



Forests in Good Hands

THE WOODLOT COMMUNICATOR



www.woodlot.bc.ca

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Norene and Dale Wilson manage Woodlot Licence 1464 in Qualicum, Vancouver Island where a wide range of values must be accommodated.

Woodlot Management Reflects Community Values for over 100 Years

While everyone knows BC's forests provide many benefits, do you know about BC's Woodlot Licences and their unique contributions to communities?

By SARA GRADY

It's unlikely that when Dale Wilson's grandfather was repaid an outstanding debt with a deed to a stand of trees in the middle of nowhere, it would lead the whole family down such an enriching path.

But that's exactly what happened in 1916. It placed the Wilson family in a pristine part

of British Columbia – Qualicum Bay, on Vancouver Island. Their small parcel of land provided a living for Dale's father, who harvested timber from the land with horses and an axe. It also provided a lifetime of memories for Dale, especially being lifted onto the backs of those giant horses and wandering the forest on childhood adventures.

In his "retirement" as a tugboat captain he pursued a woodlot licence that bordered the

Wilson family homestead and the family was awarded Woodlot Licence 1464.

Brenda and Dale based their forest management on an ethic of respect for the land and to reflect the values of the community.

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Nash Creek off channel pond and connector rehabilitation on Wilson's Woodlot

Following woodlot licence regulations and their own stewardship goals, the Wilsons were able to remove timber sustainably, manage water, ecological and recreational resource values and ensure everyone in the community could enjoy it.

Vancouver Island is an eclectic mix of people who rely on income from some of BC's best timber and some of the province's most coveted backcountry. So, managing Woodlot Licence 1464 and accommodating such a wide range of values was a balancing act of diplomacy, technical knowledge and the understanding that they were part of a community.

Dale and Brenda, who are retiring this year from woodlot management, exemplified all the qualities sought out in the woodlot licence program. They've taken their responsibilities to honour the social licence to heart, and won the hearts of their community, as well as government officials.

So much so, in fact, that they were put forward

as potential nominees for the Minister's Award for Excellence in Forest Management and Innovation.

Maintaining a woodlot – particularly on such a compact parcel of land like Vancouver Island – requires a willingness to uphold environmental and forestry standards while being sensitive to public concerns and ensuring the public has safe and easy access to the land. The Trans-Canada Trail bisects the Wilson's woodlot, and in addition to all the roads Dale has built for logging operations, there's a network of looping trails that host up to 40 visitors a day. Even the local Walmart borders a section of the woodlot today. It doesn't get much more 'urban interface' than that.

Dale and Brenda were happy to share their forest with tourists and town residents alike. Over the years, they took great pride in educating the public on their harvesting and reforestation activities.

They hosted small business, local schools and organizations to run safe and controlled training exercises on the woodlot.

The Wilsons enjoyed the benefit of those collaborations as much as the trainees did. They saw it as part of their role as stewards of a Crown resource...to make it available to everyone for recreation and education along with providing revenue for their family's homestead.

Of particular note, they took an active part in the Nile Creek - Qualicum Bay rehabilitation project, by enhancing Nash Creek which runs through their woodlot and enlarging a pond for the wild cutthroat trout. It was a collaboration with Trout Unlimited Canada, Nile Creek Enhancement Society and government agencies. Thanks to all their efforts, Nile Creek has been re-established as a fertile spawning ground for a range of species that had been at risk due to habitat destruction and over-fishing.

Dale echoed a sentiment shared by so many woodlot licensees. Having grown up roaming that forest as a child, he wanted to preserve it for future generations.

Woodlot licensees take their stewardship responsibilities very personally – because they live in the community and share the forest with their neighbours, friends and families.

The woodlot program will miss the Wilsons, but wish them well in their next adventure.

Story of Nile Creek

<https://nilecreek.org/youtube/>



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