



Newsletter SPRING 2020

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55th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the **OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY**



GUEST PRESENTER

Michael Healey

University of British Columbia Professor emeritus and a renowned Canadian-born fisheries scientist, known for his work on fisheries ecology, natural resource management and the role of science in public policy, Dr. Healey will introduce a holistic approach to the management of ecosystem of rivers, salmon, bears, using the forests in Pacific Northwest for context.

AGENDA

✓ Election of Directors

✓ Financial Report

✓ Business Meeting

CENTRE STAGE THEATRE

in the Summerland Secondary School

Friday, May 15, 2020 • 7pm

Admission Free Refreshments NO CHARGE Donations Welcome

POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Editorial

One of the features of the OSPS Newsletter over the past several years has been 'Notes From The Past' which reprints stories from the first part of the twenty-first Century. This has been a popular section in that it demonstrates where issues arose, how they were addressed and, probably most importantly, their relevance to today. In the same spirit, we ask you to consider a very common and important refrain that was popular in the 1980's: "Think Globally; Act Locally".

The philosophy underpinning this idea was that individuals can make a difference. While we hear about, and often watch, the devastating consequences of global climate change, the actions that we take on our own personal scale can assist with the mitigation of the factors behind the documented and predicted disasters. This is true as we scale up the situations that we find ourselves in individually, as a group, a community or a nation all of the way to globally.

Currently in our own region of the Okanagan Similkameen there is evidence of altered climate that is the result of, and has an effect on, actions in our ecosystems. The flooding, which destroyed beaches and property along our lakes in three of the past five years, can be traced back to a very fast melt of our snow-packs (we are currently well over 125% of typical storage in our packs this spring).

Continued on next page...

Please use the enclosed membership form on the back page to help us carry out our mission.

The fast melts appear to be the result of warmer springs (ring any bells?) and lack of forest coverage to shelter the snow from sunshine (how do forests lose their cover? Clear-cut logging and wildfire areas.) These snow-packs then melt and degrade the forest soils, destroy fish habitat in streams and creeks and do major damage to human infrastructure prior to filling the lakes to overflow.

Individual actions such as being environmentally aware and contributing to the conversations about the cycles that we seem to be entering are important. However so is keeping up to date on what local governors, from regional districts and/or cities and municipalities, are acting on as policy.

Allowing homes and other structures to be built in flood zones is not sustainable. However, neither is allowing the artificial limiting or enhancing of water through dams in the river systems. This results in individual interest groups having goals met or not at the whim of a governing entity. It is important to be aware, vote, communicate and take part where you can as an individual or as part of a group or registered society.

In terms of the larger problems with national or global consequences the individual can also take part. Driving in our region is pretty much a necessity but there are individuals out there driving fuel consumption reduced vehicles such as hybrids, electrical vehicles and small engine alternatives, such as Smart cars. Where you can take public

transit. There has recently been an increase in service between Penticton and a variety of communities on the way to Kelowna.

Likewise drink bulk sourced water, either from taps or through community programs. A reduction in the plastics and the processing, not to mention the corporate depletion of aquifers, is the logical result (there you have acted locally). Many kitchens and other rooms are now being outfitted in bamboo shelving and cupboard features. Bamboo can be regrown in a fraction of the time that it takes our boreal forests to regenerate. (Besides we tend to ship out raw logs rather than milled products from our depleted forests.)

Efforts Needed to Save B.C.'s Forests

Dear Editor:

In 1945 when the Sloan Report by the Chief Justice of B.C. laid the policy foundation for the Forest Act including granting industry full access to our forests through tenure to ensure the taxpayers of BC a "perpetual supply of raw material for forest industries, with consequent stability of industrial communities and assurance of permanent payrolls," it is doubtful he had today's depleted industry scenario in mind.

In spite of warnings in the 1970s of the 'fall down' effect precipitated by less access to old growth, consistent declines in the 1990s, 50,000 jobs lost in two decades, the shut down and curtailments at over 125 mills, today's industry keeps plugging away, business as usual, cutting down more trees, as quickly and economically as they can hoping things will turn around.

It is time to reform the government policies supporting this accelerated decline.

While radical to some, to save the remnants of the forestry industry we must first save the forest, to save reduced jobs in forestry

we have to save trees, too keep some mills afloat we will have to shutter others.

Our forest have been permanently, radically altered, now our forest industry must follow.

Anything within easy access and of value on our great landscape has been harvested, time for a pause especially in parks, protected areas and community watersheds where the true value in a tree does not come from a 2x4.

This is not a partisan issue.

Former Liberal forest critics, MLAs and one-mill town mayors need to stop finger pointing at the current government; they are suffering from amnesia if they believe this crisis sprung up when the NDP came to power in May 2017.

Telling the forestry policies of the NDP and the Liberals apart isn't easy, Green Party MLA Adam Olsen says "A lot of these decisions are eerily similar."

