



BC's forests: A Year in Review



Eastgate, near Manning Park

By SARA GRADY

It has been a year of ups and downs for the forest industry, but BC has demonstrated that as a community with shared interests we can overcome challenges and build on our strengths.

A season of unprecedented wildfires caused devastation to our forests, impacting Woodlot Licences, Community Forests, First Nations, companies with timber licences, ranchers and

communities at large. On the heels of this our forests are being further threatened by Douglas Fir and Spruce bark beetle infestations.

BC's economy has depended on the forest industry for decades, especially in rural communities where it has provided jobs for tens of thousands of British Columbians.

What's required now is a joint effort to rehabilitate our forests so that the economic, social and environmental benefits can continue to flow in a sustainable fashion and we won't face

more catastrophic wildfires. This will require cooperation amongst private industry, stewards of woodlots and community forests, the public, First Nations and government. An independent review of the BC government's response to unprecedented spring flooding and a devastating summer of wildfires has been commissioned by the provincial government, signalling a renewed understanding that the entire province must be engaged.

The theme from our 2008 conference

Woodlots: Facing our Future seems as relevant today as back then when the forest industry was facing the worst economic downturn in history. Woodlot licensees are proud to uphold a tradition of forestry excellence while building prosperous communities and striving to conserve forests

for the future. The woodlot licence program has been an integral part of BC's forest sector for over five decades.

Despite constant and ongoing changes over time, the one constant has been the fact that woodlot licences continue to provide the kind

of socio-economic benefits and environmental management so vital to the future of the forest resources and the communities where we live.

There is much work to be done, but we're optimistic about the future of forests in our province.

The Christmas Tree in BC



Students from an elementary school in Port Alberni at the Alberni District Secondary School's very own Christmas Tree farm.

A Christmas tree is part of the holiday tradition for many people in BC. And the business of growing Christmas trees is an important, sustainable part of the local economy and the environment in our province.

There are about 450 growers who have plantations in the Fraser Valley, on Vancouver Island and the Okanagan, Thompson and Kootenay regions, as well as on Hydro right-of-ways, and they provide over 900,000 trees each year.

About 75% of Christmas trees are harvested from native stands produced using 'stump culture', a practice employed for the last 50 years. A tree is cut leaving the bottom two or three branches near the ground. A shoot may grow from near the cut or the uppermost of these remaining branches may turn up to form a new tree top. Recently, growers have enhanced their practices, fertilizing and shearing young trees to improve their look and marketability. The alternative to 'stump

culture' is planting seedlings on a farm; these seedlings are typically ready to harvest in 6-14 years.

In addition to providing income to growers throughout the province, trees growing in a natural forest or on a tree farm are far better for the environment than artificial trees. They produce oxygen, take up carbon dioxide and can be turned into mulch when Christmas is over.

Wishing you all the happiness of the Christmas Season and best wishes for the New Year.



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