



# THE WOODLOT COMMUNICATOR



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Spring 2019

## Taking Social Licence to the Next Level

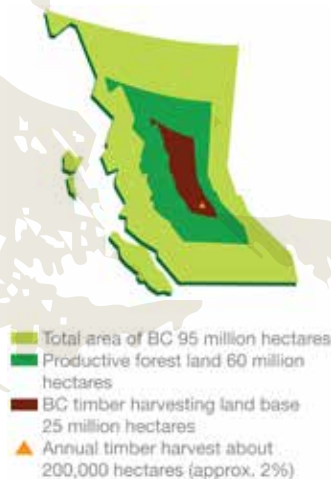


An open house in the forest presenting a painting of Woodlot Licence W1897 on Quadra Island, welcoming people to come visit and learn about a licenced woodlot. (Photo credit: The Birds Eye)

By LISA MARAK

Social Licence for Crown forests is becoming increasingly challenging today with more public demands on the same piece of land – recreation, visual beauty, cultural heritage, wildlife, range, water and trees for timber. As stated by John Horgan in his April 4th Vancouver Sun Op-ed piece, “Forestry is a foundational industry”... “Communities large and small, rural and urban, depend on a strong and sustainable forest sector.”

So sustainably managed forests (areas managed for timber along with the other forest values) are part of the mix when considering social licence for forest that is earmarked as part of the timber harvest land base. Balancing all sides of social-environmental-economic interests will be critical to the success of Horgan’s vision.



BC’s Crown Woodlot Licences are a unique, long-term forest tenure well suited to social licence – they are a small, fixed area often located in the wildland-urban interface, along traffic corridors and in sensitive ecosystems. They are licensed to locals who live in the community, First Nations, educational societies and communities. And there are 855 of them scattered around BC.

Clearly, some ‘social licence’ is built into the legal requirements associated with administering and managing a Woodlot Licence (WL). But then there are all the extras that licensees do voluntarily such as keeping trails free of debris, sponsoring school field trips, working with mountain bike clubs and providing cross-country ski trails.

One such woodlotter took social licence to a whole new

level recently. Jerry Benner, along with his family operate Big Tree Woodlot, W1897 on Quadra Island. They recently held an “Art in the Woodlot” open house where a painting by French artist Cecile Liénaux was unveiled to the public. The painting was produced as a scale drawing of the Woodlot Licence with the roads portrayed as trails for hiking and biking and areas where you’ll find resident wildlife, old-growth trees and mushrooms for foraging. The concept was not only to educate the public to the recreational opportunities throughout the entire Woodlot Licence but also encourage them to explore the management of the Woodlot in the 19 years since the area was transferred from Small Business Timber Sales.

Through open communication, education and collaboration with community members, this woodlot licence provides environmental and social security for the community and the individuals who live there and that in turn contributes to the economic sustainability of the entire area and BC’s forest sector.

# Woodlot Licence Champion Jim Simpson, FLNRORD Retires



Jim Simpson on W1641 (left) with a small scale logger (right)

After 33 years, Jim Simpson's last day of work with the Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development was February 28, 2019.

Jim began his career in the forest sector in 1981 after graduating from Selkirk College as a Forest Technician. From 1981 to 1983 he worked for Reid, Collins, and Associates in the Kootenays. With the downturn in BC's economy in the early 1980s, he went to Malaysia as a CUSO volunteer. In 1986 Jim was hired by the Ministry of Forests (now FLNRORD) and moved to Campbell River.

Jim is best known as the Woodlot Licence Coordinator for the Campbell River Forest District having spent 24 years working diligently to expand and improve BC's Woodlot Licence Program.

Among the woodlotters in his district, he's

seen as a champion of the program. It was no surprise that he was nominated for the Premier's Award in 2013, an honour given to individuals who have "made an exceptional and lasting contribution throughout their public service career."

According to Jim, the woodlot program grew over two decades in "ideal" conditions. The region was peppered with small Crown plots that were extremely difficult for the Province to manage effectively. It made sense to entrust the Crown land to private landowners, who have a

very personal attachment to their own piece of the forest. Under the guidance of the woodlot program, the government could be confident their resources were in good hands.

A stalwart advocate for the program, Jim earned the respect of his peers by providing "guidance, direction, and education through countless field visits, training sessions and meetings," according to one licensee. He's known for his "cooperative, creative and solution-oriented" style, his aversion to red tape, and his ability to balance the sometimes-conflicting interests of licensees, First Nations and community stakeholders.

Through his efforts, combined with the efforts of the woodlotters, a healthy forest sector was nurtured in the region. Considering its size, and the geographical and social barriers that come to bear on the area, this is a significant achievement. Woodlots are the ultimate private/public partnership, and the North Island is a shining example of the benefits that can be enjoyed by all stakeholders, no matter the challenges.

We wish Jim all the best in his retirement!



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