



CORTES SET TO CREATE VALUE-ADDED FORESTRY SECTOR ROADMAP

Cortes Community Forest Cooperative ready to explore local lumber business potential



Aging the Forest, photo credit: Mark Braaten

COURTENAY, 10 November 2022 – The [Cortes Community Forest Cooperative](#) (CCFC) is taking the first step towards maximizing their island's local wood sector through a sectoral planning initiative, with funding support from Island Coastal Economic Trust's [Investment Readiness Program](#).

The CCFC Roadmap will create a business strategy to capitalize on the vast potential of their value-added forestry sector. Currently, only 30% of locally harvested wood remains on the island. The other 70% leaves as raw logs to be processed at other coastal facilities. The lack of a wood processing centre on Cortes – replete with the equipment, knowledge and other infrastructure -- means there is a vast missed opportunity for locals to capitalize on business ventures, employment opportunities and the creation of a circular local economy.

"Building a business roadmap for value-added forestry products is a crucial step in unlocking Cortes' social and economic potential in the forest industry," says Carrie Saxifrage, president of the CCFC. "Our community has expressed a strong desire to utilize more locally produced lumber and we need to do so in ways that assure both the ecological management of the forest, while pursuing financial viability."

The upcoming roadmap would include approximately 3,800 hectares (or about 30% of Cortes' Island's land base), whose tenure is currently held by the Cortes Forestry General Partnership (CFGP), representing both the Klahoose First Nation and the non-Indigenous Co-op members. Developing a local strategy for enabling locally produced products would enable Cortesians to make local lumber purchases without traveling off island or paying distant delivery fees that may negatively affect other communities.

"Charting this course with a concerted strategy in place will help guide, inform and influence all our decision-making and actions along the forest products value chain," says Carrie. "It will serve as the basis for future investment, and it will allow our island residents to invest in the local economy and the value-added forest sector themselves."

The upcoming project will not only serve the Cortes Island's community needs, but also has important benefits for the entire province. In the past 25 years, over half of coastal mills have closed in BC and nearly one in three trees logged on the coast left the province in raw log form.

"The Cortes project is a great example of how communities are identifying barriers to sectoral productivity and taking the steps to capitalize on sustainable growth opportunities," says Island Coastal Economic Trust Board Chair Aaron Stone. "We applaud their efforts and are thrilled to help support a project that will prove beneficial for stimulating new growth in the emerging forestry sector."

The Cortes Community Forest Business Roadmap for Value-Added Forestry Products is supported through the Sectoral Planning stream of the [Investment Readiness Program](#). The Trust will contribute \$20,000 to a total project budget of \$40,000. The project is expected to start in November 2022.

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[About Island Coastal Economic Trust](#)

Founded by the Province of British Columbia in 2006, the Island Coastal Economic Trust works to build a sustainable and resilient coastal economy in reciprocal relationships with First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts across Vancouver Island, the Sunshine Coast, and islands and inlets from the Salish Sea to Cape Caution. Serving over half a million residents, we partner with communities in the development and financing of their economic infrastructure and diversification efforts through our unique structure that is led by, and accountable to, communities.

Since our inception, Island Coastal Economic Trust has approved more than \$58 million to economic development initiatives that have attracted over \$308 million in new investment to our region. These investments have created over 2,750 permanent jobs, and countless positive impacts, across the coast.

Island Coastal Economic Trust acknowledges that we work for communities across the ancestral and unceded territories of the Kwak'waka, Nuučaan' uɿ, Éyá7á7juuthem, Ligwilda'xw, Pəntl'áč, shíshálh, Hul'q'umi'num', diitiid?aatx, SENĆOŦEN, Lekwungen, and T'Sou-ke speaking peoples.

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