



THE WOODLOT COMMUNICATOR



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Woodlotters Work to Protect Watersheds



Watersheds like this one in the Kootenays require careful management to maintain a healthy forest and a healthy water supply for neighbouring communities.

By SARA GRADY

Springtime in British Columbia: ski gear goes in the garage, mountain bikes come out. Outdoor enthusiasts hit the countless kilometres of back-country trails, many carved out or groomed by dedicated mountain-bike riding clubs.

The forests of the Kootenay district are home to some of the most scenic trails in the province and, for the most part, mountain-bike clubs leave a gentle footprint on the terrain they enjoy.

In some cases, though, trail clubs simply aren't aware of the damage they're doing. That's where woodlotters like Peter McAllister, the tenure clerk for Woodlot Licence #494 held by the

Kootenay Agroforestry Society, play a role in educating and engaging outdoor recreationalists about the impact of their activities. It's an ongoing effort, one Peter has been making for over 20 years now. One that, at times, feels like one step forward, two steps back.

At issue, primarily, is water.

A layperson could walk through Woodlot



Peter McAllister, tenure clerk for Woodlot Licence #494, Kaslo, held by the Kootenay Agroforestry Society

#494 in the summer and see beautiful, smooth paths running down the mountainsides, the odd obstruction here and there, a fallen log across the path, a branch or some other obstacle easily removed. Perfect for biking, right? What they might not take into account are the cottonwood trees lining the pathways, a tell-tale sign of an

“ephemeral watercourse”. Water only runs briefly through these little stream beds, but they’re a vital link in the watershed chain.

Left in their natural state, these watercourses slow the flow of water during the height of spring run-off. The fallen logs and branches create natural dams, allowing run-off to percolate into the soil. Clear those paths of the branches and the water makes a speedy, straight shot down the mountain, creating wash-outs and flooding, pulling alluvial soil and other unwanted particulates along with it. This has repercussions on domestic water quality in neighbouring communities.

McAllister has been working hard to educate local biking clubs, and has always been willing to find alternative trails. In fact, the Kaslo Riding Club holds a tenure on two sanctioned trails, Sleepy Hollow and Spanish Moss, that are maintained without negative impact on vital stream beds.

Woodlot licensees are bound by strict rules when building roads and logging around the streams and lakes on their tenure, following Ministry guidelines that evolved after consultation with experts in riparian management. As stewards of a Crown resource, it’s a woodlotter’s mandate to maintain the sustainability and viability of their 600-hectare forest, including healthy community watersheds, while also giving the public access to the land.

Woodlotter like McAllister will continue to work tirelessly with communities and local recreational clubs to honour their obligations as a woodlot licensee.

Forest & Range Practices Act Values

A results-based Forest & Range Practices Act (FRPA) was introduced in 2004 and identifies key forest and environmental values that must be maintained by all stakeholders practicing forestry in BC, including Woodlot Licensees. These values acknowledge the myriad factors that impact the health of the province’s forests, and require great diligence on the part of Woodlotter to maintain. These eleven values are:

- Biodiversity
- Cultural Heritage
- Fish/Riparian
- Fish/Watershed
- Forage & Associated Plant Communities
- Recreation
- Resource Features
- Soils
- Timber
- Visual Quality
- Water
- Wildlife

To learn more about “results-based” management and these eleven values visit the Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations website: www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/values/index.htm



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