



## A family affair from roots to roof

By SARA GRADY

Woodlotters are a passionate bunch, and the folks at Son Ranch are no exception. Spend five minutes with Shilo Freer of Woodlot Licence 1626 and you'll know tree sap runs in the veins of this entrepreneurial forestry family. Tucked in the mountains outside Grand Forks, this little piece of woodlot paradise plays host to an unexpected variety of value-added enterprises, and once you're there exploring the place, you'll be hard-pressed to leave.

Naturally, there are the ingredients you expect in a woodlot operation: a 700 hectare forest carefully managed and selectively logged by Shilo's father, Ross Freer, and milled onsite to produce lumber from fir, larch and cedar. But the Freer family adds some interesting extras to the mix.

A kiln dryer and four-sided-planer, operated by Shilo's mother, Janice, produces high-quality moulding, flooring, siding, and wainscoting, as well as material for large-scale timber framing. The specialty finishing products go offsite, but the timber beams stay close to home, adding to the supply Shilo needs to craft precision framing material for Timeless Timber projects like the



Custom timber framing is just one of the many products and services Shilo Freer and his family produce from their family-owned Son Ranch, including Woodlot License 1626 near Grand Forks. SARA GRADY PHOTO

LEED-certified Christina Lake Arts Centre and the luxurious resort home perched over Hawaii's Kua Bay.

Visitors to Son Ranch will have ample opportunity to learn about forestry practices from both the present and the past: in addition to the logging, milling, and timber frame operation the ranch is home to an extensive museum brimming with artifacts from days gone by. According to the Freers, logging relics keep appearing on their doorstep, adding to the considerable collection of chain saws, rigging, even old invoices and photographs chronicling the rich history of the region. A wander through the assortment of antique vehicles will reveal such gems as a 1949 Western Flyer and a 1950 vintage Federal logging truck.

The property has a natural, rugged beauty

and surrounding the Freer's home is an extensive botanical garden brimming with colour and texture – a product of Janice's green thumb. Guests staying at one of the three rustic cottages on the property can enjoy the serenity of the place year-round: wintertime brings opportunities for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing and the extensive trails are ideal for hiking and biking during the summer.

The Freers have certainly embraced the spirit of the woodlot program as stewards of this beautiful and productive natural resource. Visitors will be surprised and delighted at the range of activities to observe at the ranch. You can check out their website [www.sonranch.com](http://www.sonranch.com) to find directions and more information about this unique BC woodlot.



# Bridging the gap between buyers and sellers

The Bridges Project is a marketing initiative supported by a group of partners working to create an interactive website connecting buyers and sellers of forest products. This website will act like a marketing hub providing up to date information on current and future availability of wood fibre from community forests and woodlot licences for local mills and manufacturers to access.

A buyer/seller website will help bring businesses together creating relationships that will stimulate new opportunities to develop durable and sustainable economic activities. With better exchange of information we can get the right log to the right place at the right time.

“This is a perfect fit for woodlot licences,” says Brian McNaughton, General Manager of the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations. “They’re community-based small businesses with a hands-on approach of the small forested land base which they manage. Their personal knowledge of the log profiles on their woodlot allows them to identify logs for specialized lumber requests. Being community based, they employ local resources and contribute to the local economy.”



Steven Wright measures the diameter of a tree to determine the volume and quality of timber for his next cutting permit. WIM TEWNKEL PHOTO

This initiative will develop milling and manufacturing in BC’s forest communities. Working in partnership with Community Forests provides access to a larger timber supply yet is still community based.

“The BCCFA is excited about the potential of this project and how it will help our forest workers and local economies recover and grow,” says Robin Hood, president of the association.

Quick and easy access to market information, whether it is what a seller has to offer or what a buyer is looking for, will facilitate the flow of fibre to a mill or manufacturer where it will be used for its highest value, creating the most jobs for the highest profit.

Throughout the first phase of this project the management team visited more than 10 locations throughout BC and met with the forestry community. These discussions will help build the foundation of the website linking buyers and sellers, providing small forest tenures, such as woodlot licences and community forests, and saw millers and manufacturers the ability to expand into other markets. Whether users are planning for the future or looking to buy or sell now, this new website will be able to point the user in the right direction.

For more information about this project contact Rhoni Whyard at [rhoni@rwbusinesssolutions.com](mailto:rhoni@rwbusinesssolutions.com)

## Woodlots are British Columbia’s true family forests

There is a small but well organized group of Crown forest managers who have consistently demonstrated their ability to adjust their forestry practices to meet many challenges. These are the more than 850 woodlot licensees in the province who manage a small but significant piece of the provincial forest harvest.

Compared to other forest tenures, woodlot licenses are a unique tenure. Many woodlots are in the interface between forests and urban

or industrial areas. Woodlots often have recreational uses such as hiking, biking and horseback riding. There are usually many eyes watching the operations on woodlots, yet there are few complaints to the Forest Practices Board.

The diversity found in the many forest ecosystems in this diverse province is reflected in the woodlot licensees. Many are ranchers or farmers whose woodlots are adjacent to or near their private lands, their family homes

and communities. Numerous woodlots are purposely intergenerational. This alone ensures excellent stewardship.

These intensively managed, family operated tenures provide several valuable contributions to the BC: forest and ecosystem diversity and resilience, communities and social benefits, a light footprint on the landscape, and a sizeable and positive involvement in the province’s economy — approximately \$200 million annually.



**FEDERATION OF BC WOODLOT ASSOCIATIONS**  
381 Pheasant Road • Williams Lake, BC, V2G 5A9  
Tel (250) 398-7646 • Toll Free: 1-866-345-8733  
Email: [gen\\_manager@woodlot.bc.ca](mailto:gen_manager@woodlot.bc.ca)  
[www.woodlot.bc.ca](http://www.woodlot.bc.ca)

**WOODLOT PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
THE WOODLAND ALMANAC**  
Box 10033, Prince George, BC V2K 5Y1  
Tel 1-888-925-9995 • Fax (250) 962-9199  
Toll Free 1-888-925-9995 • E-mail: [cjmclary@shaw.ca](mailto:cjmclary@shaw.ca)