



## Becoming a Believer: Certification Works and FSC Certification Works Best

I CAME INTO THE FSC (FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL) WORLD AS AN ECOLOGIST and not a strong believer in certification. In fact my personal view was that certification was largely green-wash, that significant change in forest management would only come from changes in corporate leadership and public policy, and certification was the rubber stamp.

My 33 years of corporate experience began in the early 1980s with MacMillan Bloedel, one of the largest companies in BC. They were tumultuous and transformative times in forest management. The tumultuousness culminated in the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history over the sustainability of public values under our proposed forest management of Clayoquot Sound. The transformative part followed as the Clayoquot Sound Science Panel unfolded onerous new standards. The focus of public scrutiny became the global market place rather than the courtroom and jails.

Fundamentally, MacMillan Bloedel needed to transform its social license. To do this we needed to rebuild a platform of trust with our critics, our customers and the government. The pinch points were conservation of biodiversity, old-growth logging and clear cutting. Part of our solution was third-party validation of the implementation and effectiveness of novel new practices such as variable retention and landscape zoning supported by a comprehensive adaptive management and monitoring system.

During those years we significantly changed forest management practices in coastal rain forests and gained world-class recognition because of third-party validation. We supported both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) forest certification schemes on private and Crown land respectively. We chose SFI and CAS to meet customer requirements—few had requested FSC certification in the 1980s and early 1990s.

We avoided the higher bar set by FSC thinking the solid-wood marketplace recognition was strong with CSA and cost less. We participated in the consultation process for the development of the FSC BC Standard and this re-affirmed our view that FSC offered a higher bar and greater costs to comply than CSA or SFI.

By 2004 I had I left MacMillan Bloedel, then Weyco, now Western Forest Products and become a consulting forest ecologist. FSC now had Canadian national and regional standards. More pressure was coming from pulp and paper customers to have FSC certification. More companies were getting certified to secure market access and capture whatever additional premium could be garnered in the pulp and paper market. That pressure also began to push the solid wood market, as much of the chip source for pulp and paper was coming as a by-product of solid wood processing.

Through a steep learning curve and the next dozen audits in BC and Alberta, I gained a new perspective on FSC certification. FSC is the only global forest certification body and all FSC certifications are based on conformance with national standards based on ten global principles and 56 criteria. As with the competing certification schemes in Canada

(SFI and CSA), FSC seeks a balance of values between social, environmental, economic and respect for indigenous people.

The primary differences with FSC, CSA and SFI are in the level of detail. FSC is simply more detailed and specific particularly about identification of high conservation value forests and sustenance of those values, greater focus on species-at-risk protection and more detailed evaluation of forest management and planning.

The competing standards also differ significantly in their approach to public participation and continued engagement with indigenous people. FSC does not develop local standards with a public advisory group but relies on regional standards developed through a regional public process. FSC is also the only standard with a separate principle on Aboriginal rights and demands much more specific evaluation of the meaningfulness of engagement beyond respect for treaty rights and enforcing no prejudices.

Canada has four regional FSC standards: Maritimes, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence, Boreal and BC. All were developed to reflect the unique ecological and social conditions within each region. FSC used a local working group to create regional standards that are then reviewed and endorsed by FSC International.

In BC, we are a diverse province with more ecological and social diversity than anywhere else in Canada and we have two regional standards that reflect that diversity: the National Boreal Standard for the Boreal Forest Region in northeastern BC and the British Columbia Standard that applies to the remainder of the forest regions in BC. They are standards with regionally appropriate indicators as determined through a balanced and highly regulated chamber-based and consensus-based process. I have worked with both.

There have been complaints that the two FSC standards in BC are unreasonably different—the Boreal Standard seen as easier to achieve than the BC Standard. The truth is sustainable forest management is more difficult in other parts of BC than in the boreal region. The differences reflect that and regional standards are not meant to be identical. There are many differences indicator by indicator but both standards share the same theme; move forest management towards greater conservation of biodiversity and balance of social, economic and ecological values.

