



Okanagan woodlotter manages with a vision for resource diversity

By SARA GRADY

As we explained in the last edition, the Environmental Goods and Services (EG&S) economy has redefined the ways in which governments and other regulatory bodies measure the value generated by farmers, ranchers and forester managers in the country.

But there isn't a formal program in BC to compensate producers of "environmental" or "ecological" goods and services – such as clean water and air, soil regeneration, wildlife habitat, scenic views, recreational opportunities. Nonetheless, environmental stewards like BC's woodlotter continue to manage their natural resources in such a way that the benefits go far beyond the financial.

One such woodlotter, Ernie Day, manages a piece of Crown land that is a virtual checklist for EG&S. Woodlot 0343, in the heart of the Okanagan-Shuswap, carries tremendous responsibility due to the many pressures placed upon it.

Poor road conditions don't permit us to meet on his woodlot – spring break-up is not a time to travel forestry roads unless absolutely necessary. Instead, we sit in his home, situated on a piece of land that's been in his family since 1897, a farming oasis smack in the middle of Kelowna. As agricultural land falls to the condominium ax in this ever-growing community, the Days' legendary pear orchard and vast vegetable gardens stand firm, defying time and urban encroachment.



Ernie Day continues to this day with the painstaking management of his woodlot in the Okanagan Valley to the same exacting standards that won him the Woodlot Stewardship Award in 1997.

I'm surprised to learn the Day family has a woodlot, but I'm not surprised to learn that Ernie manages his woodlot with painstaking care and diligence. And that's a good thing for all of us sharing the air, water and natural beauty of the Okanagan Valley. Together with RPF Dirk Pereboom, Ernie navigates regulations around watershed management, wildlife preservation, recreation and views [see sidebar].

All but 10% of Ernie's woodlot is part of the Mission Creek Watershed. (The remaining ten is part of the Sidede Creek Watershed.) Mission Creek is the largest tributary feeding Okanagan Lake, and represents a significant proportion of drinking water supply for Kelowna, population +150,000. During its journey to the lake, two

irrigation districts, Black Mountain and South East Kelowna, draw water for residential and agricultural use. Finally, the City of Kelowna Water Utility draws it from the lake for residents downtown.

Managing riparian habitat and stability is vital for the health of the creek, particularly during spring melt, when the tremendous volume of water flowing from the snowy mountains can bring down sediment, stream-side trees and other debris.

Half of the woodlot is in designated Mule Deer winter range. This necessitates balancing the health of the canopy and undergrowth to provide food and shelter to foraging deer. Leafy

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shrubs and “litter fall” from aging Douglas Fir provide winter meals for Mule Deer, strategic stands of trees provide shelter from the elements, and camouflage.

Outdoor enthusiasts will know that one of the most popular hiking trails in the province traverses Ernie’s woodlot. The High Rim Trail, renowned for its varied terrain and sweeping views, is a well-travelled 55km long ribbon cutting through the forest. Hiking enthusiasts come from all over to try their hand at the entire trail, which can take as many as five days to cover.

The recreational use, coupled with visibility from the highway, and residential developments sharing borders with the woodlot, necessitates adherence to very strict Visual Quality Objectives.

According to Dirk, small openings are created to preserve partial screening “to maintain visual conditions from both near (recreational trail), medium range (adjacent residences) and long range (landscape views from valley communities and highway corridors), while also retaining sufficient shading to reduce early summer snow melt...” These measures allow runoff to be stored for late summer, all the while maintaining tight overstory areas to protect Mule Deer winter refuge areas.

For all the complexity and regulation surrounding his woodlot, Ernie is undaunted. Like so many of his fellow woodlotters, he considers the environmental restrictions to be common sense measures he would enforce whether or not he was required by the terms of his license. The environmental benefits are a natural offshoot. He’s happy to share his forest with outdoor enthusiasts and works to make it an enjoyable, safe place for all to use. The painstaking selective logging, planting and management are simply part of doing the job right.

He’s been recognized for his efforts, winning the Woodlot Stewardship Award in 1997, and has remained a stalwart advocate of conscientious resource management, in the true spirit of the Woodlot licence program.



Small-scale selective harvesting is undertaken on Ernie Day’s woodlot to ensure other values such as biodiversity, riparian habitats and wildlife are maintained.

MANAGING FOR ALL RESOURCE VALUES

The Forest and Range Practices Act outlines 11 key forest and environmental values that must be maintained, most of which are in play to a greater or lesser extent on Ernie Day’s woodlot licence.

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

You can get a full description of each of the resource values at:

<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/values/>



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