



Best Management Practices for Coastal Legacy Trees

A. Introduction

The Pacific temperate rainforests ecoregion of North America is one of the richest and most diverse temperate forest ecoregions on earth¹. These coastal rainforests contain enormous trees, referred to as “legacy trees”, which are a result of the area’s favourable growing conditions, including mild year-round temperatures and heavy rainfall. Legacy trees are exceptionally large and old, and a unique feature of British Columbia’s coastal forests.

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) recognizes that legacy trees are often attributed with having important cultural, aesthetic and ecological value. These trees, when retained, can play an important role in habitat conservation by bridging old-growth characteristics into second growth stands. In addition, large trees are increasingly supporting the growing ecotourism economy as valuable destinations in and of themselves. In that context, BCTS’ aim is to retain legacy trees throughout the program’s coastal operating areas in accordance with the protocols below.

B. Scope

The following best management practices for the retention of legacy trees apply to the coastal operating areas of the BCTS Strait of Georgia, Seaward-tlasta, Chinook and Skeena Business Areas, which are located within the Skeena, West Coast and South Coast Natural Resource Regions of British Columbia (BC)².

C. Best Management Practices

1. Guidance for Selection of Legacy Trees for Retention³

A legacy tree is defined as a tree that is of the species and the minimum diameter specified in Table 1.

Table 1: Diameter Guidance for Legacy Tree Retention⁴

Species	Diameter (m DBH) Guidance for Legacy Tree Retention
Yellow-cedar	2.1
Coastal Douglas-Fir	2.1
Sitka Spruce	2.2
Western red cedar	3.0

It is difficult to confirm the exact measurements of standing trees; therefore, the table’s measurements are a guide. It is up to the judgment of the assessor to use both estimated

¹ See: http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/ecoregions/pacific_temperate_rainforests.cfm

² See: https://gww.nrs.gov.bc.ca/flnr/files/flnr/media/internal_communications/FLNRO_regional_map_0.pdf?pl=mo-flnr-regional_map

³ The University of British Columbia (UBC) [BC Big Tree Registry](#) is used in this BMP as the reference source to identify the largest trees by diameter and species for those species that are capable of growing to very large diameters in BC. As guidance, this BMP recommends that trees that are at least 50% (diameter threshold higher for Yellow cedar due to safety issues such as dead tops, hollow cores, etc.) of the largest diameter of those registered in the UBC Big Tree Registry can be considered as unique and can be considered by BCTS for retention.

⁴ Largest Diameter Tree (m DBH) specified in Table 1 as per the UBC Big Tree Registry (Note: Select ‘metric’ and ‘diameter’ parameters in Big Tree Lists report).

measurements and quality indicators to determine if a tree qualifies as a legacy tree suitable for retention.

2. Planning Considerations

Legacy trees selected for retention are ideal features to anchor retention patches. Legacy trees can be retained within areas that will normally be set aside from harvesting (e.g., wildlife tree retention areas, ungulate winter ranges, wildlife habitat areas, old growth management areas, riparian reserve zones and any other areas reserved for non-timber values). Despite best efforts, it is also recognized that due to operational factors it is not possible to identify or retain all legacy trees or include them within retention patches.

3. Operational Factors

Legacy trees may need to be felled during or after primary harvesting operations if they constitute a safety hazard (or are affected by other operational factors) that cannot be addressed through other means.

Operational factors to consider in making a decision of whether to retain a legacy tree will be based on, but not limited to, the following considerations:

- a. Worker safety.
- b. Operational constraints associated with the location of a tree, potential isolation of timber and impacts to cutblock design, in particular in cutblocks that rely on overhead cable harvest systems.
- c. Windfirmness of the tree.
- d. Known First Nations' interests based on recent consultation.
- e. Local abundance of legacy trees.

4. Field Marking, Mapping and Documentation

All legacy trees selected for retention will be marked in the field, mapped, visually inspected, and their key characteristics (e.g., species, estimated height, diameter at breast height, crown spread) and location recorded per the BCTS Coastal Legacy Tree Spatial Tracking Procedure. In addition, all exceptionally large legacy trees that meet the criteria for the BC Big Tree Registry "Top Ten List" will be nominated for inclusion on the list⁵.

5. Relationship Between Legacy Trees and Monumental Cedars

Where BCTS Forest Stewardship Plans (FSPs) or other commitments warrant a different management approach such as retention of monumental cedars, large cultural cedars or culturally modified trees that also fit the definition of legacy trees, those commitments supersede BCTS' Best Management Practices for Coastal Legacy Trees.

⁵The BC Big Tree Registry Top Ten List presents the top ten highest scoring trees for each species. Big trees are ranked using the "Tree Importance Score", which is based on tree height, circumference (or diameter) and crown spread. Information on nominating trees to the BC Big Tree Registry can be found at <http://bigtrees.forestry.ubc.ca/nominating-trees/>.