



The advantage of diversity

By ROD KRIMMER

Most of us are aware of the importance of diversity in maintaining healthy ecosystems. But diversity's importance goes much further than that. Diversity, similar to variety, is not only the spice of life but the very essence of it.



We instinctively understand the dangers of "putting all our eggs in one basket." In spite of this, diversity is rare in practice. On a large scale, specialized monopolies are the business model of the day. But, like monocultures everywhere, they seem unable to adapt to rapid change. On a smaller scale woodlot licences and their holders are the model of diversity. Over 800 individuals, societies and bands contribute a unique perspective and management style to a range of forested stands across the province.

This variety in approach is the greatest strength of the woodlot licence tenure. These management licences provide a glimpse of what land stewardship means, and an example of what forestry could be in a sustainable future.

Mixing it up in the Kootenays

Burns family works within nature and the neighbourhood

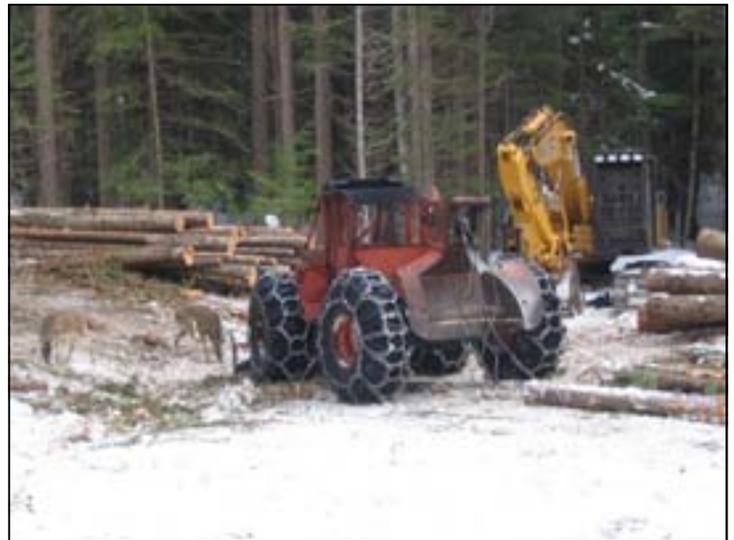
By DEBORAH GREAVES

Gary Burns and his wife Heather both come from long established Kootenay families, and they've built a lifestyle at Goat Creek Ranch some urban dwellers would consider heaven.

Atop the crest of the hill is a large log house that overlooks a view that would make a memorable setting for a movie. Below the house are ponds, a creek, emerald green fields and a small herd of fine Cleveland Bay horses.

Every evening, the Burns's look over their land, their horses and their many obligations. They clearly strive to strike a balance between the work their investments require and the pleasures they provide. Like most woodlot licensees, the Burns have many diverse business interests to help maintain the family and its enterprises.

In the beginning, the farm supported cattle, a few milk cows and some horses. Later on, the newest branch of the Burns family added four children, two boys and two girls, now ages 17 through 26. Gary works as an independent production faller. And, after a long and arduous application process (one which



Small business, community and nature all co-exist in a "Kootenay Mix" on the Burns family woodlot at their Goat Creek Ranch.

incidentally resulted in the establishment of a Ministry of Forests appeal process) the family was awarded Woodlot License 498 in 1991.

Woodlot 498 has become a positive example of how woodlots can help address forest health issues.

When neighbours on properties with pastoral views found out about his plans to log as part of a battle against a Douglas Fir beetle infestation, as well as a new road proposed for scenic Perry Ridge, they were horrified, said Burns.

But when the harvest was complete, the anxious neighbours became advocates

for Burns' brand of local forest management. Since then, local environmental activists have also accepted and trusted Burns' forest management strategies, as well as the harvesting practices of several other woodlot licensees in the area.

The often-envied "Kootenay Mix" of tree species has kept the Kootenays green and beautiful through diversity. And in part because they agree with their neighbours that it's worth the trouble to be discerning with the management and harvesting of trees, the Kootenay Mix continues to provide a fluctuating income to a handful of determined and dedicated woodlot licensees.

Forestry's changing face

Just as the forests themselves are changing, influenced by natural aging, new harvesting methods, altered weather and fluctuating political policies, so too are the people who manage trees on behalf of the people of British Columbia.

Not many of the people working in BC's forests are women, but one individual who stands out is Nancy Pezel, a Registered Professional Forester based in the Qualicum area.

It was Grade 9 social studies that led Pezel to choose a career in forestry over a career as a veterinary doctor.

"Several of us 14-year-olds were chosen to attend Evans Lake Camp near Squamish for forestry lessons. That did it for me," she said.

There's plenty to do in the forest industry in this province, and with 22 years experience and six of her clients active in the local region near her Port Alberni office, Pezel's hands are full.

Some of her clients belong to a group that many people are unaware of: woodlot licensees.

Discussing what she calls, "the mystique of Vancouver Island," Pezel said she feels that "most people's perception of the forest industry is negative. People think forestry and logging is all on a huge scale."

Many people don't know that some forest businesses are actually small, family-run operations

that may involve several generations of the same family for many years, often cutting selectively for specialty products, she said.

"I enjoy working with woodlot licensees because they're so hand-on."

Woodlot licenses are generally awarded to people

who are directly connected to the land, often through ownership of their own sections of private forest, as well as their own local farms or ranches.

Currently, woodlot licenses are held by families, individuals and First Nations groups. Each license comes with a set of long term responsibilities – including replanting trees – along with both the costs and privilege of harvesting trees.

Pezel assists woodlot licensees with the planning and paperwork that's required for both harvesting and silviculture.

Today's current responsibilities and challenges include the protection of biodiversity values and species at risk, maintenance or enhancement of recreation opportunities, and protection of scenic values. It's a tall order, but Pezel enjoys working with these smaller-scale forest managers.

"Woodlot licensees have more personal, hands-on contact with the land. They leave a lighter footprint."



A simple trip to summer camp when she was 14 was all it took to get Nancy Pezel hooked on forestry. Now she is part of a growing demographic — women working in the forest industry.

Annual General Meeting in fall

The West Kootenay Woodlot Association is proud to host the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations and the 12th Annual General Meeting of the Woodlot Product Development Council in Kaslo, BC from September 24 – 26, 2009.

The theme for this year's AGM is "Employing Diversity."

Did you know:

There are 22 woodlot licences in the West Kootenays with two right in Kaslo.

Kaslo, located on Kootenay Lake in southeastern BC has a population of 1,000.

Kaslo was originally incorporated as a city in 1893, making it the oldest incorporated community in the Kootenays.

In its heyday Kaslo was an important centre for shipping and silver mining.

About woodlots

Started in 1948, with woodlot licenses first awarded to local farmers on Vancouver Island, the woodlot program was a democratic plan for the management of forests for their timber resource in perpetuity. Local families with their own lands nearby were licensed as stewards of selected sections of forest and, in return, were beneficiaries of the sale of the timber on those woodlots.



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