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PFLA field tour stop, June 2015, at Howie Griessel's woodlot near Union Bay on Vancouver Island.

5 Life Lessons from the Cook Family Tree Farm

Whether you're a forest owner, a land manager or a tree farmer you bring a vision and commitment to the work you do. You know the decisions you make today will have an impact on generations to come. You take this responsibility seriously and it shows.

A recent visit to Warren Cook's 87-acre Managed Forest property near Bowser on Vancouver Island reminded us just how much pride goes into the work of managing BC's private forest lands.

Warren is the fourth generation Cook to hold title to this property. Back in 1883, long before railways or highways, Warren's ancestors, Ephram and Ezra Cook, paddled a canoe from Nanaimo and purchased 500 acres at a price of \$1 per acre. Warren's property has been in the Cook family ever since.

The trip from Nanaimo to Deep Bay, the same one Warren's ancestors took via canoe 132 years ago—a trip that probably required considerable strength, planning and preparation, and likely resulted in a few blisters along the way—we managed to accomplish in about 40 minutes, with little effort, via Highway 19, while sipping frothy-lattes and listening to a lively blend of top 40 hits. Times sure have changed.

We arrived to find Warren's two sons, Bruce and Steven, and his 23-year-old granddaughter Amber, hard at work on a Friday afternoon—busy cleaning up the property after a recent harvesting

operation. Bruce explains, "We'll be cleaning up through the fall and winter, getting ready to plant a couple of thousand trees in the spring."

A stroll, and an ATV ride, around the property, with Warren's son Bruce and a sweet dog named Stella Grace, quickly revealed how the family's rich stories from the past inform the work they do today, and at the same time, help point toward the future and the continuation of the Cook family legacy.

Inspired by our visit, we put together a list of 5 Life Lessons from the Cook Family Tree Farm

Lesson #1 Know your roots

You can't go too far on Warren Cook's property without noticing signs of the family's history. Bruce points to an old, orange tractor, parked on the driveway near the house, and explains, with a smile, "Oliver was my grandpa's first farm tractor, but he was too scared to operate it so he never ran it."

Small, wooden signs nailed to trees throughout the property tell what year, and by whom, nearby trees were planted. It's a visual record that keeps track of the history of the plantations and gives everyone a bit of credit for the work they do.

A milk-crate-sized metal box with holes and a lid sits near the Chef Creek estuary.

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Bruce explains, “This was my grandma’s refrigerator. It’s how she kept the milk and butter cold. She put them in the box and then put the box in the creek.”

A big sign, the sort you’d see in a provincial park, with pictures, maps, photos, and a detailed history of the Cook family and the Chef Creek estuary is situated not too far from the house. The sign, a gift from the province after a 2006 salmon enhancement project, is perhaps the most obvious reminder of the family’s deep roots and connection to the area.

Lesson #2 Work with good people

These days, Warren, his son Bruce, and Bruce’s daughter Amber, do most of

the work on the property. After a heart attack, at the age of 58, Warren stopped working at the mill in Campbell River and moved to the property full time with his late wife Irene Cook, living in a small trailer until they built the house 20 years ago.

Bruce has worked full time with his dad, on the property and managing the family oyster business, for over two decades. Bruce’s brother, Steven, works out of province and comes home to help when he can.

The work they can’t do themselves, for example the recent harvesting operation, they find good people to help them

with—they ask around, talk to locals, get recommendations, and find reputable people to do good work.

Lesson #3 Take pride in what you do

Together, the Cook family takes a lot of pride in the work they do. Steven explains, “Just to see the look in my father’s eyes when he comes out and sees his trees—he has a lot of pride in what he’s done.”

Lesson #4 Have a vision and stick to it

It’s hard to get where you’re going if you don’t have a vision for what it’ll look like when you get there.

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Harvesting: So Much More than Cutting Trees

Harvesting is one of the most important phases in the forest management cycle because it sets the stage for the creation of a new forest. If the harvest isn’t done properly, subsequent management steps become about cleaning up or correcting damage, rather than achieving your overall plan.

Harvesting is also the major revenue-generating phase in forest management and a key development activity in the woodland.

The decision to harvest is usually based on one, or a combination, of the following reasons

- Replace one crop with another
- Cash in some or all of the value of the current crop
- Recover some otherwise natural mortality losses from, for example, insect attack, root rot, wind throw
- Improve the quality and value of the current crop

The process you use to tend, harvest and replace a forest is called a silvicultural system. Silvicultural systems are classified according to the method you use to remove the mature crop and establish the new one.

Even-aged stands are maintained by clearcutting, seed-tree and some shelterwood systems. Uneven-aged stands are maintained by selection system. Each of these systems represents a strategy for the complete cycle of the stand.

