.

Harvesting System

All of the proposed cutblock areas within ~60m of the Tx line right-of-way will be harvested under a small patch clearcut system. Retention of trees within 1.5 tree lengths (~60m) is not recommended due to the hazard of tree blowdown onto the line and the potential for wildfire ignition if blowdown was to occur. Replanting of the clearcut areas will occur following harvesting. The trees in the regenerating plantation will not pose a risk to the transmission line until the reforested area reaches a mature stage (~60years).

The remaining areas of the cutblocks away from the transmission line will be harvested under a retention harvesting system. Retention will be comprised of aggregate retention patches, both internal and external to the block boundaries as well as individual or small clump (2-5 trees) dispersed retention. All retention will be marked in the field prior to harvest. Retention levels will range from 5 to 30 stems per hectare (sph).

None of the planned blocks are old growth forest stands. There are scattered older / larger Douglas Fir with old growth characteristics present in block LAVA 5 (~20 total trees). The harvesting plan for all blocks will specify that all old growth stems are to be retained from harvest.

There is a component of smaller western red cedar stems present across the stand in the understory canopy layers at various densities. These trees range in size from ~8m to 20m with a diameter range from 12.5cm to 20cm. These cedar trees will not be marked for retention but the harvesting prescription will require retention of these immature stems as much as operationally possible. These cedar trees will be retained for ecological and structural diversity and to provide ongoing and future opportunities for cultural collection of cultural use cedar products.

There are isolated and scattered mature stems of White pine found at low density across the planned areas for harvest. White Pine stems will be retained from harvesting.

There are higher ecological value large logs and stumps present across the blocks at variable density. Many of these large features are in an advanced state of decay and are functioning as nurse logs maintaining natural vegetation communities and providing habitat for variety of plant and animal species. These features are artifacts of the original old growth forest type which was present prior to first pass harvesting ~70 years ago. Harvesting crews will be trained to recognize increased value nurse logs and these features will be avoided as much as possible during harvest operations.

Roads Description

The blocks will be harvested from existing roads which require minor upgrades and maintenance and from sections of proposed roads which will require new construction. Most of the new road sections will be deactivated after harvest through decompaction of the running surfaces, spreading of woody debris across the decompacted surface, and reforestation.

Archaeological Potential

The Squamish Forest District Archaeological Overview Assessment (AOA) (Millenia Research 1997) ranks the area of the proposed blocks as moderate potential areas. The ranking for habitation of moderate is based on the presence of flat / gentle slopes and proximity to the Mamquam River. The potential for presence of Culturally Modified Trees (CMTs) is low as the forests are less than 140 years old. Potential for rock art is rated low as there is a lack of rock faces and outcrops that would support rock art within the area being referred.

Chance Find Procedure

The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) Chance Find Procedure - Guidelines for Archaeological Chance Find Management 2020 has been utilized during layout and engineering fieldwork. No suspect archaeological features or artifacts were noted.

The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw Chance Find Procedure will be included in pre-works with contractors for the road reconstruction/construction and timber harvesting activities presented in this referral.

Cultural Designations

The proposed timber harvest areas are not located within or adjacent to any Cultural Management Areas or Squamish Nation Síyamín ta Skwxwú7mesh (cultural sites) as identified within the Sea to Sky Land and Resource Management Plan, nor within any Kwa kwayx welh-aynexws (Wild Spirit Places). The Raffuse Creek Síyamín ta Skwxwú7mesh is located ~230m south of the nearest planned harvest area (LAVA4). There will be no impact or disturbance on the cultural site from proposed LAVA blocks operations.

The proposed harvest areas and associated roads do not overlap and are not adjacent to any newly designated areas in the Squamish Nation Phase 2 Land Use Planning Agreement.

Xay Temíxw Land Use Plan

Based on the Land Use Plan Map (First Draft May 22, 2001) for Xay Temíxw – Squamish Nation Traditional Territory Forest and Wilderness Land Use Study, as presented in the 2023 reproduction, the proposed LAVA harvest areas and roads are located within the Mamquam River Restoration Area subzone of the Forest Stewardship Zone.

Riparian and Aquatic Habitats

Due to the rapidly drained nature of the lava flow zone there are no surface water riparian features present in any of the planned cutblocks. No specific riparian management prescriptions are required.

Species at Risk

While the proposed harvest areas potentially support a variety of wildlife species, there are no legally designated areas for the protection of biodiversity and wildlife within the proposed Community Forest harvest blocks and roads. The proposed blocks are not within or adjacent to any areas identified as containing critical habitat features necessary for the survival of any plant or animal species at risk, or for the winter survival of ungulate species. The BC Conservation Data Centre mapping application was visited August 5, 2025. There are no reported incidents of any species at risk within or adjacent to the proposed blocks.

