



***NEW \$1.3M FORESTS FOREVER EXHIBIT COMING TO FOREST DISCOVERY CENTRE***

COURTENAY – Forestry is a vital industry on Vancouver Island, and the BC Forest Discovery Centre in Duncan is about to undertake a comprehensive revitalization to illustrate the story of modern forestry to visitors and locals alike.

The project will inject new life into the BC Forest Discovery Centre, making it the premier tourism destination on the BC Coast to learn about forestry - past, present and future. A \$400,000 grant from the Island Coastal Economic Trust will support the \$1.3M project.

“For over half a century, the Forest Discovery Centre has been educating the public and our youth about British Columbia’s rich history in the forest sector,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “These interactive exhibits will modernize the centre’s ability to educate and will serve to inspire young minds to seek out forestry jobs and contribute to the forest sector’s ongoing legacy in B.C.”

The project will feature new, immersive and interactive exhibits that follow the life cycle of a tree from seedling to finished product. The project will also include revitalization of the museum entry and façade, and an interactive phone app will create a ‘Pokémon Go’ style game, to engage visitors with the outdoor exhibits on the 100-acre property.

“The advances in technology over the past few decades have transformed many aspects of the forest sector and are creating new opportunities for the future,” said Chris Gale, Executive Director of the BC Forest Discovery Centre. “Today’s industry uses drones and LiDAR to map and optimize use of forest lands, uses biotechnology to transform wood fibre into new products such as fuels, lubricants and food additives and has been pioneering use of cross-laminated timbers to replace steel in multi-story building construction.”

ICET’s economic analysis assessment estimates that 30 new permanent local jobs will be created through the economic activity generated by the project over the next 3-5 years. Construction alone will create an additional 5.3 person-years of short term employment.

“The evolution of forestry from hand-sawn logs to technologies such as LiDAR is a fascinating transformation that has kept the industry the lifeblood of our economy from B.C.’s earliest days to today, said Bruce Ralston, Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology. “The BC Forest Discovery Centre is a vital educational tool, and this funding ensures that it, like our forest industry, continues to grow and evolve with the times.”

The project is a great example of successful non-profit sector and private sector collaboration. Project partners include major forestry companies, contractors, manufacturers and industry associations, providing design and development input as well as approximately two-thirds of project funding.

“Many people might not realize how much forestry has evolved in the past few decades, and this renewal of the Forest Discovery Centre will help showcase forest innovation and sustainability practices to the public,” said Phil Kent, Mayor of Duncan and Chair of ICET. “We are especially pleased to see the wide range of industry players supporting this community-based organization with funding and expertise, helping to grow new experiential tourism assets that celebrate our history and connection to our natural resources.”

Final project concept planning and construction will get underway shortly, with completion of the project forecast for fall of this year.

### **About the Island Coastal Economic Trust**

Created and capitalized by the Province of BC, the Island Coastal Economic Trust has been at the forefront of economic diversification, planning and regional revitalization for the past eleven years.

ICET is independently governed by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials, MLAs and appointees from the Island and Coast. This exceptional team of leaders collaborate to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community centered decision-making process, more than \$50 million in funding has been approved for over 180 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects. These investments have leveraged over \$270 million in new investment into the region creating more than 2500 construction phase jobs and 2600 long term permanent jobs.

A full overview of ICET can be found at [www.islandcoastaltrust.ca](http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca).

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