



BCCFA 2026 Conference Notes – Session #2

Stewardship and the long Game: Rethinking AAC and Timber Supply

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Moderator: Casey Macaulay, Wells Gray CF

Notetaker: Densie English

Session Description

This session shifts the focus from timber targets to informed decision-making that reflects the full range of values managed within community forests. As fibre becomes more constrained, AAC is increasingly understood as an outcome of good data, shared understanding, and integrated planning—not a target.

Hear how community forests are reassessing timber availability, managing for long-term values like water, access, fuels management, and resilience, and adapting to real-world constraints.

Participants will explore implications for budgets and local economies, and gain practical insights from managers using both Western science and First Nations knowledge systems.

Session Summary

This panel challenged traditional assumptions about allowable annual cut (AAC) and timber supply, encouraging participants to view AAC as an outcome of stewardship objectives rather than the primary driver of forest management. Speakers explored how community forests are adapting management practices to reflect long-term ecological, cultural, social, and economic values while maintaining sustainable timber supplies.

The discussion highlighted a growing recognition that community forests are uniquely positioned to lead innovation in forest management because of their area-based tenure



model, close connection to local communities, and ability to balance multiple values. Several speakers questioned the long-standing focus on maximizing harvest levels and emphasized the need to first determine what communities want their forests to look like in future generations, then design management approaches to achieve those outcomes.

Case studies from Westbank First Nation Community Forest and Barkley Community Forest demonstrated how incorporating old-growth management, biodiversity objectives, cultural values, connectivity, extended rotations, and wildfire resilience can significantly influence timber supply outcomes. While these approaches often reduce short-term AAC, they can improve long-term forest health, increase future stand value, enhance public acceptance, and better align management with community and Indigenous values.

The panel also examined the limitations of current timber supply modelling and inventory systems. Speakers discussed the need for improved data, more flexible modelling tools, and stronger connections between planning, monitoring, and on-the-ground management. There was broad support for moving toward more adaptive, spatially based planning approaches that integrate multiple forest values rather than relying solely on traditional AAC-driven processes.

Key Takeaways

- AAC should be viewed as a result of management objectives, not the primary objective itself.
- Community forests are well positioned to lead innovation and making the necessary trade-offs to manage for timber production along with ecological, cultural, and community values.
- Long-term stewardship often requires difficult trade-offs, including lower short-term harvest levels.
- Indigenous values, community priorities, biodiversity, wildfire resilience, and ecosystem health are increasingly shaping management decisions.
- Better inventory information, monitoring, and modelling tools are needed to support innovative management approaches.



- Adaptive management and spatial planning offer opportunities to better integrate multiple forest values.
- Public support and community acceptance remain critical factors in forest management decisions.
- The economic value of community forests extends beyond timber and needs to be better recognized in policy and AAC decisions.

Notable Themes

A recurring theme throughout the session was the question: **What if forest management objectives drove cut levels, rather than cut levels driving forest management?** Speakers encouraged participants to rethink traditional planning frameworks and consider how community forests can demonstrate new models of stewardship that prioritize long-term resilience, ecosystem health, and community benefit alongside sustainable timber production.

Note Taker's Overall Reflection

The session reinforced that community forests are increasingly becoming laboratories for innovative, values-based forest management. As pressures related to biodiversity, wildfire, reconciliation, and community expectations continue to grow, community forests may be uniquely positioned to demonstrate how stewardship-focused, area-based management can shape the future of forestry in BC.

