

# Proposed Community Forest Expansion

## **A Challenge**

The threat of wildfires is a growing concern for our residents. Large areas of Crown Land have a build up of old and dead trees and other woody debris. With hot, dry summers these conditions create serious wildfire hazards for our communities.

## **An Opportunity**

By forming a collaborative partnership and managing this land through a Community Forest Agreement, we can reduce hazards, promote land conversion to agriculture and agroforestry, support biodiversity, and expand cultural and economic diversity.

## **A Partnership**

The City of Prince George has successfully managed its Community Wildfire Program for 6 years. By creating a partnership and adding Crown Land to a 25 year license, we can build on this success and gain more control over our community's future.

## **A Proposed Community Forest Expansion**



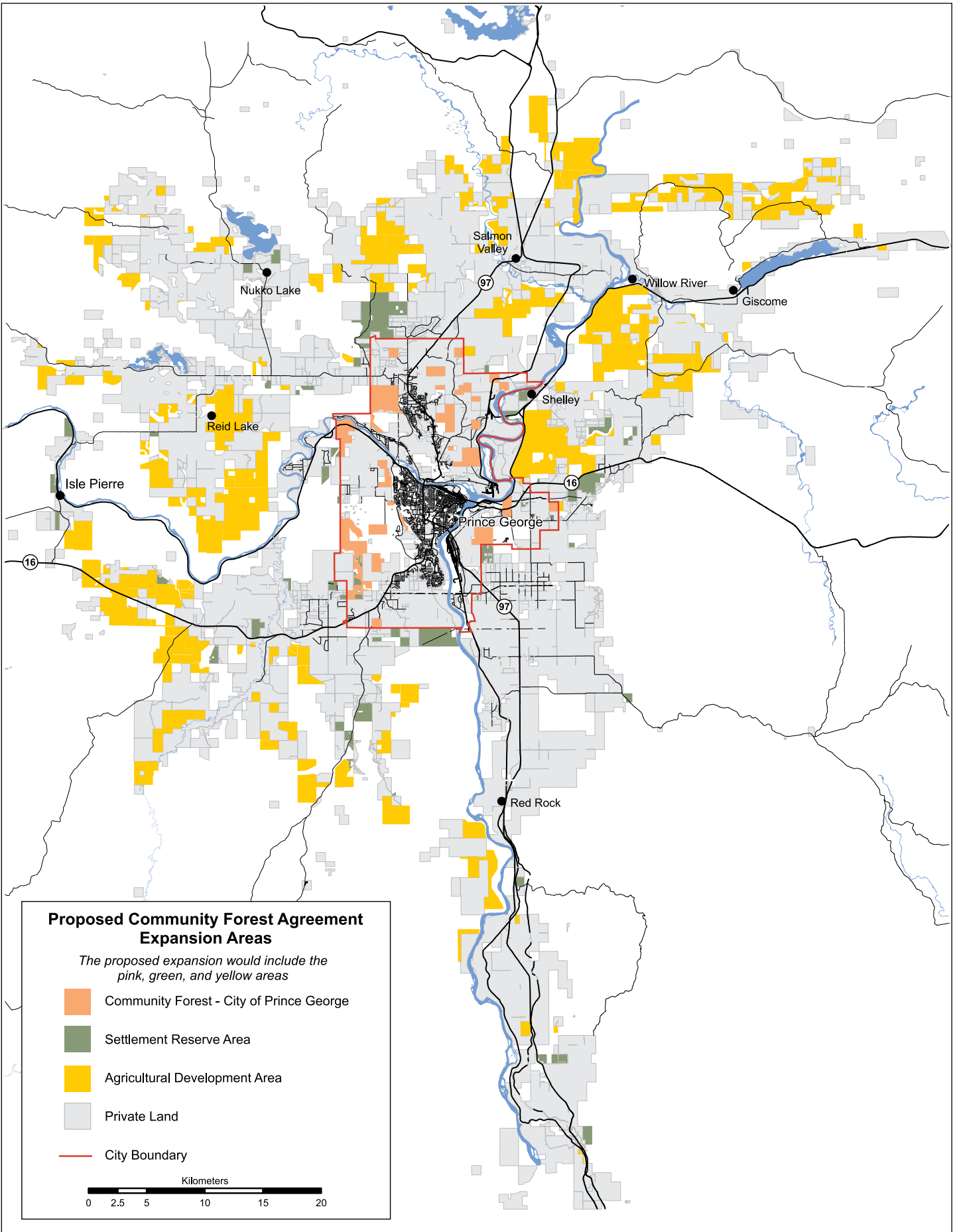
CITY OF  
**PRINCE GEORGE**



Lheidli T'enneh  
First Nation



**REGIONAL DISTRICT**  
of Fraser-Fort George



In 2009, the City of Prince George used a model to predict possible fire behaviour on the land surrounding the city. With all the hazard trees and increased woody debris, the results were concerning. This led planners and foresters to consider different ways to minimize the risks. In discussions with the Regional District of Fraser Fort George and the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, an integrated approach to wildfire mitigation and agricultural development in and around Prince George was proposed.

