



by Craig Wickland, RPF,
on behalf of the
Coastal Silviculture
Working Group

Improving Partial Cutting Practices on the Coast

DESIGNING AND REVIEWING COMPLEX SILVICULTURAL systems requires a forest professional to balance multiple, often competing goals and objectives and have a thorough understanding of the impacts of these decisions. This means it's important that forest professionals practise in their areas of expertise, be adequately trained and have experience designing silvicultural systems in complex stands prior to developing or implementing partial cutting prescriptions.

To ensure this happens, the Coastal Silviculture Working Group (CSWG) was established by the Coast Region FRPA Implementation Team (CRIT). Composed of government and industry forest professionals, the working group reviews matters associated with silviculture within the Coast Forest Region.

In May 2006, the CSWG published a discussion paper titled *Silvicultural System and Partial Cutting Issues in the Coast Forest Region*. The paper discussed forest management issues associated with partial cutting where high levels of dispersed over-story retention were prescribed. During this same time frame, the Forest Practices Board conducted a special investigation into high retention harvesting on the BC coast.

Prior to the discussion paper, concerns regarding species shift, insufficient growing space for regeneration and forest health were noted in some complex silvicultural system prescriptions. Since the release of the discussion paper, the CSWG has conducted reviews of complex silvicultural systems and evaluated the work against the elements and guiding principles within the discussion paper. These reviews provide feedback to prescribing foresters and have improved the quality of both prescription development and implementation associated with partial cutting.

Monitoring results from 2008 indicate plausible prescriptions with predictable outcomes are being developed. Prescribing



Photo: Craig Wickland

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foresters have incorporated the elements and principles from the discussion paper into the planning and implementation phases of partial-cut blocks. For example, small openings are being created by concentrating the residual dispersed stems in aggregates versus an even distribution of residual stems allowing foresters to replenish stocking with similar species in these small openings.

Improvements in partial cutting prescriptions and practices have been demonstrated by:

- Improved prescription development through consideration of sustainability issues.
- Improved implementation of prescriptions through better communication.
- No high grading on blocks harvested after the discussion paper was released in May 2006.
- A reduction in the number of blocks with an over-story species shift.
- Increased use of an aggregate retention strategy.
- A reduction in identified forest health concerns through better dwarf hemlock mistletoe sanitation practices.
- Increased number of blocks planted with desirable species.

Looking forward, the Forest Practices Board revised their report, *High Retention Harvesting and Timber Sustainability on the British Columbia Coast*, in January 2009 to address inaccuracies identified by industry. This revision will further assist professionals in working with partial cutting silvicultural systems. The CSWG has also developed a stocking standard framework to support the use of the retention silvicultural system where over-story residual trees contribute towards meeting the silviculture obligation. This new discussion paper was released by CRIT in November 2009 and provides an alternative stocking standard option for forest professionals to consider when prescribing the retention silvicultural system.

The CSWG demonstrates the collaborative success of professionals working together to improve silvicultural practices on the coast. 🌱

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