

executive director's report



**By Gord Chipman, Woodlots BC
Executive Director**

Executive Summary and Woodlot Program Overview

Even though the economic future is uncertain, I look forward to 2026. I was thinking about the state of forestry and over the holiday break my mind wandered to the story of *Back to the Future* (1985). This is a classic sci-fi adventure that centers on the high-stakes consequences of messing with the past. In the movie the character Marty McFly traveled into the past and had a mission - to save the future. Making a few changes to key points in time would change the future. Maybe we could learn a few things from this movie.

Words matter, and today there are some words that trigger unintentional consequences. One word like “Management” triggers some sensitive people and has been used in a recent Land Management Handbook # 79 with the concept of “Intervention”. In a forestry

context an Intervention is any management activity within the stand that changes the stand development trajectory. Interventions are planned to influence the stand development towards the desired future condition. For more information see the new land management handbook 79 that was distributed in August of 2025.

<http://library.nrs.gov.bc.ca/digipub/LMH79-si-ngpg.pdf>.

The good ol' days for me were in the 80's and 90's when I knew it all and the forest industry was growing. Do you remember the 90's? That was when I heard the slogan “Forests Forever”. It has been used in different contexts depending on the campaign it was used for. In BC, it was used as a counter-campaign slogan by the forest industry during the intense environmental protests of the 1990s (like the Clayoquot Sound blockades). At that time, it was designed to reassure the public that the industry was not “liquidating” the forests but was instead moving toward a cycle of renewal.

This idea has been demonstrated over and over again on woodlots for over 7 decades now. There have been some exceptions when Mother Nature has unleashed natural processes such as fire or insect outbreaks, and salvage was necessary. We can be proud that we managed the dead forests and replaced them with new forests. Woodlots have consistently led the way through active management that creates continuous forests.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in many areas of British Columbia. There are many

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burnt dead forests in this province that have not been recovered and in many of the past killed forests only 10% were salvaged. I have watched many Old Growth Forests destroyed by high intensity fires and they will never be the same again in our lifetime. There are many burnt over lands where natural regeneration has resulted in an overstocked forest that is doomed to burn again. We have seen many areas in parks that have burnt over and depleted the soils due to high fire intensity.

By contrast, we now have many woodlots that were salvaged in the 80's and 90's that are ready for an intervention (juvenile spacing or likely commercial thinning) now. We do have a good story to tell and it is about time to tell it again.

Often times we find that our hard work goes unnoticed. Good forest management is not always a visible activity and therefore the public is often unaware that the forests they enjoy are due to the management that made it possible. For example, many woodlots have mountain bike trails, yet many users do not realize they are riding through a managed woodlot.. We need to remind people that they are benefiting from good management. A need for standardized sign designs was identified at the last conference. I know this is not a new concept. We plan to deliver on this early this new year.

Besides jobs and revenue, woodlots serve a very important role for society and we need to do a better job of communicating this. We have noticed some great examples of woodlot owners sharing their stories and informing the public of the great work that is being done on woodlots and we want to support and build on these efforts. We are looking for ways to better share the good

work happening on woodlots, including ideas such as social media campaigns, short videos, and member-led storytelling. If you have ideas or would like to be involved in developing this further, please let us know. This will be one of our campaign priorities in 2026.

In January the Board of Directors met face to face, including a half-day governance review to make sure we have our lanes and guardrails mapped out. This work is helping set a strong foundation as we move into the next fiscal year.

We plan to finalize the budget and working plan by the end of February in time for the new fiscal year which begins in April. In 2025, the Board focused on 3 interim objectives: reducing red tape, non-disclosure agreements, and no net loss. The results in these areas had varying results.

One lesson we learned is that the political conditions in Victoria limit the opportunity to reduce red tape, which is out of our control. We will be shifting our focus on areas we have control on.

Going forward, the focus will be prioritizing projects that fit with the Strategic Plan that was finalized in 2025. There are a few projects that we plan to prioritize over the course of the year, specifically Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan: Financial Stability.

It is important that we continue to learn from the past but we need to have our eyes set on the future. I hope we can stop the uncertainty that we have in the Forest industry and start focusing on possibilities for the future. Going forward we plan to reach out to the rest of society and make them aware of the great woodlots that we

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have in this province. We plan to team up with some other organizations in this regard.