

Anthropocentric Views Influencing the Rehabilitation of Mountain Pine Beetle Stands

While I understand the need for managed forests I find it hard to ignore the strong anthropocentric views contained in the article entitled "Rehabilitation of Mountain Pine Beetle Stands: Thinking Critically," published in the September/October 2011 issue of **BC Forest Professional**. It concerns me to know that a large group of professionals see forests as something to be micro-managed for human exploitation. Especially when the management strategies go against all that define healthy forest ecosystems. Pathogens, fire and other natural disturbances are part of intricate systems that work to promote forest health and diversity.

The intent of this letter is not to preach to a group of RPFs about what constitutes a healthy forest but to ask: Do you see value in the natural succession of impacted lodgepole pine stands? Is there not any value in letting fires consume portions of these areas and having them regenerate themselves? It seems to me that timber harvest methods need to be modified to accommodate nature and not the other way around.

Mr. McWilliams and Mr. Blackwell suggest management strategies that seemingly exceed our capabilities as human beings and speak as if forests can be managed like vegetable gardens over very broad temporal and spatial scales. Say it out loud, "I am going to control nature." Sorry, that just doesn't sound possible.

My concern is that Mr. McWilliams, Mr. Blackwell and others following their advice are being over optimistic about what can be achieved through micromanaging such complex systems, and in the face of failure they will lower harvest standards to recover their bottom lines.

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Adapting MPB Techniques

Thinking critically about how to manage the stands impacted by the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) is the only way we are going to salvage the MPB situation. Jeff McWilliams and Bruce Blackwell's article, "Rehabilitation of Mountain Pine Beetle Stands: Thinking Critically," in the September/October 2011 edition of **BC Forest Professional**, eloquently outlines the need for a change in how we manage the effected MPB stands.

"As forest professionals, we need to understand that good decisions cannot be based on only what exists now but need to consider what is expected to happen over the long-term." As the authors emphasize, looking at the long-term is key for the survival of our forests. This does not mean merely looking forward to the next generation, but planning our forests for thousands of years.

McWilliams and Blackwell really stress the importance of long-term management plans to replace existing silviculture techniques which do not address the complexity of the MPB issue. Every MPB stand needs to be managed on an individual basis. Approaches and policies must evolve to ensure the most effective management plans are always in use, not simply the easiest and most cost effective, to guarantee the future of BC forests.

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BC Forest Professional is published six times a year by the Association of BC Forest Professionals

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DESIGN: Massyn Design

PRINTING: Mitchell Press

DISTRIBUTION: PDQ Post Group

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER: Brenda Martin

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Tel: 604.639.8103 • Fax: 604.687.3264

E-mail: forest-ads@abcfp.ca

ISSN:1715-9164

Annual Subscriptions: Canada \$44.80 incl HST

U.S. and international \$80 Canadian funds

Publications mail agreement No: 40020895

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

ABCFP Circulation Department

330-321 Water St, Vancouver, BC V6B 1B8



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Watershed Management Requires Strong Field Skills

I commend the work of Dave Wilford and strongly agree with his opinions in the Viewpoints article: “Do Professional Foresters Need a Forestry Background to Practice Forest Watershed Management and Forest Hydrology?” in the March/April 2011 edition of **BC Forest Professional**. As a forestry student at UNBC with a minor in Natural Resource Planning and Operations, I have had the opportunity to take courses in watershed management, integrated resource management and soil sciences. I quickly learned that mastering these fields requires an intricate and developed set of knowledge. By combining skills gained from my field experience as a summer student with local forestry firms and knowledge from my schooling, I have only begun to grasp the vast array of factors that go into managing a forest site.

Using tools such as air photos and GIS to predict characteristics like tree species (for water absorption levels) and slope stability (for sediment erosion levels) can be a useful technique in predicting areas that may be suitable for harvesting. However, to think that one could determine a management plan that includes watershed values by strictly using models is absurd. The number of unpredictable factors that arise in the physical process of managing a watershed is simply too high to attempt to understand a watershed without being there in person and having previous experience. The manager of the area needs to physically walk the ground in order to experience, for themselves, how each management decision will affect the area.

Personally, I believe that foresters, especially watershed managers, need to develop strong field skills before supervising a group of workers or making important management decisions. Upon becoming a supervisor or manager, I feel it is crucial to continue to spend as much time as possible working in the forest to fully understand the aspects of a given site. I am glad to read opinions like Dave Wilford’s, especially because he is a high-ranking member of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

DAVID STRAHL
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Higher Stakes

I read with interest the collection of articles on BC’s resource roads (July/August 2011) and, in particular, the one titled “High Stakes: Taking Responsibility for our Resource Roads.”

I recall a superintendent of forestry and engineering watching the divisional logging manager tear up a stack of Forest Service 242s that had been issued because the logging division had not cleaned ditches or culverts after logging for the past six months.

Why did the divisional logging manager tear up these Forest Service 242s and risk road washouts and landslides? Obviously to save a few cents per cubic metre on road maintenance. Why did the superintendent stand by and implicitly support this action...higher stakes!

BRIAN MURPHY, RPF(RET)
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Working Toward Sustainability in the African Rainforest

Peter Shatens’ article “Saving the African Forest: People vs. Trees” (November/December 2010) discusses a very important topic for forestry in global society. This article notes the major problem facing African forests: deforestation and the resulting impacts on the land and human population. Shatens fails to implicate Canada and the rest of the world as participants in this disaster.

Although Shatens is correct about the role that Africans play on the landscape, it is also important to mention the multi-billion dollar global industry of African hardwood. As environmental protection and regulations increase in the developed world, we look to the global south to purchase the resources we no longer take from our own lands. Climate change is a serious issue worldwide and Africa specifically faces challenges as it is estimated to have a higher temperature increase than the global average. This means that the forestry industry in Africa will face greater challenges every year. As the global market turns to Africa and climate change diminishes products for harvesting, the system becomes unsustainable.

Shatens’ suggestion that Canadians insist on tying foreign aid to proper forest management and buying only certified wood is a great start, but more could be done. Africans need to feel connected to the industry and the movement towards sustainable forest practices. By placing our support in local organizations, Canadians can help reforest Africa by assisting Africans themselves, rather than contributing to outside organizations, which merely reinforces foreign dependence. Articles such as the one written by Shatens are key to discussions around global forestry in Canada as we are living in an increasingly globalized society. It is necessary for BC and Canada to make policies that benefit our own ecosystems and resources without diminishing others around the world—only then can we create a sustainable future for the resource industry.

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Put in Your Two Cents

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