



Everything Is For Later – And That’s As It Should Be



Jon Seinen is enjoying an upswing in the lumber market on Woodlot License #126 outside Houston, BC.

By SARA GRADY

“Everything is for later.” This is a recurring theme in the Woodlot License program.

Veteran woodlotter Miles and Denise Fuller in Burns Lake have ridden the waves of good and bad times that characterize the forest industry in BC, and relative newcomer Jon Seinen, based in Houston, is just beginning his rollercoaster

ride in BC’s Crown forests. But neither has any misgivings because, paradoxically, what comes down inevitably goes up. And woodlotter understand that much of what they do will be for later.

Having a woodlot license in the heart of the mountain pine beetle infestation presented a mix of fortunes for the Fullers: they were among the forest managers given permission by the Province to exceed their 5-year Annual Allowable Cut on Woodlot License 1540 and extract every viable tree possible. They removed infested pine trees (nearly two thirds of their total stand, the remainder being spruce and balsam) from their 600-hectare plot that would have eventually died standing and become worthless. Local mills raced to absorb the surplus. While the US housing market was experiencing a downturn, trade with China was robust and the forestry sector was reaping the benefits. The lumber mills were drinking from a fire hose.

However, that also meant that the Fullers were left with what people in that area dubbed a ‘stump farm’. They were faced with the daunting task of replanting on a scale that certainly wouldn’t have been part of their original plans, since the very core of the woodlot license program is sustainable forest management with small-scale logging over decades, not clear-cutting over months. So, like their counterparts in the region, they went into ‘silviculture mode’, working



Woodlotters worked hard to restore their forests to healthy, thriving pine stands after the mountain pine beetle infestation.

hard to reforest and get their woodlot back to a healthy, free-to-grow state. As stewards of a Crown resource, this was their promise, their commitment to the Province.

The Fullers are now seeing the results of that hard work, as their new pine and spruce plantings flourish and look less like a nursery and more like a forest. In the meantime, they're selectively logging in small patches, doing remediation and clean-up, and once again getting good market value, as mills in BC clamour for any fibre source to feed the raw lumber market and the burgeoning bioenergy industry. The mills, once selective in grade, size and variety, are taking everything to feed the rebounding US market and local demand for biofuel.

This is good news for Jon Seinen on WL126, who's been managing his own woodlot for nearly five years now. He's looking forward to the next wave of supply on the replanted pine beetle plots, but also benefiting from the fibre-starvation mills and pellet plants are facing in BC.

A lumber-jack-of-all-trades, Jon has fought fires for the BC Wildfire Service over four seasons, and also hires out his logging truck, processor and skidder to local logging operations. Salvage logging to remove pine beetle kill and deadwood and extract danger trees from powerlines and other public infrastructure keeps Jon busy when his woodlot isn't in need of attention. A thriving firewood business has provided a steady, if not modest, source of income in a region that relies heavily on wood heat over the winter.

A husband, and father of a four, six and eight-year-old, Jon is introspective about the cycles of his woodlot. He controls what he can, and understands there are factors over which he's got no control at all. His motivation is knowing that his efforts will result in a payoff 20-plus years down the road and his children will enjoy the fruits of his labour.

Because nearly everything, when you're a woodlotter, is for later.

Mountain Pine Beetle 101

The mountain pine beetle is an invasive species native to Western Canada that, due to historical fire suppression policies and a warming climate, was allowed to spread unchecked during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The epidemic in B.C. is recognized as an unprecedented forest-altering event. It was the most severe bark beetle infestation in recorded North American history, with the greatest damage occurring in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region, where forestry is at the heart of the economy.

The provincial government invested \$107 million in order to limit the spread of the epidemic, destroying infested trees on the leading edges of the epidemic and using small-scale harvests to remove small patches of infested trees. Full-scale commercial timber harvesting was used to remove larger, infested stands before the beetles could fly to new trees. To facilitate recovery of the economic value of dead timber, the Chief Forester raised the allowable annual cut in nine timber supply areas and tree farm licences. Many, but not all, woodlot licensees were beneficiaries of this increase.

For more information about the mountain pine beetle, please visit

www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/mountain_pine_beetle



FEDERATION OF BC WOODLOT ASSOCIATIONS

381 Pheasant Road • Williams Lake, BC, V2G 5A9

Tel: (250) 398-7646 • Toll Free: 1-866-345-8733

Email: gen_manager@woodlot.bc.ca • www.woodlot.bc.ca

WOODLOT PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

P.O. Box 23011 Plaza 33 Postal Outlet

Kelowna, BC V1X 7K7

Phone: (250) 961-0271 • Email: cjmclary401@gmail.com