



Ties to the land key to future sustainability

By ROD KRIMMER

In recent months it is difficult not to connect most of my thoughts in some way to the economic situation. Much havoc has already been wrought and there is surely more to come.



Certainly the forest industry is in difficult times and even the forests themselves are in transition.

Forest management is threatened by fiscal realities that cannot be ignored, and yet, real forest stewardship is more than a set of practices. It is an attitude towards the land that is not greatly affected by market conditions, and so continues on.

Industries come and industries go. When I look around to consider who will best weather this storm, it seems most likely it will be the people who have practiced a long-term land ethic as stewards of the soil.

The products from these soils will be the ultimate payback long after the monetary fluctuations of our current time are over.

Stewards of the forest

Woodlot licensees take land management responsibility to heart

By DEBORAH GREAVES

“I wonder if the people who hike or ride their horses or ATVs through our forest ever think of the people who are responsible for that terrain and what that entails,” says Lisa Marak, a Kelowna mother of two and second generation woodlot owner. “I certainly didn’t until I returned home to Kelowna with my family after living in Vancouver for 25 years and took over the management of our family’s woodlot licence.”

Woodlot licensees tend many of the forests near towns and communities that people enjoy driving through, looking out their window at or recreating in, Marak says.

Modern day woodlot licensees, of which there are more than 800 in BC, have a challenging job — to manage for healthy forests, harvest timber, establish a new forest where they harvested, protect water, wildlife, recreation and cultural heritage resources, and maintain access to Crown forest land.

Most woodlot licensees live near the land they are licensed to manage so they have a personal attachment to the Crown forest they manage. They develop strong bonds with their neighbours, and are part of the community.



Lisa Marak came home to Kelowna to manage the family property and its woodlot licence. She and her family view these opportunities as a privilege and an ethical responsibility.

Most woodlots are licensed to families, and many of those families care for the land for decades, even generations. They take a long-term, hands-on approach to forest management. In order to meet government standards, they often spend thousands of dollars on management plans that require Ministry of Forests and Range approval. Profit comes in long after the additional costs of each harvest.

While some families harvest trees every year, others like the Maraks harvest once every five years, using the services of a professional logger.

The wood is usually harvested in small, carefully-designed sections called cut blocks.

At a slow and sustainable rate, it takes up to 100 years to complete a harvesting cycle, keeping in mind that not all areas are harvested. Some parcels of land are designated not to be harvested in order to protect unique values such as wildlife, old growth attributes and water quality.

“We manage Crown forest land, but it’s land that is also part of the urban interface, which impacts communities,” says Marak. “So much like farmers, we’re stewards of the land on behalf of the larger community”

Woodlots are key to forest-based community development program

The Community Development Trust Job Opportunities Program is providing over \$150,000 to improve the growth and quality of wood and reduce the fire hazard on woodlots in the Prince George area.

Sixty percent of the funds will be paid out in wages directly to displaced forest workers, with the balance paying for tools, equipment, and administration to complete the work.

This is the first of several projects that will be initiated by the Prince George Woodlot Association. The intent is to employ about 13 displaced forest workers for a full year. The crew will move from woodlot to woodlot, doing silviculture work such as cleaning dead pine from the forest and releasing the existing green timber to grow faster and with better form. The crew will also perform some trail maintenance activities and reduce the fire hazard in higher risk areas by cleaning the forest floor and pruning the existing stands. All the work is in addition to any legal obligations the woodlot holder may have.

Community Development Minister Kevin Krueger and



Displaced forest workers and woodlot managers will be working together to create safer interface forests and better wood .

Minister of Forests Pat Bell both approve these projects.

The Community Development Trust is a three year initiative that funds projects providing short-term employment for unemployed forest workers in forest-dependent communities affected by job losses.

The Job Opportunities Program provides funding to communities, organizations, forest licensees and contractors. A total of \$26.25 million is available over three years, beginning in 2008/09, for eligible activities on publicly owned and Crown lands. Of this funding \$2 million was allocated to the communities

of Mackenzie and Fort St. James in the first year.

The Job Opportunities Program creates short-term forest management-type job opportunities in or near forest-dependent communities in order to assist laid off workers who have been directly employed in the forest industry.

Activities funded under the program are consistent with Canada's obligations under all of its international trade treaties (including the Softwood Lumber Agreement). Tenure holders' obligations are not relieved or displaced by activities funded through the program.

Wood Chips

The importance of trees

"Plant Trees. They give us two of the most crucial elements for our survival: oxygen and books" – A. Whitney Brown

Trees provide a few other interesting essentials such as toilet paper, toothpaste and shatterproof glass, and help reduce the "greenhouse effect" by absorbing CO². One acre of trees removes 2.6 tons of CO² per year.

Ponderosa Pine Facts

Also known as the Western Yellow Pine, this evergreen was first reported by members of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804. Later it was named by the Scottish Botanist David Douglas, for its heavy or "ponderous" wood. The ponderosa can live as long as 400 to 500 years.

Fires are common in ponderosa pine forests and the thick bark of mature trees protects them from ground fires. It is common to see fire scars on older trees. The other common name, yellow pine, refers to the clear, even-grained wood that is found in very old, large trees.

About the woodlot program

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.

Because the woodlot licence can be passed onto children, it is a unique opportunity for long term stewardship of forest land.



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