

Harrop-Procter Community Forest, Procter, British Columbia, Canada Background and History

The communities of Harrop and Procter are situated 20 miles northeast of the city of Nelson in the West Kootenay interior region of British Columbia, Canada. The communities overlook the West Arm of Kootenay Lake that flows into the U.S. We fit geographically within the Yellowstone to Yukon Project. We are located within one of only a few interior rainforests in the world.

The Harrop-Procter Watershed Protection Society is a registered British Columbia Society incorporated in 1997 to address the issue of domestic water stewardship in the Harrop and Procter communities. The incorporation of the society formalized a long-standing community interest in watershed protection among a broad base of community members. HPWPS is a non-profit organization that is pioneering a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified eco-forestry project in southern British Columbia. Forest Stewardship Council Certification is an international third party auditing regime that assesses the social and environmental aspects of forestry operations.

In 1999 the not-for-profit Harrop-Procter Community Co-operative was incorporated to carry out management of the forest harvesting operations in the Harrop-Procter Community Forest. For many years the villages of Harrop and Procter have been working to provide input into logging plans issued by government and under tenure to large forest companies. After many years of endeavor, it was realized that the only way to protect local water supplies was to obtain tenure over the forest surrounding our communities. Working in collaboration with the Silva Forest Foundation a community mapping and forest land use plan was developed (silvafor.org).

In July 1999, we were granted a Community Forest Pilot Agreement over 11,000 hectares (24 000 acres) of land and are only one of five forests in BC to be operated according to FSC standards. The development of a FSC business is at a time when few others of a medium size exist in Canada and virtually none in western Canada. Other FSC operants in B.C. are small woodlots or the very large ISAAK Forest Resources Ltd. Co/owned by Weyerhaeuser and Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations. If more forest companies are to embrace better ecological forest practices, there must be a clearly defined marketing and production network in B.C. We, with our small size and limited staff have been trying to promote certified wood, but much more focus is required. We would like to collaborate with others in a public education campaign.

Recently the B.C. Government issued a five-year extension of our Community Forest Agreement tenure over the Harrop Procter Community Forest, which includes community watersheds. We were hoping for a twenty-five-year extension however the government had not fully evaluated us and requires until July 2006 to make a decision regarding long-term tenure. We enjoy widespread community support both locally and within the community economic development sector as a whole. We also developed a small medicinal herb value-added business and conduct community outreach and education activities. Our community forest serves as a research site for students as well as projects that we commission such as our longitudinal study on the sustainable harvest of 3 forest growing medicinal plant species. The current forest tenure agreement increases the pressure on our community to proceed with great care and attention and yet prove economic and ecological sustainability within a relatively short time span. If we are successful within this five-year span we are confident that we will achieve long-term tenure over the Harrop-Procter Community Forest, thereby providing safe water and employment for generations to come.