

# Report

Date June 1, 2022  
Subject Update on the Municipal Forest Reserve Review

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File:

## PURPOSE

To update Council on the timeline for the next steps in the Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR) Review engagement process.

## BACKGROUND

In early 2019, Council directed staff to carry out meaningful public engagement, both deep and broad, on the future management of our forests to determine the highest and best use of our MFR. A collaboration consisting of the University of British Columbia (UBC) and 3GreenTree Consulting were contracted to perform a technical review of our forest management practices and provide potential forest management scenarios for Council's consideration that will be informed from the public engagement process and First Nations consultation. In November of 2019, Lees & Associates were contracted to conduct public engagement in support of the UBC Partnership Group technical review.

The review was paused in 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and further paused to accommodate government-to-government consultation with local First Nations to understand their interests in the MFR better.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Quw'utsun Nation was signed in August 2021. The MOU outlines the roles and activities related to a First Nations Working Group whose role is to exchange information related to the stewardship and use of the MFR for the benefit of the community.

On September 21, 2021, Council approved the resumption of public engagement on the MFR review. During the fall, the public participated in Round 1 of public engagement through facilitated virtual workshops and a survey that aimed to determine the values held by the public around the MFR. These values were shared with Council in February 2022, and with the UBC Partnership Group. The UBC Partnership Group is using that input received during Round 1, together with their forestry expertise, to conduct a technical review of the forestry operational information and develop potential forest management options (scenarios). These scenarios will then be shared with the public during Round 2 of public engagement for their input and feedback. The information gathered from Round 2 of public engagement will be summarized and provided to the UBC Group, who are expected to present a preferred forest management scenario to Council for their direction. A management plan for the preferred scenario would then be developed.

## DISCUSSION

We are currently in Phase 3 of the review timeline. During this phase, the UBC Partnership Group is developing the potential forest management scenario options and conducting technical work such as analyzing MFR spatial data and using this data to evaluate habitat values for the different scenarios. They will also assist in the development of materials to accompany these scenarios that would support fulsome public engagement.

Before sharing these scenarios with the general public, the UBC Partnership Group will present them to the Forestry Advisory Committee (FAC) for their feedback and comments before a final review by Council. Any potential changes will be made at that time, and Round 2 of public engagement will begin. Round 2 of public engagement will include workshops, a survey, as well as a statistically valid phone survey of North Cowichan residents.

In parallel with this technical review and public engagement process is the MFR Working Group, established through the North Cowichan/Quw'utsun Nation Memorandum of Understanding. This working group continues to meet to share information in relation to the stewardship and use of the MFR for the benefit of the community. Feedback will be incorporated into the MFR review process when appropriate to do so.

The UBC Partnership Group has experienced delays due to unforeseen personal circumstances within the UBC team and will be sharing the potential scenarios with staff in the coming weeks. After that time, a FAC meeting can be facilitated for their input, and then presented to Council. Given this delay, it is expected that public engagement will begin mid-summer. This adjustment will have an impact on the remainder of the timeline. Generally speaking, public engagement during July and August is typically avoided. Fall 2022 also poses some timing challenges with the general local election slated for October 15, 2022.

## OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council receive the update on the Municipal Forest Reserve Review Report dated June 1, 2022, from the Manager of Communications and Public Engagement for information.

## IMPLICATIONS

An updated MFR review timeline will be shared with Council prior to the start of Round 2 of public engagement.

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the Update on the Municipal Forest Reserve Review Report dated June 1, 2022, from the Manager of Communications and Public Engagement for information.

Report prepared by:



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Report reviewed by:



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Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer

## Approved to be forwarded to Council:



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Chief Administrative Officer