



Woodlots: The Rocky Mountain Way

By SARA GRADY

One of the many benefits of spending time with woodlotters is visiting the beautiful, and varied, communities across the province that they call home. Such was the case again when the Columbia Woodlot Association hosted the Annual General Meetings of the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations and the Woodlot Product Development Council in September.

Tucked between the Rocky and Purcell mountain ranges, the milky, glacier-fed Kicking Horse and Columbia Rivers weaving through it, the city of Golden is as picturesque and rugged as they come, and an ideal venue for a gathering of woodlot operators. It's home to some of the most well-established family operations in the program, as well as some thriving secondary industries that feed off the forests.

Formal meetings for this year's AGM were held in the historic Golden Civic Centre, a rustic timber frame building with vaulted ceilings and an abundance of character. Woodlotters were welcomed by committee chair Brian Amies, City Councillor Ron Oszust and Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA Norm MacDonald. They spoke about the tremendous opportunities these gatherings provide, and the many benefits of sharing stories of successes and challenges from across the province so that the entire program can grow and thrive.

A diverse cross-section of speakers was present to share insights, including Matt Wealick, Chief Operations Officer of the Ts'elxwéyqw band, which oversees a woodlot license held by seven different First Nations bands. He shared



Floating down the Columbia River provided a unique perspective for AGM attendees on the diversity of the landscape across which woodlot licensees have operated for generations.

the parallels between band management and managing a woodlot, and cited some of the hurdles they've had to clear with their operation, including protected species regulations, cultural heritage resource preservation, community watershed management and public interface. He also spoke of the excellent opportunity to meet with other woodlot operators and learn how they've solved similar problems.

In a region so heavily concentrated with family woodlot operations, it was fitting that the "father" of the woodlot program was present to offer his thoughts. Dr. Peter Pearse, Professor Emeritus at UBC and Commissioner of the 1976 "Royal Commission on Forest Resources" – which drove the early growth of the nascent woodlot program – shared his observations on the state of forestry in BC.

It was the Pearse Commission that

recommended the woodlot model as a means to bring small parcels of private land under active forest management, and make Crown land available to entrepreneurs wanting to pursue silviculture and timber production, as a means of profit and preservation of public forests. He called on all stakeholders to critically examine the productivity of BC's forests in comparison to other regions, such as Sweden, and give serious consideration to the notion of area-based tenures, which he feels are more conducive to long-term success than the current volume-based tenures.

In between the sit-down sessions woodlotters were invited to participate in several site tours – some flat-out fun like the float down the Columbia River, others more information-based.

Tours of Canadian Timberframe Homes and Louisiana-Pacific revealed some intense and (Turn to Page 2)

thriving operations that rely on the supply of quality timber from the region. With prefabricated homes going as far afield as New Hampshire and Kentucky, Canadian Timberframe is a zero-waste, highly efficient facility with 22 staff turning ready-to-assemble homes around in four to six weeks. At peak production they're sourcing roughly 50,000 board feet per month, some of which comes from local woodlots.

Louisiana-Pacific's Golden plant focuses on the production of some plywood, but primarily LVL, or laminated veneer lumber, a structural steel replacement that is gaining immense popularity in home and commercial construction. How popular? The Golden facility houses over 300 employees now, with hiring planned for this year to meet the demands of a plant operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also rely on a steady supply of timber from local licensees: LVL is made from 100% Douglas fir, and with an appetite of 220,000 metres to meet production targets, their supply chain involves some logging, some purchasing, and some creative trading with mills that need the spruce, balsam and pine off Louisiana's license.

It wouldn't be an AGM without some hiking in the bush, of course. Randy Appleton and Irv Graham took visitors out to Woodlot #1819, a robust plot with thick underbrush that is intersected by power lines and mountain biking trails. A big blue busload also got to tour the Braisher Woodlot, #0447, one of the truly multi-generational woodlot operations. The Braisher family has been managing this land for 96 years, and the upcoming generation is already well-entrenched in forestry.

The concentration of intergenerational woodlots in this region is something of an anomaly, and was celebrated in the Stewardship video at this year's meeting. Whether listening to the Braishers, Wolfendens, Wardwells, or Schiessers, the dedication to preserving the land for future generations rings out loud and clear. As the eldest Braisher, Ormond, put it, "We're part of every bit of the ground. We're all part of it." And there is the essence of BC's woodlot program.



Minister's Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Woodlot Management presentation, left to right: Fred Marshall, southern Interior recipient, Minister Forests, Lands and Natural Resources, Steve Thomson, coast and provincial recipients Sibylle Walkemeyer and Wolfram Wollenheit. Missing from photo is Clayton Foster, northern interior recipient.

MINISTER'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson was on hand in Golden to present four woodlot licensees with awards for innovation and excellence in woodlot management at this year's AGM.

- Clayton Foster of Vanderhoof, who received the \$2,500 award for the North region, in recognition of his commitment to stewardship and innovative marketing practices.
- Fred and Jane Marshall of Boundary, who received the \$2,500 award for the South region, for their leadership in the field and their long-time advocacy of the woodlot licensing program.
- Wolfram Wollenheit and Sibylle Walkemeyer of Campbell River, who received the \$2,500 award for the Coast region, along with a separate \$2,500 provincial award in recognition of their commitment to long-term forest stewardship.



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