



Post Wildfire 102 - Restoring the Forest



Gernot Zemanek's Roserim Nursery in Canim Lake provides trees for his own woodlot licence as well as others around the province. It is surrounded by a young healthy forest in the Cariboo.

By LISA MARAK & SARA GRADY

Nature's balancing act is challenging enough without interference. How we have managed our forests through the decades, our success at fire suppression and control and global warming have disrupted the balance of our ecosystems and culminated in last year's worst wildfire season for BC.

The immediate impacts of the 2017 wildfires are fairly evident - loss of 12,000 square miles of forest. But the subsequent impacts are only now becoming apparent. Soil has changed making it more or less hospitable, with the concern of

invasive species taking hold. The bare, scorched earth contributed to the flooding this spring and bark beetles are now attacking the remaining stressed trees.

For woodlot licencees impacted by the wildfires, restoring the forest starts with salvaging what burned wood they can before it can no longer be made into lumber. Once the clean up is over the reforestation begins. Replanting with the same species that were destroyed might not be the best long-term option given possible changes in growing conditions, improvements in seed stock and changing climates. BC's Chief Forester recently introduced Climate Based Seed Transfer (CBST)

as an option to meet silviculture obligations in a changing climate. The science behind CBST matches seed sources to climatically suitable planting sites, promoting healthy, resilient and productive forests and ecosystems. This is one of the ministry's first climate change adaptation policies intended to increase the ability of BC's forests and ecosystems to adapt and respond to the impacts of climate change.

A woodlot licensee must now participate in the balancing act as they select stock for planting on the areas burned to achieve the prescribed stocking standards (the Provincial Government's expectations for how many trees grow in a set area of Crown land). These stocking standards

do not take into consideration wildfires and forests being located in the wildland urban interface where many of these small area based tenures such as woodlot licences, are located. Should the same tree densities be planted in the wildland urban interface? Is there wildlife habitat lost that must be restored and is this achievable? Is there merit in adding aspen and poplar to the forest, quick-growing, soil-stabilizing trees that don't have significant market value but can serve as a natural fire break?

Woodlot licensees explore these questions and others, before purchasing their seed-stock and hiring a nursery, like woodlotter Gernot Zemanek's

in Canim Lake, to grow their seedlings. When experts like Susan Zedel, Seed Specialist with the Ministry of Forests, have been successful in anticipating future demand there is sufficient supply. By all accounts, nurseries have fulfilled demand across the province thus far but time will tell as the massive effort to replant these burned areas begins.

As a fresh crop of tree-planters venture out into the woods this summer their efforts should be adding to establishing a more fire-resilient, healthy forest. For woodlot licences this is a good thing as they work to re-establish their small piece of Crown forest.



Tree planter, planting seedlings.



Gernot Zemanek, Woodlot Licensee, President of the Cariboo Woodlot Association, owner of Roserim Nursery, and member of the Forest Genetics Council.

Scholarship Announcement

We are pleased to announce that two FBCWA Scholarships are being awarded this year. \$2,000 to Trevor Chambers, W1719, Shuswap Okanagan. \$1,000 to Tom Younger, W2032 and W0161, North Island. Both will be attending a natural resource based program at university this fall.

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Williams Lake, BC.

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