Wildlife

The forested stands planned for harvesting are 2nd growth, closed canopy, mixed conifer species stands with high density of suppressed stems in the understory position, resulting in low light levels on the forest floor and sparse to nil understory vegetation established. Ground layer vegetation is dominated by thick moss cover throughout. Large mammal wildlife uses in the general area, specifically deer and black bear use, appears to be concentrated in previously harvested areas that range in age from ~8 to 20 years. These young forest regenerating areas have very high occupancy and diversity of wildlife forage vegetation. There are numerous species of berry producing plants and a wide range of herbaceous and shrub browse species including deciduous tree species. These regenerating areas provide a wide range of wildlife forage opportunities as well as security cover functions for wildlife use. It is expected that similar high diversity of plant communities with associated wildlife values will become established across the harvested areas and will contribute to wildlife forage and habitat types provided by younger age regenerating forest areas remaining available across the landscape. During post-harvest debris piling the creation of 3-5 “critter piles” per hectare will be prescribed. These small piles will

provide habitat for small mammals, amphibians and various songbirds within the post harvest stand.

Most of the proposed LAVA harvest areas are within an area noted as a core habitat patch in the Squamish Wildlife Connectivity Project model results as of the July 2025 model iteration. During forestry fieldwork and a July 22 field visit there was very little evidence of wildlife use in the stands proposed for harvesting, except for an animal path (likely deer path) in LAVA5, between the Tx line right of way and a young clearcut to the north. The path is likely used for travel between feeding sites in the young seral areas, in particular the young cutblock to the north that contains an abundance of forage and berries.

Silviculture

All areas harvested will be reforested with suitable mix of tree species as promptly as possible after harvest completion. Roads utilized for harvesting will have specific post harvest plans developed and will be seasonally deactivated if road use in the future is likely or permanently deactivated and returned to a productive state if not required for use for future harvesting opportunities.

The species mix for reforestation will be developed by a Registered Professional Forester based on field assessments. Tree species for reforestation will likely consist of a mix of Douglas-fir and western redcedar. It is expected that the blocks will infill naturally with a low to moderate density of western hemlock regeneration. Fill plants will be completed if seedling survival or natural infill are found to be insufficient.

Terrain Stability

Appropriate terrain stability assessments will be completed as required, as determined by a qualified professional. There have been no terrain stability concerns identified during field assessments and layout activities on these blocks.

Visual Quality

Portions of the block areas have been assigned a Visual Quality Objective of Partial Retention. The blocks may be visible from various forestry roads in the Mamquam valley. The blocks are not expected to be visible from neighborhoods in Squamish or from any significant public viewpoints. The block area will be partially to mostly screened from view by topography and existing forest cover. Following harvesting the blocks will easily meet the visual quality criteria of Partial Retention assigned to the area.

Wildfire

The blocks are located within the District of Squamish municipal boundary but are not considered to be within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). It is approximately 2km to the closest developed area. Measures to mitigate post-harvest wildfire risk will include normal timber utilization combined with piling of woody debris for disposal, both at the roadsides and within the blocks.

Recreation

There is a high level of motorized use occurring across the lava flow area from dirt bike riding, with moto-bike trails throughout the area. Some of the trails are authorized and established through BC Recreation Sites and Trails. Trails with no authorization or approval also exist. All known moto-bike trails are shown on the attached maps. A variety of management strategies will apply to the trails. Authorized and established trails will have trail specific management strategies developed which could include trailside retention, minimizing disturbance to trails and designating specific crossing points. All proposed management strategies for authorized trails will be discussed with recreation use groups and with the Sea to Sky District Recreation Officer to determine the proposed impacts and mitigation strategies that will apply to these trails. Non-approved moto trails will also be identified and proposed management strategies reviewed with the primary user group.

The Squamish Community Forest will engage with Squamish Dirt Bike Association (SDBA) to develop a trail closure and communication plan to ensure harvesting operations are conducted in a manner that ensures the safety of both logging crews and recreation users.

Two low use established mountain bike trails are located within the vicinity of the blocks - "Ring Creek Rip" and "Powerhouse Plunge – Access". The Ring Creek Rip is located on the existing resource road Ring Creek South 2 FSR. Harvesting of LAVA 13 will occur adjacent to the Ring Creek Rip trail/road. LAVA 13 will be harvested as a small patch clearcut (0.6ha) due to proximity to the Tx line. Harvesting activities will not utilize the trail for access so there will be no impact to the trail. LAVA 9 harvesting will occur approximately 25m from a 100m section of the Powerhouse Plunge – Access trail. There will be no impact to the trail surface from harvesting activities. These harvesting plans for the area will be reviewed with the Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA) to identify any potential impacts from the proposed harvesting and appropriate mitigation measures. A trail closure and communication plan will be developed in cooperation with SORCA to ensure the safety of harvesting crews, mountain bikers and other trail users.