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Abstract

Governance and management of small forest tenures in British Columbia

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The growing number of small tenures in British Columbia creates new demands on local organizations to manage public forest lands. To deal with these demands, small tenure holders must develop governance practices that address both accountability and participation. Local participation is especially important for Community Forest Agreement (CFA) holders to ensure that community members are actively involved in decision-making processes. Both CFAs and Woodlot licensees have upward accountability to the B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range. Holders of CFAs also have downward accountability to members of the local community. Community forests in the province have adopted various legal structures. Private corporations owned by local government are popular vehicles to hold CFAs and have commercial advantages, but their structure is less accountable than others. Although it is important to separate the political decisions of community forest governance from the technical decisions of management, both are needed. Experience with small tenures in other countries suggests that scope exists for sustainable, commercial forest management based on a substantial degree of local autonomy, if accompanied by technical support and oversight from governments, as well as training, extension, and services from voluntary associations of local tenure holders. Further study of options and experience with local forest governance and management will be helpful for small tenures in British Columbia.

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