

Eco-Village Proposed

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A dream eco-village in the forest - that's the pitch a team of charitable land developers made to North Cowichan council on Wednesday.

"The trust acquires land from forestry companies, develops a small part of it and protects the rest via a covenant," said Doug Makaroff, a director of the not-for-profit Trust For Sustainable Forestry, a charity that gets involved in conservation projects.

"Ninety per cent or more of the land will be protected," he said, noting one such community - a living forest community - is up and running now.

"We first started out four years ago at Cortes Island and 95 per cent has remained as park or sustainable forest," he said.

"Our raison d'etre is to have sustainable forest and conservation."

The trust works this way, Makaroff said: the organization buys up forestland and tries to cluster the density of the residences.

"The houses are restricted in size so as to leave only a small footprint on the land," Makaroff said.

All the timber rights are donated back to the trust which will, from time to time, take small chunks of land for selective logging.

"We'll take out very small clusters of timber of second generation forest," Makaroff said. "Instead of parcels of land being clear cut, we come in and do this."

While the trust doesn't want to tip its hand on exactly where in the Valley they want to set up the eco-community, they did say the lots will range in price from \$100,000 to \$400,000.

"Selling these building sites pays for the whole works," Makaroff said.

The trust recently made a similar presentation to the Comox/Strathcona municipality.

"We want to be invited into communities where the municipality and the residents say this is a good compromise," Makaroff said.

North Cowichan council made a motion to raise the issue at an upcoming committee meeting.

"I expect we will be back in front of council to talk," Makaroff said.