If this is so, then to achieve the outcomes B.C. voters want including forests first, wildlife, clean water, then mills and jobs, we will need

a monumental shift in ministry policies, a new forestry, focused on the communities that rely on them for more than just jobs.

In a week that mourned the loss of a politician who had to make the hard decisions, and place a moratorium on the cod fishery to save the species and salvage an industry. Premier John Horgan and his NDP Green coalition are going to have to get offensive in their forestry reforms.

The NDP cannot continue to play defensively pitting forestry workers against academics, unions against environmentalists, local governments against licensees and industry but bring them together to develop a 'new' forestry game.

B.C. must dramatically change how forestry is managed and governed if it hopes to reverse today's troubling trends. It will be essential to shift decision-making away from the top five or six accountable forestry corporations to regional planning committees, local councils that are accountable to First Nations, communities and rural residents.

Taryn Skalbania - Peachland

Wetlands, forests can help cities save millions in climate adaptation costs

MICHAEL TUTTON
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

As Canadian communities brace for rising risks of spring flooding related to climate change, a non-profit group has published findings suggesting preserving wetlands and forests can be key to reducing adaptation costs. The Municipal Natural Assets Initiative released its second set of results recently on how forests, creeks, wetlands, ponds and other natural features help cities avoid costly infrastructure projects. The approach has been applied to the New Brunswick communities of Florenceville-Bristol, Riverside-Albert, and Riverview; Oshawa, Ont. and the district of Sparwood and City of Courtenay in British Columbia.

The report dated Feb. 21 estimates savings ranging from \$200,000 to \$414 million for preserving or improving so-called “natural assets,” with results including improved drainage of stormwater and purification of drinking water. The initiative was originally pioneered by the Town of Gibsons, B.C. - which conducted the first similar studies - and is funded by the Suzuki Foundation.

One of the areas considered was how conservation helps adapt to flooding. Last year’s Canada’s Changing Climate Report, a summary of climate science by federal researchers, concluded the effects of widespread warming are becoming evident in many parts of Canada and “are projected to intensify in the future,” including earlier spring peak streamflow and rising sea levels. The 2019 document also concluded a warmer climate will intensify weather extremes, “while ...more intense rainfalls will increase urban flood risks.”

The natural assets report says in Florenceville-Bristol, N.B., protecting 182 hectares of forested area along the St. John River helps avoid costly human-engineered systems that would be required for a one-in-100 year rain storm. It estimates forest conservation would save the creation of a \$3.5 million stormwater management pond system. In Riverview, N.B., adjacent to Moncton, protecting four wetlands that cover 14,000 square metres in the Mill Creek Watershed would avoid the \$2.3 million needed to create stormwater management ponds to handle a 1-in-100 year flood, as predicted under a climate change scenario.

In Oshawa, Oshawa Creek - which drains an area of about 119 square kilometres - and surrounding lands were studied as the key natural system for handling more frequent rain storms. According to the group protecting seven kilometres of natural area in the watershed, including steps to guard against erosion of lands around the creek system, would save about \$18.9 million that it would cost to build a concrete channel with similar flow rates to handle runoff. If full protection measures are taken for the entire length of the creek and its surrounding floodplain, the financial benefits increase to \$414 million by

avoiding construction of alternative, human-made water channels. The consultant calls for additional study of the water system to fully define ways to help it absorb precipitation.

In Courtenay, B.C., the study looked at several potential flooding scenarios from the Courtenay River, one based on the 2009 flood conditions and another on a 1-in-200 year storm. The project identified four options including widening the Courtenay River banks, converting a sawmill site to a natural foreshore, bringing back the river’s natural path and “gradually removing properties from the flood plain and allowing only land uses that are compatible with flooding in the flood plain.” The study found these measures would not solve the flooding problems, but they would reduce flood damage by between \$723,000 and \$2.4 million, depending on the extent of the flooding.

Roy Brooke, director of the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative, said in an interview the information being gathered for municipalities can be used for their planning. “Natural assets are providing vital infrastructure to communities, and the services have a value and often increase over time because they are adaptable in the face of climate change,” he said. “This becomes information the communities can leverage ... to start treating nature for what it is: a vital asset and a core part of any resilient system.”



MICHAEL HEALEY
*Professor emeritus,
University of British Columbia (UBC)*

Michael Healey is a Canadian-born fisheries scientist, known for his work on fisheries ecology, natural resource management and the role of science in public policy. In addition to his activities as an academic and research scientist at Fisheries and Oceans Canada from 1971 to 1990, and at UBC from 1990 to 2007,

Healey has served as an advisor on a number of high profile conflicts over water flows and conservation. Healey is also concerned with how scientific information gets translated into public policy, and he explored the institutional arrangements for natural resource management and the role that science plays in the development and evolution of resource management policy.