### Why is there such an interest in wildfire hazards?

We live in the forest – it is all around us – and so there will always be a chance of a wildfire. We have been successfully putting out wildfires for decades and this means more fuel for wildfires when they occur. Adding to that are the concerns from dead pine killed by the mountain pine beetle. With our warmer, drier summers this means that when a fire starts it will be hotter, spread faster, and be harder to control.

### What can be done to reduce the wildfire hazards?

By removing dead trees, some live trees, and occasionally part of the understory, we can reduce the fuel for a wildfire. Creating large open areas can create fire breaks and help firefighters. Different options are appropriate on different sites. We can't stop a fire, but we can reduce the severity of a wildfire and how quickly it spreads.

### So where would these fuel treatments be done?

We have identified about 38,000 hectares of land near Prince George that are not included in the working forest (they are not part of the forest allocated to a forest company). This land designated Agricultural Development Areas (ADAs) was set aside in the 1980s to support agriculture. There are some additional lands included for settlement purposes called Settlement Reserve Lands. The ADA lands we are interested in managing have not been logged or put into agricultural production. In fact, the old and dead trees on some sites are increasingly creating a barrier to converting the lands to agriculture.

### How would this help the farming community?

By including these lands in a community forest, we can do things that an individual farmer would find more challenging. We can manage for efficiencies – having more timber volume to work with makes the operations more viable and the Community Forest has lower stumpage fees. These savings can go towards getting the land ready for agricultural production, helping a farmer who wants to purchase that parcel.

### Would farmers have to apply to the Community Forest to buy or lease land?

No. The Community Forest would not own the land. The Provincial Government owns the land and they would retain the right to sell or lease the land. Farmers interested in purchasing rights to the land would not have to wait until the Community Forest completes its treatment.

### Will the Community Forest work get in the way of converting land to agricultural use?

No. We WANT to convert these lands to agriculture! The Community Forest has a number of flexible strategies to work with farmers. We would identify parcels of interest for the subsequent five years and share this with the agricultural community to determine their priorities. Any concerns could result in modifying the proposed operations. The only time the Community Forest would ask the Province not to remove land from the license would be just prior to the fuel treatments, as we will have invested in planning, consultation, layout, cruising, permitting, or other options. Following the treatment the land would become available again.



*Dead pine trees are adding to a wildlife hazard for Prince George and the surrounding area.*



*By removing the dead trees and some of the understory, the wildfire hazard is greatly reduced.*



*On this site dead trees were felled and removed, leaving young conifers and deciduous trees which are important for wildlife and erosion control.*

## How can we be sure that the Community Forest will be managed to support the agricultural sector?

Accountability is backed by your elected officials with the Regional District, the Lheidli T'enneh and the City. Any concerns can be brought to Councils and Boards. An agriculture representative will represent the sector on the advisory committee and will seek your feedback. The Province retains ownership of the land. They will monitor the work of the partnership and ensure objectives for the agricultural sector are fulfilled. The Community Forest Management Plan will be subject to a public review and feedback. Your input will also be welcome for operational plans.

## Will the Community Forest manage other values and interests?

This Community Forest is designed to meet the varied needs and interests of our communities. By law, the Community Forest will have to manage for a host of identified values. These range from ecological values, to recreation, and cultural values.

## Will the fuel treatments be the same on every parcel?

No. Many factors affect how a fuel treatment is done. There will be ongoing consultations with the agriculture sector, key stakeholders, and wildfire specialists. Careful considerations will be given to the host of values and operating challenges associated with each parcel of land.

## Why is the City involved with land outside the city limits ?

It is easier and more efficient to add land to an successful Community Forest than it is to create a new one. The Prince George Community Forest has extensive experience and a proven track record of responsible forest management. Collaborative management with the Regional District and Lheidli T'enneh adds a host of benefits. All of our residents – both rural and urban – are rightly concerned about the risk of wildfires. Wildfires do not follow city boundaries, and the more we can do to reduce the overall threat where we can, the better it is for all our residents.

## What will happen to the money that the Community Forest makes from its fuel treatments?

We expect revenues to be minimal and allocated to future operations and to agricultural development. Any net revenues will be jointly allocated by the Regional District, Lheidli T'enneh and City to achieve these objectives and to support the good of the communities.

## We need your input!

**This is an important partnership, and your input is critical to its success. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts.**

For more information on this partnership please visit our web site at:  
[www.communityforestexpansion.ca](http://www.communityforestexpansion.ca)

or contact:

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*Small clearcut openings are important as they slow the progression of wildfires and provide staging areas for firefighters.*



*Many of the areas where woody debris will be removed will become more suitable for agriculture.*



*About 38,000 hectares of land near Prince George are being considered for this integrated approach to wildfire mitigation and agricultural development.*