

Seed Use Efficiency Meeting

Langley, BC July 30 & 31, 2008

Bevin Wigmore

Operational Seed Efficiency Gains with coastal Douglas-fir

TimberWest owns 796,000 acres of private land on Vancouver Island, most of which is used for forestry operations producing approximately 2.5 million m³ per year. The company also has a TFL with an annual allowable cut of 0.7 million m³ per year. TimberWest plants from 4.5 to 6.5 million seedlings per year, 85-90% of which are Douglas-fir.

As a company we are committed to tree improvement and we operate a seed orchard which provides most of our Douglas-fir seed, as well as minor species such as western Redcedar, western hemlock, and western white pine. We also purchase a quantity of high-gain Douglas-fir each year to increase the genetic gain on our private land base. The total value seed sown annually is approximately \$500,000.

All TimberWest seedlings are grown on contract at private nurseries. Since 2004, we have been encouraging the nurseries to use seed efficiently to save costs, particularly with Douglas-fir as it is our primary species. We feel that the sowing guidelines in SPAR, while allowing nurseries to achieve complete cavity fill, result in too many seedlings being discarded as thinnings. We have also found that nurseries in other jurisdictions routinely use considerably less Douglas-fir seed than nurseries in BC are accustomed to receiving. Accordingly we have gradually reduced the amount of seed allocated per sowing request to a current level of 15 – 18% below SPAR guidelines.

The nurseries involved have all become supportive and worked to utilize seed more efficiently, through more precise sowing and/or transplanting to fill empty cavities. Seeds used per seedling has dropped from about 2.3 to 2.1, and it is expected that with this winter's lift we will get to 2.0. We are also pursuing single-sowing and reduced-sowing cost-sharing agreements that will benefit both us and the nursery.