Photo credit: © Michael Healey

Remote B.C. school gets most of its power from \$450K solar energy system

The district expects to save about \$50K in fuel costs per year

Dominika Lirette, CBC · December 1, 2019

The Cariboo-Chilcotin school district estimates it will save about \$50,000 per year in fuel costs thanks to a new solar energy system set up at the Naghtaneqed Elementary-Jr Secondary. (Photo by Alex Telford)

A school in the Nemiah Valley, two-and-a-half hours southwest of Williams Lake, B.C. is trying to reduce its diesel consumption by getting most of its energy from solar panels.

The solar energy project at Naghtaneqed Elem-Jr Secondary in the Cariboo cost \$450,000 but the district hopes to have it paid off in seven to eight years, said Alex Telford, manager of facilities for School District 27.

“We’ve been discussing how to reduce and minimize energy consumption for quite a few years,” he said.

The district was paying about \$78,000 a year for diesel fuel to power the school, which has 20 students of Chilcotin First Nations ancestry from kindergarten to Grade 10, but a capacity for up to 75.

The fuel was also used to power a portable that houses a wood shop, three mobile homes for teachers and another building used as a

health unit.

“So, there’s quite a sizeable electrical draw out there,” said Telford.

Telford estimates that the school will get about 80 per cent of its power from the solar energy system that was installed. (Photo by Jason Jackson)

After a few years of considering the move to solar power, the school district hired solar energy installation company, Hakai Energy Solutions, to assess the benefits of installing solar panels. The results were positive and the district was able to receive funding for the entire project through the Ministry of Education’s program for carbon neutral funding.

The district isn’t entirely certain how much diesel the school was consuming each year, because it varies depending on the weather and the people at the school. However, it estimates the district will save around \$50,000 per year on fuel costs

The school will still use two diesel generators, one as backup, and one that is from the 1970s that was rebuilt to charge the new system’s batteries through the darker winter

months and the shoulder seasons.

“We’re forecasting about 80 per cent to be running off of the solar system,” Telford told Daybreak Kamloops host Shelley Joyce.

Award-winning project

Earlier this month, the school district received a community improvement award from Clean Energy B.C. for the school’s solar energy project.

“It was kind of a shock,” said Telford.

“Our contractor had signed us up for it, which is wonderful. Kind of felt like a little fish in a big pond...But it’s still very nice to be honoured by them.”

Prince George installs B.C.’s 1st solar-power parking lot

Telford isn’t sure if they will install solar panels at other schools because it is still expensive.

“The price still has probably got to come down a little more to compete with hydro,” he said.

However, they are going to look into other energy efficient solutions, such as using a biomass boiler system, which uses biological materials found in a forest, to create heat.

“So we do quite a few other things other than solar to save energy within our district.”

With files from Daybreak Kamloops.



Wilderness Preservation is Our Best Protection Against Wildfires

by George Wuerthner · February 27, 2020

In recent weeks, misinformed Douglas County politicians have expressed opposition to the 500,000 acre Crater Lake Wilderness proposal based on the misguided belief that wilderness designation poses a wildfire threat. They argue that “active management,” meaning logging, can preclude or prevent such blazes. But this demonstrates a fundamental failure to understand fire ecology.

Just as it may seem intuitive to assert the sun circles the earth because it rises in the east and sets the west, it may seem intuitive that logging would reduce fires. But just as science shows us that the earth circles the sun, despite the daily rhythm of sunrise and sunset, logging has been shown to increase wildfire risk.

A recent study by Oregon State Forestry School found that the most severe wildfires are located on private forestlands where “active management” is most prevalent. Another study of 1,500 wildfires across the West found that fire severity was lowest in protected landscapes like a wilderness area, while lands, where active management (read: logging) occurred, had the highest severity blazes.

While this may seem counterintuitive, the reason has to do with the factors that drive wildfires.

First, most wildfires are human ignitions. There is a strong correlation with access to logging roads and the number of fire starts. Wilderness, because it prohibits roads, has far fewer actual fire ignitions.

Second, the driving force in wildfires is drought, low humidity, high temperatures, and high winds. In particular, all large fires are driven by high winds. With these “extreme fire weather” conditions, wildfires pass through and around any “fuel breaks.”

But even more importantly, logging and thinning by opening up the forest to greater

warmth, drying, and wind penetration enhances wildfire spread.

But that is only part of the issue. Logging is not benign.

Logging roads are a significant vector for the spread of weeds and sediment that clogs streams. Logging fragments forests and removes the biomass (i.e., trees) that are critical wildlife habitat for many species. Logging activities disturb and sometimes displace sensitive wildlife like grizzly bears and elk.

Worse for the long-term health of our forest ecosystems, logging indiscriminately removes trees. Yet, all forest stands have genetic variability. For example, some trees are more resistant to drought or bark beetles. Some trees grow better under cold temperatures while others are adapted to heat. Logging has been shown to reduce the genetic diversity of our forests, thus reducing the resilience of forest ecosystems.

