

DIVISION: Engineering, Planning & Environment
POLICY SECTION: Forestry
SUBJECT: County Forest Growth, Investment & Protection Policy
POLICY NUMBER: POL-SCF-003
EFFECTIVE DATE: September 2020
SUPERCEDES:

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Simcoe County Forest (SCF) is owned and managed by the Corporation of the County of Simcoe. The over-riding principles and goals which govern the management of the SCF are established within the approved 20-year forest management plan 'Simcoe County Forests 2011-2030'. The following assumptions which guide this policy and its implementation are derived from the management plan, former 'Acquisition Principles', and historical practice:

- Sustainability of the Forest is paramount
- Operations and maintenance of the SCF will strive to remain economically sustainable
- All income derived from the SCF will be reinvested back into the SCF
- The SCF is a 'working forest' and is not parkland, preserve or for single-use

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure the continued management, protection and growth of the County Forest.

This Policy will also contribute to the requirement under the Municipal Act (Section 270 (1)7) that

'A municipality shall adopt and maintain policies with respect to the manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality.'

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all lands owned and managed by the County of Simcoe and identified as Simcoe County Forest, and all associated assets including the 'County Forest Reserve Fund'.

4. RELATED POLICIES, PLANS, BY-LAWS

- Simcoe County Forest 2011-2030
- County Forest Reserve Account
- County Land Acquisition / Disposition Policy

5. ACQUISITION PRINCIPLES

The continued strategic expansion of the County Forest will enhance the environmental, social, and economic benefits it provides. Priority will be given to acquire available lands which:

- Enlarge or consolidate existing SCF tracts;
- Provide opportunities for forest restoration / management;
- Contribute to natural heritage protection;
- Increase or protect woodland cover in underrepresented areas of the County.

These broad principles may be refined upon the adoption of targets for woodland cover and/or the completion of a more detailed Acquisition Strategy.

6. REINVESTMENT OF COUNTY FOREST ASSETS

The most effective means to provide for the future protection and viability of the County Forest is to ensure the reinvestment of all assets. As such, all income derived from the County Forest shall be reinvested back into the management, promotion and continued growth of the County Forest. Exceptions may include the support of natural resource based initiatives in Simcoe County such as the support of private land tree planting.

Income derived from the County Forest includes all revenues generated and the proceeds from any property disposition.

7. DISPOSITION / REPURPOSING OF EXISTING COUNTY FOREST LANDS

All SCF lands have historically been acquired for 'forestry purposes', however with hundreds of acquisitions over a century of growth and change, some minor re-purposing is inevitable. Relatively minor losses and intrusions have historically occurred due to road widening and realignments and other infrastructure requirements including hydro, pipeline, and stormwater.

Although rare, property dispositions have also occurred due to changing landuse patterns. All such circumstances must follow the protocols as defined within the current County Land Acquisition / Disposition Policy.

Re-purposing of SCF lands for County facilities and infrastructure may also occasionally be considered which does not meet the requirements of the disposition process as per the above noted policy. In this circumstance and where the requirements for re-purposing exceed one hectare, Council approval shall be required.

8. CONTINUED GROWTH

The continued growth of the County Forest is the desired state. At a minimum, over any one year period, the total area of the SCF must remain constant.