

Forestry – A Path to a Green Future in BC

Old growth forests are immensely important to the province of BC and beyond for numerous social, environmental, and economic reasons. As a Registered Professional Forester (RPF), part-owner of a forest harvesting firm, and resident and recreationist residing on Vancouver Island, old growth forests have a major influence on many aspects of my life. As do the potential changes to old growth policy.

Firstly, I am a strong believer in the importance of a healthy forest industry in BC. Not only does my business and the jobs of over 140,000 others in this province rely on it (COFI Report, 2019), but I truly believe the industry is one of the greenest and most sustainable that we have available to us as a province. Not to mention our massive forest land base and high quality fibre which gives us a significant natural advantage over our competitors on a global scale. In a world desperately needing to get away from plastics, synthetics, concrete and other unnatural building and construction materials, wood is available to us in relative abundance, is natural, renewable and locks up carbon for generations, and we're specialists at delivering it! This message needs to get across to the public! We need to reframe how people think about trees and the products that are derived from them so we can protect our working forest and start to garner much needed support for new investment in the industry. Let's be at the forefront of the new generation of forestry (think replacing all single use plastics with a cellulose based product! How great would that be!).

Secondly, I think it is important to note that old growth forests CAN and WILL come back after being harvested in many circumstances. It seems popular opinion is that harvested old growth will never be replaced but I think that is untrue. More than ever before, society has an acute awareness of how important natural ecosystems are for recreation, cultural uses and ecological diversity. As a result, it seems we have more protected area than ever before. Parks and protected areas on a provincial and municipal level that are currently encompassing second growth, will in turn (and sooner than most people realize, I believe), start to exhibit old growth characteristics (particularly those >150 years old) aesthetically and functionally. Stands that are closer to 150 years old are less than 100 years from reaching the 250 year age class that is often the acceptable threshold for being considered old growth. Less than the age of many of the buildings we live in! Old growth recruitment is possible and will happen! The coast is a special place with a unique climate perfect for supporting the growth of large trees and it will undoubtedly continue to do so.

I also don't believe the public realizes how much old growth still remains in this province (~13.2M hectares) and how much is totally unavailable for harvest (33%). Through mechanisms such as the Great Bear Rainforest Order, large contiguous areas along the coast will never be logged. However, these areas are difficult to relate to for the public due to their relative remoteness and difficult access. In the absence of anecdotal evidence and physical interaction, opinions are formulated often solely based on the information available through social media – this is very problematic for obvious reasons.

The government needs to take a leadership role in getting the message out about the importance of forest harvesting in BC and about the real facts regarding old growth logging. Forestry not only supports jobs, but it particularly supports *green* jobs and helps to keep our forests healthy when executed

properly. Misinformation readily available through social media channels only serves to damage an industry with the potential to support generations of green employment and prosperity in our province.

Only 35% of our entire forested land base in BC is available for harvest. We cannot continue to let this critical area erode, for our chances of renewed and significant investment will be lost, as will much needed modernization to stay globally competitive. Don't let the huge natural advantage we have in the province go to waste. Please take a bold stance and support our industry and working forest! It is the right choice for our province now and in the future!

Sincerely,

Shawn Mandula, RPF