Climate change is imposing many stresses upon our forest ecosystems. Perhaps one tree in a hundred might have a genetic ability to tolerate higher temperatures or extract more moisture from the soil. None of these genetic adaptations are visible to the forester with a tree marking paint gun.

With climate heating, perhaps the most significant value of unlogged and unroaded forests is their storage of carbon. Logging is the biggest source of CO₂ emissions in Oregon. Some 28% of tree carbon is contained in branches, cones, and needles, which is typically released when burned in slash piles after logging. Another 53% of the carbon stored in trees is lost as waste in the manufacturing and milling process. Overall, about two-thirds of the carbon in trees that are logged for lumber quickly become greenhouse gas emissions.



Garfield Peak from Skel Point, Crater Lake. Photo: Jeffrey St. Clair.

Even forests charred by wildfire store far more carbon than a thinned/logged forest. For instance, in Oregon, more than 35% of the statewide greenhouse gas emissions are the result of logging, while wildfires emit about 4-5% of carbon. Across the country, wood product production emits more than 10 times the amount of carbon as do the combined emissions of wildfires and bark beetle.

Keeping carbon in the forest is analogous to keeping fossil fuels in the ground. If we reduced fossil fuel burning and protected our forests from logging, we could take a considerable chunk out of our annual carbon emissions and maintain healthy forest ecosystems, and ultimately a healthy planet.

This brings me back to the Crater Lake Wilderness proposal. By storing carbon, reducing roaded access, limiting fire ignitions and reducing fire spread, wilderness designation is by far the best land management option.

Of course, if you want more wildfire ignitions, more severe wildfires, more carbon release, more sediment in rivers, more spread of weeds — and more taxpayer losses due to subsidized timber sales — by all means, support more logging.

George Wuerthner has published 36 books including Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy. He serves on the board of the Western Watersheds Project.

DESERT

Osoyoos Area, British Columbia

Canadian Wildlife March & April 2012

Life in the desert isn't easy. It's even harder when that habitat is vanishing, just as Canada's only desert ecosystem is doing. Located in the only desert ecosystem in doing. Located in the southwest corner of B.C.'s Okanagan Valley, the Osoyoos desert region is characterized by arid, sandy hard-packed ground and talus slopes dotted with drought-resistant grasses, shrubs and cacti. But more than 60 per cent of this habitat has been destroyed. Only nine per cent of what remains is considered undisturbed. The main threat is urban and agricultural development, which has left the more than 100 rare plants and 300 animals found now here else in Canada in jeopardy. The most threatened include western rattlesnakes, nighthawks and the Behr's hairstreak butterfly. In 1991, a group of locals formed the Osoyoos Desert Society, an organization dedicated to preserving and restoring this habitat. But its own strategic plan concedes the current rate of local development will eradicate Canada's only desert within 30 years.

Mudboggers Fined

*By Judie Steeves - Kelowna Capital News
September 30, 2011 2:00 AM*

Two young Kelowna-area men were fined Sept. 11 after they were discovered driving all-terrain vehicles through a wetland in the Chute Lake area. Each was fined \$575 under the Forest and Range Practices Act for damaging the environment. Conservation Officer Ed Seitz said they were doing a routine patrol in the area when they saw the pair and, although they fled, they were found at their camp at Chute Lake. "We don't need that kind of activity

in sensitive natural areas around here," said Seitz. New legislation against what is called 'mud-bogging' and other activities that tear up the natural environment was enacted by the province of B.C. in 2007 with the intent of providing tools for authorities to crack down on such activities.

Myth of Abundance

Penticton Herald, Friday, April 15, 2011

Last weekend I previewed a DVD, directed by Canadian Liz Marshall, that follows the work of Maude Barlow. This award winning documentary, "Water on the Table" examines the question: should clean, potable water be declared a human right, or should it be a marketable commodity like lumber, grain or oil? A number of people, both Canadians and Americans, are interviewed at various times throughout the documentary: some with views similar to Ms. Barlow's other with opposing thoughts. At one point during the DVD, Ms. Barlow states there is a "myth of Abundance" when it comes to Canadian water resources. In other words people, including Canadians (perhaps especially Canadians), believe we have an abundant supply of clean water. We don't.

In 2006, a number of groups collaborated and produced a poster called "Okanagan Basin Waterscape". The poster, available through the Geological Survey of Canada (Natural Resources Canada), is subtitled: "Water – the myth of abundance". Sound familiar? The Okanagan Basin Waterscape poster has 'an abundance' of good information specifically directed to the Okanagan Valley.

