



Family Efforts Restore the Health of the Forest



Carl Sjoden, Poppy Sjoden and Willow Sjoden (Granddaughters) Marselle Sjoden (Son) Linden Sjoden (Grandson) and Michael Sjoden (Son) Photographer is Mattea Sjoden. (Granddaughter)

By SARA GRADY

The Mountain Pine beetle is still in the news as the destructive pests continue their march eastward and new tracts of forest are consumed. It's easy to forget that foresters in BC are still dealing with the aftermath of an infestation that leveled their livelihoods over a decade ago. But their efforts are most certainly newsworthy, including those of the Sjoden woodlot family.

Carl and Pamela Sjoden's Woodlot License #0124 is located five kilometres out of Houston,

a small community on the Yellowhead Highway, nestled in the Bulkley Valley between Burns Lake and Smithers. The community's roots were planted with the expansion of the railroad at the turn of the century, and today its 3000-plus citizens and countless visitors enjoy the winding hiking trails and pristine lakes in the region.

The Sjoden family have been, quite literally, tending to WL0124 since 1985. They approach forest management with the mindset of farmers, treating their 600-hectare woodlot like a giant garden. Interestingly, thanks to the technological aptitude of Carl's son Marselle, they've

succeeded in combining boots-on-the-ground practices with computer-based inventory tracking and assessment.

They've walked every square metre of their woodlot and know the ground well, but also have detailed data regarding the density and species mix, thanks to Marselle's diligent mapping and the use of the Province's orthophotographic imagery (see insert) captured by radar-equipped airplanes.

The Sjoden's were able to log a significant amount of their pine beetle kill while it was still viable timber. Since the family conducts all the logging themselves, they were also able to log more selectively around the healthy stands of spruce and balsam.

Their replanting efforts have focussed on rehabilitating the timber inventory but also on restoring the health of the forest. The vast majority of their plantings are spruce – a preferred species in lumber mills – which has the natural advantage of sharp needles, less appealing for the deer and rabbits who graze in the woodlot. The remainder is planted to pine, a “weed species” in Carl's words because it grows so voraciously on its own. It's rich in carbohydrates and, therefore, a favourite of ungulates. The fragile balsam, which relies heavily on protection against the elements from its sturdier cousins, continues only with the support of Mother Nature. By allowing some natural selection and regeneration to occur the forest is given the opportunity to balance itself in



A healthy plantation on Carl and Pam Sjoden's Woodlot License #0124, located out of Houston which was impacted by the mountain pine beetle in the early 2000's. The Sjoden family and friends have planted an estimated 182,715 trees since clearing out the pine beetle infestation.

the wake of such extreme deforestation, creating an ecosystem that will be more sustainable in the decades to come.

Planting is challenging. The woodlot is on a south-facing slope. The terrain can be extremely rocky, as well. The Sjoden family, including Carl's son Michael, along with a great many friends, have planted an estimated 182,715 trees since clearing out the pine beetle infestation.

Registered Professional Forester Alison Patch, who works with the Sjodens, marvels at the knowledge Carl and Marselle have when it comes to their plantings. They know each plot, when it was planted and by whom. Like diligent farmers they are invested in their woodlot very personally, looking decades into the future, and we will all reap the benefits of their healthy, thriving forest.

An orthophotograph is an aerial photograph that has been geometrically corrected to compensate for the curve of the Earth's surface. It takes into account factors like topographical relief and camera tilt, unlike a traditional aerial photo, so the distances are completely accurate. Moreover, the images can be overlaid and refined by technicians after the data has been downloaded; these specialists will assess the orthophotographs and identify specific stands of trees, extrapolating from information provided through "ground truthing" (comparing the technician's assessment to actual conditions after walking the terrain.) This results in an extremely detailed and accurate snapshot of the forest floor, and is very valuable tool for professionals working in BC's forests.



Best holiday wishes from the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations



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