The differences between regional FSC standards in BC are far less extreme than the difference of either of these standards with the associated CSA or SFI standards. The simple fact, reinforced in my audit experience, is that the FSC standards in BC are the broadest and set the highest bar, have the most rigorous and extensive audit process, have open public notice and reporting, and are the most credible with environmental groups and First Nations.

While I started out as a disbeliever, my view has clearly changed. I have now seen the scene from both sides—getting certification

It is very important to many members to receive word of the passing of a colleague. Members have the opportunity to publish their memories by sending photos and obituaries to **BC Forest Professional**.

The association sends condolences to the family and friends of the following member:



**Merv Wilkinson**  
ABCFP Honorary Member  
1913-2011

Merv Wilkinson, an honorary member of the ABCFP, died Wednesday, August 31st at the age of 97. He was a lifelong forestry practitioner, educator and passionate advocate for reform. He will continue for many years to be a role model for those who strive to make the world a better place through forestry.

As a student of agriculture at UBC in the 1930s, Merv was introduced to the concepts and practices of sustained selection logging. He also began his career in forestry in the 1930s, working in the pulp mill in Powell River. He subsequently put these principles and experiences into practice at Wildwood, a 55-hectare woodlot near Ladysmith, BC, harvesting 1.5 million board feet of lumber between 1938 and 1998. Over the

decades, he refined his practices based on personal observations, trial and error, and discussions with experts from around the world. His practice was based on a passionate belief that a single forest stand can, and should, simultaneously support a broad range of values, including long-term economic stability, local employment, value-added manufacturing, aesthetics, wildlife, recreation and soil protection.

Merv's small operation was largely unknown to the general public until the "war in the woods" of the 1990s, when Merv's practices were embraced by the environmental movement as an alternative to the industrial forestry practices of the day. At the time, anti-logging sentiment was common in the province. For many, the words "forestry" and "logging" had negative connotations and the debate was whether to log or not to log. Merv demonstrated that things aren't so black and white. As a participant in the Clayoquot Sound protest of 1993, he famously convinced the protesters to change their banner from "No Logging" to "No Clearcut Logging." At this time, Wildwood became the focus of intense interest from the public and Merv dedicated himself to education and advocacy, giving tours of his woodlot to approximately 2000-3000 people every year. Even into his 90s, Merv received visi-

## In Memorium

tors at his home at Wildwood to discuss his practice of forestry and opened his land for weekly tours. Merv—possibly more than any other forestry practitioner during that time—was able to communicate a positive vision of forest management to the public imagination. By demonstrating an approach to forestry that environmentalists could embrace, he framed forest management as the solution, not the problem.

Merv was a strident critic of the mainstream forestry practices of the 1980s and 90s, which alienated him from many foresters of the time. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Merv's unique approach to forest management, and the forest that it created, captured the imaginations of thousands of people. His role in expanding the public's understanding of forestry earned him some of the highest honours in the country, most notably an appointment as a Member of the Order of Canada (2002) and the Order of British Columbia (2001) and an honorary doctorate from the University of Victoria (2005). In retrospect, it is clear that Merv left a positive legacy for all forest professionals. Merv was awarded Honorary Forester status with the ABCFP in 2009 in recognition of his life's work at Wildwood and his profound influence on the way British Columbians think about forestry.

Submitted by Colin Mahony, RPF.

### CSA Certification, continued from page 12

and auditing certification. Through my audit experience with FSC, I have seen rapid changes in forest management happen that would not have happened any other way. I have renewed faith in certification in general and believe that these processes, in particular FSC, work to affect changes in forest management in a positive direction. Market pressure works, companies respond to client's needs and the global marketplace

demands certified wood products. 🌲

*Glen Dunsworth, has over 30 years' experience in forest renewal, biodiversity and forest genetics research in coastal British Columbia and Alberta. Glen has worked on two CSA and twelve FSC audit teams in BC and Alberta. He is currently a forest ecology consultant and recently co-authored Forestry and Biodiversity: Learning How to Sustain Biodiversity in Managed Forests with Dr. Fred Bunnell.*