It's not just human water needs, conveyed primarily by Okanagan municipalities, to take into account when considering the need for water. Aquatic life and wildlife need healthy streams. Recreation and industry need water. The Okanagan produces 25 per cent of the total value of British Columbia's agricul-

tural products, so this sector needs its share of water as well. With the yearly watering restrictions placed on Okanagan residents each year, we do have enough water resources to meet the many demands. Today. What about 10 to 15 years from now? While the net amount of water remains relatively constant, demands on the resource are increasing. The two principle areas of rising demand lie in population growth and climate change. According to Collier International's report "economic Overview and Population Stats", average population growth of just over 1.6 per cent over each of the next 15 years is forecasted for Kelowna. If this growth means additional 'sprawl' with lots of roofs and roads that direct runoffs flows directly to sewers and then into streams, population growth exacerbates the issue. However, if the development is compact and runoff is captured and filtered naturally before it flows into ground water, population growth can be sustained. Climate change affects water demand more subtly. Longer, warmer and drier summers increase outdoor water demand and more water evaporated from Okanagan Lake; a longer growing season leads to an increased demand for irrigation and our forests dry out more quickly, increasing the potential for forest fires. Fortunately, Okanagan residents have two ways to counter the inevitability of population growth and climate change. One, capture rainwater and allow it to slowly infiltrate the soil, and two, remove or reduce lawn areas and select low water plants for the landscape.

Both of these solutions are 'doable' and they both dramatically reduce the amount of water used out-of-doors. For our sake and for the sake of future generations, I encourage you to think seriously about how you can reduce your outdoor water use.

Toni Boot is the founder and owner of Grasslands Nursery in Summerland, a nursery specializing in sustainable gardening. (Toni is now the Mayor of Summerland)

Forest Sector Beyond Bailouts

BY BRIAN HOREJSI,
COMMON GROUND

Most Canadians no longer expect much from their members of parliament, or from their provincial legislature members. And that's what they're getting! It's a sad example of progressive decline in the already sad state of a badly tattered democracy.

But that does not excuse elected "representatives" for their resistance to read and consult, not only the traditional corporate and senior civil service water haulers – but informed people who do their analysis and interpretation outside the now highly private and paralyzed chain of government command.

Had these people ever had the backbone to step outside the elitist shelter of the insider and corporate world, we would all be in a far better place today than we are.

If MP Dan Albas wanted to do something for the forest industry – notwithstanding what he should actually be doing, which is stepping up for the citizens of B.C. and their long standing fears and observations that B.C. forest are badly managed, critically over exploited and very poorly protected – he would demand that the B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations produce a detailed annual report.

That report should set out for B.C. public lands shareholders – citizens – how B.C. "manages" forest, who gets preferential use of our forests, and what these corporations or license/permit holders pay to taxpayers for exploiting public land, forest and ecosystems.

Imagine if you put your money in the bank and never, at least for 15 years, as is the case in B.C. with the Forest Service, saw a statement or knew that we were happening to your investment or savings, except that you saw some big corporations and CEO's consistently walking out of your bank with a big smile on their faces. That's B.C. forest management!

The fact that the "new" government – Premier Horgan and Minister of Forests Doug

Donaldson – didn't and haven't changed this when first elected is preposterous.

Small wonder that the U.S. trade representatives don't trust B.C.

Subsidies and handouts to the timber industry in B.C. allow them extreme advantage over the U.S. timber industry (active on public land) that have a strong suite of environmental management and protection regulations and laws they have to abide by.

Needless to say, they do that only if and when the U.S. public holds their hands to the fire using those democratic and legal regulations that entitle citizens to go to court or administrative appeal demanding U.S. Forest service accountability. You and I don't have those rights in B.C.

I'd be the last person on earth to argue this regulatory umbrella in the U.S. is perfect, or even satisfactory, but imagine, as is the case in B.C., if it were entirely absent, and always had been. Logging companies operating on federal public land in the U.S. are constrained (relatively speaking) by at least nine pieces of legislation, ranging from forcing preparation of publicly vetted forest management plans, to off-road vehicle use plans, to environmental impact assessment of logging plans, to open-to-the-public meetings, to endangered species protection.

None of these are present in B.C.

Province Needs Help Monitoring Moose

VALLEY IN BRIEF – HERALD STAFF

The BC Wildlife Health Program is asking for help assessing the effects of winter ticks on the province's moose population as part of its annual surveillance program.

The program relies on observation from wildlife professional and the public to monitor the number of moose with hair loss and assess the amount of hair loss on each individual animal. This information is used to estimate the overall prevalence and distribution of winter ticks.

Tick infestations can result in behavioural and physiological changes that may directly

Observers need only look at decimated watersheds, grossly excessive road systems degrading habitat and sucking money out of the pockets of taxpayers or bleeding sediment in community watersheds and fish habitat, mill owners blathering about the high cost of logs, and mayors demanding handouts and a return to the good old days to see the costly social, economic, and environmental consequences of a forest management system with no public accountability, no science-based protection standards, and an entitled attitude that crushes citizens' fingers in the door jamb when they try to intercede.