The silvicultural system you choose depends on the forest you have and the

forest you wish to create, as well as your own management objectives.

Your harvesting schedule is an expression of the following considerations:

When to cut

- How old is the stand?
- How much can it be expected to increase in volume and value?
- How shall I decide whether to cut it now or later?
- Is natural regeneration planned?
- If so, when is the next good seed year expected?
- What time of year do I harvest: in the winter on frozen ground, in summer when the soil is dry and stable?

How much to cut

- What are the harvesting objectives—stand replacement? Cash flow?
- Is the area being salvaged after fire, insect or disease infestation?
- What are the management objectives for the area regarding other uses?
- What are the constraints regarding harvest?
- Are there other economic, social or environmental issues to incorporate in your harvesting plans?
- Any fish-bearing streams, deer or elk winter range, visual quality objectives or community watersheds?

Which silvicultural system

- Are the trees all mature or of varying age classes?
- Are there particular products ready for harvest?

- Is the stand healthy or are there pockets of disease or insects?
- Is the species mix appropriate for my personal goals?

Which logging methods

- What are the terrain conditions?
- Are the soils subject to compaction or erosion?
- What is the average slope?
- What equipment do I have and how could it be converted for logging?
- How large is the area?
- What volume of timber will be logged?
- What access is in place?
- Is the appropriate equipment available with trained operators?

Which species to regenerate and by which method

- What is the current species mix?
- Which species are appropriate to the site? Which species are favoured?
- What products are desired?
- What financial and time resources am I willing to commit?
- What are the cost and environmental implications of natural regeneration versus planting?

As you can see, harvesting is so much more than cutting trees. You can find all the information excerpted above, and more, in the complete online document: *A Non-forester’s Guide to Small-scale Forestry in British Columbia*.

As always, thanks to the authors for letting us share the information.

Steven describes, "This was always my grandfather's dream, and dad's just carried it on. He loves his trees. He's like the Johnny Appleseed of Deep Bay, out there planting every day."

He goes on to say, "Yesterday, 82 years old, out here with his walking stick because he wanted to plant a tree. I was saying, 'Dad, slow down, you need your rest', but he just can't stop. The other day, he brought me a whipper snipper, 'Can you do that bank?' he said 'I want my trees to get some sunshine.' And then he wanted to come out and see how I did. 'You missed a couple there,' he said."

Nobody said having a vision is easy, but it sure pays off if you stick with it.

Lesson #5 Everything is connected and you can make a difference

In 2013, Ducks Unlimited Canada awarded Warren Cook the Wildlife Habitat Canada Award in recognition of the preservation and enhancement of the Chef and Cook Creek watersheds.

A biologist with the Ministry of Transportation describes Warren Cook as, "a landowner steward in action that deserves a lot of credit and recognition for his overall philosophy and approach

to maintaining and enhancing the rich environmental values on his property. He, and his father previously, allowed and encouraged salmon research, assessment and restoration to take place on his property, owned by the Cooks since 1883."

Bruce explains, "Dad can remember, when he was a little boy, the salmon running up the creek were so many you could cross the creek and your feet wouldn't get wet."

A big thanks to the Cook family for their work, the tour and the inspiration.

Celebrating BC's Private Forest Stewards

Each year, PFLA celebrates and acknowledges specific members for their unique contributions to the overall stewardship of BC's private forest lands.

The 2015 Private Forest Stewardship Awards were presented at PFLA's annual conference, field tour and AGM in Courtenay, June 3rd and 4th.

PFLA founding members, John and Gabrielle Goudy (below right), were presented with a stewardship award for their unwavering support, enthusiasm and dedication to the association and private forestry. Extremely knowledgeable about plants and wildlife, and passionate about their forest, the Goudys epitomize independent forest owners in coastal BC. A big PFLA thanks to John and Gabrielle for all their contributions to PFLA over the past 20 years.

Rod Bealing also presented TimberWest log buyer, Dave Kral (below centre), with a stewardship award for his contributions to private forestry over the past 42 years. That's right, 42 years. To learn more about Dave Kral's story, you can read our blog post *42 Seedlings for 42 Years*.

One of the highlights of this year's field tour was a trip to Howie Griessel's woodlot for an interesting discussion of forest health issues including root rot, Douglas-fir bark beetle, thinning, post-harvest treatments and harvest regeneration sequences.

Howie (below left) also went above and beyond the call of tour host duty with a detailed presentation on log prices and getting the best value from your harvest. Also a founding PFLA member, Rod Bealing took the opportunity to

present Howie with a stewardship award for his contributions to the association and his exemplary commitment to forest stewardship.

