

HARROP-PROCTER COMMUNITY CO-OPERATIVE



280 Munch Road, Procter, BC

Telephone: (250) 551-5452

Website: <http://hpcommunityforest.org/>

CONVERSION TYPE

- Non-profit to co-operative conversion: From Crown forest land to a non-profit community-controlled forest to a community co-operative

SECTOR

- Forestry / Lumber

SUPPORTED BY

- Numerous BC government forestry management and preservation programs and laws
- Numerous grants and loans from foundations and social economy organizations
- A vast majority of the population of the villages of Harrop and Procter

COMMUNITY IMPACTS OR BENEFITS

- Co-operatively organized stewardship of “the commons” via sustainable watershed and forestry management by the community
- Good local jobs by and for the community
- Building local knowledge and organizing capacities for the short- and long-term care of a community’s environmental and economic goals

Timeline of Conversion

- Residents of the nearby towns of Harrop and Procter began organizing in the mid-1970s against clear cutting by private companies and demanding enhanced community-based forest and watershed management practices.
- After nearly 20 years of organizing, local residents formed the Harrop-Procter Watershed Protection Society (HPWPS) in 1995, a not-for-profit entity to formalize their efforts around forest and watershed protection.

- In 1998, the British Columbia Ministry of Forests created the Community Forest Agreement Program (CFAP), allowing for the creation of community forest tenure on an experimental basis.
- The HPWPS was selected as one of the ten pilot community forest programs and formed the Harrop-Procter Community Co-operative (HPCC) as a not-for-profit business to take control of the community forest.



source: Keith Powell, 2015 Kootenaybiz.com

- The Harrop-Procter Community Co-operative then moved on to establish two for-profit subsidiaries, the Harrop-Procter Forest Products (HPFP) and Sunshine Bay Botanicals. While Harrop-Procter Forest Products is involved in commercial activities around timber, the now-closed Sunshine Bay Botanicals used to sell non-timber forest products.
- Both the HPCC and HPFP's activities are centered around ecosystem-based forestry practices, enabling both local economic development as well as forest and watershed stewardship. As of mid-2020, they are both in very strong financial standing.

Key Lessons From Conversion



CP141 Tour. Bob, Dave, Joern & Mia.
Source: hpcommunityforest.org

- Over two decades of organizing around a common cause provided Harrop-Procter residents with the momentum and capacity to seize the opportunity when B.C.'s Community Forest Agreement Program was introduced.
- Both the Harrop-Procter Watershed Protection Society and the co-operative tapped into the power inherent in management plans and research studies to establish their action and business plans. This also allowed them to concretize their ecosystem-based mission and vision, while gaining legitimacy in the eyes of public institutions and funding agencies.

- The co-operative applied a hub-and-spoke business model: They incorporated HPCC as a not-for-profit co-operative, enabling them to access a variety of grants, while also establishing subsidiary for-profit businesses, which in turn also funded the activities of the HPCC.
- The experience of the HPCC signals both to communities and public institutions alike the benefits inherent in communities taking management, stewardship, and ownership of their local resources through the co-operative business model.

Key Challenges and Responses

CHALLENGE

RESPONSE

Prior to the establishment of the HPCC, the local community was at odds with the B.C. Ministry of Forests for over two decades. During these challenging times, their dedication to a common cause and organizing kept their momentum alive.

And, as stated above, once a policy-related opportunity came up, the community was able to rise to the occasion.

The co-operative decided to discontinue one of its for-profit subsidiaries, Sunshine Bay Botanicals, on the basis that forest products would yield a higher return compared to non-timber products sold by Sunshine Bay.

While this was a difficult decision at the time, it ultimately proved to be the right fiscal decision as the co-operative was a strong financial standing as of mid-2020.

The expansion of business operations led HPCC to hire professional staff, as opposed to involving a variety of residents in volunteer labour. While this move towards professionalization appeared as a necessary step, it also meant that a lower number of residents are now involved with the co-op's activities.

The democratic and participatory impacts of these moves for the co-operative are still to be seen, although board members we spoke to are confident that the co-operative is tightly attached to its original mission and spirit of community involvement.