MP Albas has missed the boat when he decries forest management in B.C. for not giving more to industry and mill workers.

He's either uninformed or simply grandstanding.

In either case, he's only helping cripple the ecological viability of forests, public lands and all the critters, humans included, that do and will increasingly depend upon protection for public lands and downsizing on obese timber industry.

What he should be doing is standing on the pulpit demanding powerful, written laws and regulations to dramatically elevate the scale of protection and recovery of ecologically effective and functional forest.

Dr. Brian L. Horejsi is a wildlife and forest ecologist from Penticton.

affect the survival rates of moose, especially in younger individuals. Winter tick infestations can be observed on moose from January through April. The ticks spend the entire winter on one host. There can be tens of thousands of ticks on one moose.

As the female ticks mature, they feed on the blood of the moose in late winter. The irritation causes moose to scratch and groom themselves excessively, resulting in hair loss and less time spent foraging or resting, which can lead to weight loss. The extent of hair loss on a moose can be observed easily from a distance and is a rough indicator of how many ticks are present.

Anyone interested in contributing to this surveillance program can fill out a survey online at gov.bc.ca/wildlifehealth/mooseticksurvey

Forestry Workers Being Used as Pawns by the Forestry Industry

Every good chess player knows about sacrificing their pawns. A player sacrifices a pawn to get a kingside space advantage, to destroy or damage the opposing king's pawn cover, or to keep the opposing king in the center. Unless the opponent manages to fend off the attack, he is likely to lose. The king in this analogy is the NDP government, the opponent is the Forestry Industry, and the pawns, unfortunately, are the forestry workers of BC, their families, their communities.

Daily headlines cite high log prices and dwindling timber supply as driving the crisis in British Columbia's forestry industry which has devastated communities and kneecapped the provincial economy. Forest Companies have announced shutdowns or curtailments in more than two dozen mills in the province. Statistics say more than 6000 workers have been affected so far.

What's not being discussed openly is the Forestry Industry's rebellion to the NDP government's Coast Forest Sector Revitalization Initiative. After exhaustive consultation with industry and a demonstrable reluctance of Industry to address the problems themselves in a meaningful way, the government moved ahead with some aggressive solutions to address the significant de-regulation of the Forestry Industry implemented by the previous government.

It was the previous government that opened the doors to raw log exports with hardly a whimper from the Forestry Industry at that time. BC exported 5.1 million cubic meters (m³) of unprocessed timber in 2018, compared with 2.5 million m³ in 2009. As an illustration one cubic metre roughly equals one city telephone pole. To put that in perspective: a standard logging truck can hold around 40 cubic metres of timber. A standard single-family home contains about 37 cubic metres of wood. So, in 2018, B.C. exported enough wood to fill 127,500 logging trucks or build over 137,837 homes. If lined up end to end, those trucks would stretch from Vancouver to Thunder Bay, Ontario. If inhabited by four people each, those homes would house more people than all of Vancouver.

Yes, raw log exports have created a significant problem for the survival of mills in BC.

The Industry rebellion started with the provincial government's announcement that it will be making a series of legislative, regulatory and policy changes over the next two years. It commenced with Bill 22 in May of this year. The legislation now requires what's called a "public interest" test for any transfer of cutting rights. So, before the big lumber companies get to trade tenure between themselves the government has to be assured that there is an economic benefit to communities, First Nations and workers and not just to corporations and their shareholders.

This legislation has stalled the tenure transfer of \$60 million of timber between Canfor and Interfor and they are not happy about it. The NDP followed up with more rules that further riled the industry. The new rules included changes to waste policy and are designed to get some of the approximately two million cubic metres of wood waste on the coast to pulp and paper producers and the bio-products sector. Holders of licenses are required to cut all of the block and not just pick the high value trees. The holder of the license must bring all of the fibre at least to the road, and if the lower value wood is not utilized it will be left for operators under the Small Scale Salvage program. The new rules provided for the charging of triple stumpage on any wood left behind that is deemed to be economically usable. The days of huge slash piles left behind after the high value sawlogs are trucked out had come to a crashing end. This made the Forestry Industry mad.

The government also applied a new, targeted fee-in-lieu of manufacturing for exported logs harvested from a coastal BC Timber Sales license, in an effort to make sure more logs are processed in B.C. and create jobs in the province. The fee is to be in effect for five years, as of July 31, 2019. The fee will be dependent on the economics of individual stands. Easily accessible stands of higher-value species will have a higher fee than remote stands with low-value species. The policy is expected to discourage exports of higher-value timber, making more of the supply available to domestic mills that have a more difficult time competing, and to encourage investment in value-added manufacturing. To be fair, from a forest industry perspective, they claim log exports are a tradeoff to maintain employment



for loggers and contractors that would be lost if offshore shipments were banned outright.