Last, but definitely not least, twin sisters Iola Elder and Siriol Paquet, of Sylvan Vale Nursery, were presented with a stewardship award for their dedicated support to private forest owners.

Established by their parents, in 1980, Sylvan Vale Nursery has grown to an impressive 200,000 square feet of growing space with 46 greenhouses and an expected count of 8 million seedlings this year.

A big PFLA thanks to the duo Rod Bealing describes as "twin bundles of awesomeness."



Update from BC Assessment

Thanks to Tina Ireland, Director, Property Owners with BC Assessment for her presentation at the PFLA annual conference, June 4, 2015 in Courtenay, BC.

For those of you who couldn't join us, you can see Tina's presentation slides on the PFLA blog. The slides include info about:

- A brief history of BC Assessment
- The annual assessment roll
- Key dates for assessment
- List of property classifications
- Highlights from the 2015 assessment roll
- Facts about managed forest classification
- The managed forest application process
- Bare land and cut timber rate calculations for managed forest land

While not included in the slides, the issue of grandfathering was also discussed.

Tina Ireland explained, "When the Act changed in 2004 there was an understanding that any properties that didn't meet the new qualifications would remain in Managed Forest classification. However, if a property is sold, and the new owner doesn't meet the new regulations, then they are no longer eligible for Managed Forest classification."

To date, the practice has been that BC Assessment won't remove people from Managed Forest classification if the property is being handed down within the family, but this practice is currently under review. Tina is not saying there will be changes, but she's letting the group know the practice is under review.

Robbie Preston highlighted some concerns for forest owners engaged in estate planning and managing their

affairs. He encouraged any clarity BC Assessment can offer on the subject. He also suggested some printed guidelines would go a long way to help forest owners plan for themselves and their family's futures.

Tina confirmed the goal of the review process is to provide clarity for both forest owners and BC Assessment. The review is underway now, and answers are expected by fall 2015. Tina emphasized she doesn't foresee any changes; however, if changes arise that significantly effect forest owners there will be a consultation process with the community before any changes are finalized.

If you have any comments or feedback you can reach BC Assessment at

1-866-ValueBC (1-866-825-8322)
Ext. 00225

managedforest@bcassessment.ca

What Can Ducks Teach us About BC's Subsidized Log Markets?

You've all heard the phrase, "If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, well, it's probably a duck."

Because turkeys proved so helpful in understanding BC timber supply complaints, we're optimistic ducks can help explain why we use the word subsidy to describe current log markets in coastal BC.

PFLA received feedback from other stakeholders in the coastal forest industry suggesting we tone down the use of the word subsidy in our communication efforts around Federal Notice to Exporters 102 and log export restrictions.

Mortified at the thought of being misunderstood, we set aside some time to explain our word choice.

What is a Subsidy Anyway?

In the spirit of ongoing cooperation, here are a few definitions to help explain our understanding of the word subsidy.

- A direct pecuniary aid furnished by a government to a private industrial undertaking, a charity organization, or the like.
- A subsidy is a form of financial aid or support extended to an economic sector generally with the aim of promoting economic and social policy.

- Money that is paid usually by a government to keep the price of a product or service low or to help a business or organization to continue to function.

Why the word subsidy accurately describes the situation in BC

Mill #1 is located in coastal British Columbia. Thanks to government policy (Notice to Exporters 102) this mill owner is able to buy logs at suppressed domestic prices (\$70 per cubic meter).

Mill #2 is located in western Washington. This mill owner has to pay international prices for logs (\$100 per cubic meter).

Admittedly, this is a simplified scenario; however, based on the definitions above, it seems fair to say mill #1 is being subsidized.

Is the coastal log market the best example of a subsidy?

No, it's not the best example. A better example is something like the auto sector in Ontario. In that case, government used public funds to subsidize the auto industry. We're not opposed to the use of public funds to subsidize industry. In fact, it's a better example of how people generally understand subsidies to work.

Nonetheless, in the example of coastal log markets, government intervention affords coastal mills an advantage. Unfortunately, it's private forest owners, and not public funds, that shoulder the burden of the "pecuniary benefits" bestowed by government policy.

Why other stakeholders might not understand our use of the word subsidy

The stakeholders who suggest we minimize our use of the word subsidy don't pay the subsidy. We do. Because we're the people who pay the subsidy, we have a personal, daily experience of what that means.

When you're in a position to lose 45 million dollars annually, and spend your time managing, on a daily basis, reduced revenues, economic uncertainty and increased costs, you start to feel like you can speak with some authority on the subject of what is and isn't a subsidy.

So, while we'd love to use other words to describe the situation—words like functional market, open competition and international prices—we'll continue to use the word subsidy because if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it probably is a duck.

Please note, above quoted prices are for fir gang logs and based on mid-March 2015 market prices.