Timber companies are now required to prove that logs slated for export are "excess" to lumber manufacturing needs before the province will grant them export permits. As a result, BC coast timber harvesters must now submit data to the government about their log export volumes. These changes also required increased reporting and surveillance over logging operations that until now were left to the companies' own devices and honesty.

This is exactly what was needed to curtail raw log exports that have been contributing to critical shortages of fibre as compared to manufacturing capacity. This is what we the citizens of British Columbia begged for.

But now the Forestry Industry was enraged. Their response was simple. Close mills. Threaten the dismantling of the BC Forestry Industry. Use the naivety of BC citizens to rebel against the government and its policy.

Their narrative was also simple. Blame everything on persistently weak lumber prices, combined with rising operating costs that include high rates for stumpage, the provincial fees charged for timber-cutting rights, and new requirements for removing residual waste fibre from forests. Make citizens believe logging has become uneconomical, that there is no profit in the Forestry Industry anymore. "The sky is falling". The government must undo their restrictive policies.

The reality is, yes lumber prices have fallen, but because of the cyclical nature of the industry not because of government policies. As the US housing market starts to grow (as predicted) so will lumber prices. This cycle has existed forever in the industry. What wasn't predicted was the skyrocketing lumber prices in the first 2 quarters of 2018.

Companies like Interfor and Western Forest Products bragged in their respective annual financial reports about the record profits that had been realized by each company.

Not one company in BC complained or warned that these very high lumber prices were without question going to cause a spike in the stumpage fees following a lag period far after lumber prices surely plummeted. And that's exactly what happened. Lumber prices fell at the same time as stumpage fees rose to astronomical levels (as predicted).

Stumpage, the province's Crown timber fee, is adjusted quarterly in accordance with Part 7 of the BC Forestry Act. It is based on a complicated formula that considers timber volumes, species and grades and previous lumber prices all administered through a Harvest Billing System. The formula has been intact forever, and everyone in the Forestry Industry knows the system well, and they all knew that stumpage fees were due to spike. But rather than be honest with the public, the industry perpetuates a cry for the government to address the stumpage fees, knowing full well that this would undermine the entire countervailing case the US has ongoing with Canada in the softwood lumber litigation. Both resolution panels from the World Trade Organization and under the North American Free Trade Agreement had found that Canadian softwood lumber production is not subsidized, and therefore a victory shortly is anticipated.

The Forestry Industry is playing a dangerous game, knowing that if the government were tempted to subsidize the forestry industry by lowering stumpage fees these same companies would lose the hundreds of millions of dollars that is being held in trust by the US government that will be turned over once the dispute is resolved in favour of Canada as it is currently predicted.

Now, to be fair, BC stumpage rates need to be much more responsive to fluctuations in lumber prices and perhaps should be more weighted to lumber prices as in Alberta. In BC stumpage rates are derived from billing rates from January to December or a year of rates. This functions as a slow reaction to lumber price fluctuations and a significant lag period before stumpage rates reflect the lumber market. This lag promotes a strategy of milling the timber at a rapid rate when

lumber prices are high and stumpage rates low, until the inevitable change where lumber prices drop and stumpage rates are high. That's when a sawmill would prefer to curtail production, as they aren't making as much money. That is pretty much what is happening in BC right now. The Forestry Industry is attempting to leverage an inevitable downturn to pressure government into a system of forestry de-regulation that have enjoyed and thrived in for over a decade.

In Alberta stumpage fees (timber dues rates) applied are based on the current market prices of forest products. Therefore, they are very responsive to fluctuations in the lumber market. BC assigns stumpage considering species, while Alberta uses strictly harvest volumes. As an example, in 2018 when lumber prices were very high stumpage fees for Hemlock were \$5.22/m³. In Alberta stumpage fees were \$32.87/m³ in August 2018 but by November had dropped significantly to \$6.12/m³. Meanwhile stumpage rates didn't adjust in BC until some time in 2019 and soon had soared to \$13.62/m³ for the same Hemlock making it uneconomical to log or manufacture timber.

Managing stumpage fees is a particular challenge that requires a sensitive balancing act between, fees collected, market values, and sensitivity to our US softwood lumber litigation

Experts agree that changes made and further contemplated by this government will fundamentally address growing concerns about forest management on the coast. We just need to be a bit patient and wait until things shift and then settle.

However, companies like Teal Jones continue to perpetuate artificial hysteria like; "Current high stumpage rates remain high relative to lumber prices, and harvesting costs have been adversely impacted by new regulations to bring out more residual waste fibre. These

negative factors have made it impossible for the company to continue its forest licences economically."

The answer is simple. If a company claims that they cannot continue its forest licenses economically, then take away their licences. Award them to someone that can make a profit. And profit some other company will make.

Furthermore, if a Forest Company closes a mill in BC the government should quickly restrict all of their raw log exports, and take away a proportionate amount of their tenure. If you aren't going to manufacture our trees in BC you don't get to keep our trees. Close a mill ... lose your trees.

This can be done, but it probably requires legislative amendments to the BC Forestry Act. In Section 54.69 under Subsequent suspension or cancellation of rights -the government could simply add:

(d) the holder announces a permanent closing of a mill or facility

In conclusion it is transparently clear that the Forestry Industry is using the market argument, the stumpage argument as a way to blame the NDP government, a way to bully the government into repatriating their free reign of the industry.

The Forestry Industry cannot be trusted with the stewardship of our trees. The Coast Forest Sector Revitalization Plan is crucial to the survival of the industry. It must be defended, it must proceed without delay.

If companies are not interested in doing business in this province, in a way that provides economic value to the citizens of BC, then we don't need them.

Close a mill ... lose your trees!

Species	BC Coast Area 2019	BC Coast Area 2018	Alberta	
			Total dues for sold volumes over 107,296 m ³	
Balsam	\$11.88/m ³	\$4.33/m ³	August 2018	\$32.87/m ³
Hemlock	\$13.62/m ³	\$5.22/m ³	Sep 2018	\$19.53/m ³
Cedar	\$24.00/m ³	\$12.52/m ³	Oct 2018	\$14.30/m ³
Cypress	\$16.42	\$5.63/m ³	Nov 2018	\$6.12/m ³
Douglas Fir	\$21.39	\$9.97/m ³	Aug 2019	\$8.27/m ³
Spruce	\$16.75	\$5.64/m ³		
Other (unlisted coniferous species)	\$16.85	\$7.60		

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Finding Hope for British Columbia's Salmon

BC VIEW – GREG KNILL

It was a tough year for B.C.'s iconic salmon. But there's reason to hope 2020 will be better. Fraser River salmon, already struggling, took a major hit in June after a rockslide blocked their critical migration route just before they were about to head upstream.

The Big Bar slide, north of Lillooet, sparked an intensive effort to get the fish to their spawning grounds. Using helicopters and truck transport, the salmon were lifted from the water and moved farther upstream.

If there was urgency in the effort, it was because biologists had seen this before.

In 1914, railway construction along the Fraser generated a rockslide that made passage through Hell's Gate north of Hope impossible. The result was dramatic. In 1913 the salmon run was estimated at 2.4 million. Four years later, when the cycle returned, the number had plummeted to fewer than 600,000.

Efforts over the next few years, including construction of fishways, helped mitigate the damage, but some species never recovered.

Scientists see the same potential at Big Bar. Last month of federal government earmarked up to \$30 million for private-sector contractors to clear the debris, citing the possible "extinction" of some species if action wasn't taken quickly.

"Without immediate environmental remediation," a government department wrote in December, "many salmon stocks native to the upper Fraser River may become extinct."

That urgency was echoed by the Pacific Salmon Foundation. Calling the situation a "national emergency," the foundation told politicians, "Failure to fully restore salmon passage will have serious biological, economic and socio-cultural consequences that will have repercussions for years to come."

The economic impact of the slide is already being felt. The threat to the salmon prompted the total closure of recreational fishing in the non-tidal portions of the Fraser, affecting the lucrative tourist trade in several B.C. communities.

The impact on Indigenous communities is even greater. Following the 1913 slide, whole fisheries for some First Nations were lost. The fear is that the Big Bar slide could have the same effect.

Salmon held a special place in this part of the world long before Europeans colonized it. Not only was it a critical food source, salmon held a special spiritual significance because of its timely reappearance each year – "a gift."

That reverence remains. It's something I can't fully appreciate, but I do understand the significance of a healthy salmon stock to the whole intricate biological balance of B.C.'s coast and its waterways.

Salmon feed more than people. They sustain the orcas in the ocean, gulls and raptors inland, the bears on the river's edge, and,

when their life is done, their bodies nourish the land.

I was reminded of that as I ran along one of my local trails the other day. At my feet I found a salmon head and later a tail – nitrogen-rich gifts for the trees housing the bald eagles perched above me.

Work is being done in communities across B.C. to help salmon have a better future. This year federal and provincial governments committed more than \$150 million for research and habitat restoration over the next five years.

This commitment will no doubt be cheered by the 35,000 volunteers who give up their Saturdays each year to wade into muck, plant trees and clear debris so young salmon have a fighting chance.

In Hope, for example, an abandoned gravel pit that's been a tomb for young salmon will now have access to the Fraser and ultimately the Pacific.

Along my running trail, new spawning beds were created. Days after the narrow construction window closed I watched in fascination: The ripple that I thought were waved around a rock were in fact spawning salmon, stirring up gravel and literally laying the foundation for a new generation.

What a gift.

Greg Knill is a columnist and former Black Press editor. Email him at greg.knill@blackpress.ca