

Three case studies on alternative logging initiatives in British Columbia

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“When we look at a chair, we see the wood, but we fail to observe the tree, the forest, the carpenter, or our own mind. When we meditate on it, we can see the entire universe in all its interwoven and interdependent relations in the chair. The presence of the wood reveals the presence of the tree. The presence of the leaf reveals the presence of the sun.” – Thich Nhat Hanh

Preamble

Every year I find myself in Princeton, BC, living in a tent for two months and planting thousands of trees a day. For the last four years I have worked in the silviculture industry to pay costly tuition fees at the University of Victoria. Due to first-hand experience working in industrial forestry, I have become curious about alternative models.

Spurred by my final paper for ES 441 I decided to research selective logging or eco-forestry. I intend to learn about three alternative logging case studies and then 'cherry pick' advice from my readings to pass onto the Galiano Learning center as they ponder and eventually implement a degree of selective logging forestry on their lands.

According to the Galiano Learning Centre management plan (reference appendix 1 for Galiano Learning Center management area map), agroforestry is included. This document states the potential for both: on site use of timber or for sale of timber off-site; phrased as economic development within the document (31). Agroforestry implies agricultural cultivation of something, but after talking with members of the Galiano learning center it has become clear that selective logging is a potential as well.

Case studies

Wildwood

Ladysmith, BC

Fortunately, I was able to visit the famous Wildwood property; where Bruce Hepburn, a friend and colleague of the late Merv Wilkinson showed me around. As we walked the property, the sun speckled through the trees and I noticed the components of a healthy and diverse ecosystem, including: native species, a developed understory, variety

of birds, healthy insect communities, and mushrooms. Mentionable were our sightings of a garter snake and a pileated woodpecker.

Merv Wilkinson's Wildwood is acclaimed by the Ecoforestry institute to be the oldest selective logging initiative in Canada. Merv bought the 77-acre property in 1938, and it was he whom pioneered selective logging, and left a living legacy of his work in the form of a vibrant old growth forest. From reading information about Wildwood on the Ecoforestry institutes website, I discovered that one of Merv's secrets was harvesting less than the annual growth rate. He claimed it was essential to maintaining the volume of the stand. In this way, the forest volume at Wildwood never diminished. Although, Merv states he harvested the stand 8 times and that the "property had provided him with two thirds of his income (Niosi, 15)," over the years. In contrast, clear-cutting¹ eliminates all volume at once. This practice has been seen to cause large-scale environmental disruption such as: erosion, nutrient loss and leaching, contamination of riparian areas, and destruction of habitat for various species, among other notable effects. As I walked around Wildwood, I noticed a few stumps covered in moss and huckleberries acting as nurse stumps, otherwise the forest was flush with old growth trees. Clear cuts and selective logging do the same thing; they produce lumber but are done with very different means (high tech vs. low tech) and to a very different end (immediate profit vs. sustained profit).

To re-focus us on the Wildwood case study, Merv created an economically and ecologically sustainable forest. Deeper then this accomplishment there are examples that show that his ambition was to change the way forestry was and is done in British Colombia. For instance, in the book *Magnificently Unrepentant* by Goody Niosi, the following anecdote is told: in

¹ Clear-cutting: a harvest method in which most if not all trees in a given area are cut down.

1955 Merv wrote the minister of forests and invited him to take a look at Wildwood. The minister sent his chief forester Dick Spillsbury and Merv proudly showed Dick the property. Afterward Dick said, "This is a wonderful system" but... "The way Canadians are and the way they love the dollar, it would be difficult to make it fly (103)." This illustrates Merv's urge to share his selective logging practices with the industrial system with the hope that what he was actively discovering could be integrated into the contemporary logging system of the day. Arguably, Merv didn't influence the industrial system to any measurable degree but he did have influence upon small-scale loggers. Many of whom started their own selective logging initiatives after learning from the Wildwood example.

Merv pioneered and practiced selective logging through calculated trial and error. Peter Bradford quoted Merv in his article, *Wildwood Tree Farm: 50 years of Selection Forestry*, stating: "select trees (that) are sound as timber but (that) are crowded, losing vigor, or perhaps storm-damaged." In contrast, industrial forestry usually clear-cuts an area and then piles all inutility timber and burns it. Merv learned that trees not fit for lumber were better to be, "left for wildlife habitat, and to eventually decay, contributing to the forests soil." This is a point that industrial forestry could easily adopt from Merv's selective logging that would not completely transform it. Additionally, when Bradford asked about how much light to let into the forest floor, Merv stated: "My rule is: Leave enough light to make the trees grow, and enough shade to make them reach for the light." Merv calls this the "50% rule" and claims it is the key to Wildwood's success because it "produces quality trees with long straight trunks, healthy crowns, and minimally sized limbs (Bradford)."

The Ecoforestry institute, a pedagogical institute, has been closely involved with Wildwood through their history. The Institute has used Wildwood as the site of many

educational programs and formally recognizes Merv as, “a valuable example of the pursuit of sustainable forestry.” Therefore, Merv’s example is valuable in understanding where many contemporary selective logging initiatives learned practices from.

Slocan Integral Forestry Co-operative (SIFCO)

Winlaw, BC

Mission statement: “To create and operate a financially sound community forest business that fosters community and ecological health.”

The SIFCO case study provides a unique perspective that is embedded in citizen protest. In the early 1980s three residential areas in the Slocan valley became concerned about the effects of clear-cut logging practices on their watersheds. According to *A chronology: twenty years of watershed defense*, a newspaper article by Jennifer Yeow, the communities of Redmountain, Ringrose, and Pedro, protested the clear cutting of their watersheds for over 20 years. Their diligence evolved into the need to create a local forest management organization. That is a shorthand description of how SIFCO was created. After years of protest (as the mentioned article describes), in 2012 a 25-year Community Forest Agreement (CFA) was signed with the Province of British-Columbia (SIFCO website). What I find interesting in this case study is that SIFCO evolved out of three communities adamancy to protect their local watersheds.

The Slocan valley community members involved in protecting their watersheds and SIFCO have maintained strong ties with Silva Forestry Foundation (SFF). In 1995 SFF completed their first ecosystem-based plan. On SFF’s website, they state that ecosystem-

based conservation planning, “protects biological diversity and ecological processes, while assisting communities and individuals to implement ecologically responsible human uses and develop conservation-based economies.” SFF works to engage community members, especially those who are not traditionally heard from. “Such as First Nations, small-scale loggers, trappers, and recreational users; environmentalists, local small businesses (organic farmers, tourism operators); educators and students...” SFF has produced a large amount of literature on how to make planned change, and on their project summaries page both SIFCO and the Cortes Island example can be found.

Presently, SIFCO manages an area of 15,852 ha of Crown forested land, with an annual harvest rate of 16,300m³ (SIFCO website). This case study is important for review because it is at the confluence of grassroots protest, industrial logging, politics, and alternative logging management systems.

Cortes Community Forest cooperative

Cortes Island, BC

Mission Statement: “To manage, directly or indirectly, the Cortes Community Forest Agreement in conjunction with the Klahoose First Nation for the benefit of all residents of Cortes Island.”

For the last 25 years Island residents have been acting to gain control over their forests and stop destructive clear cutting practices. One of which, is the ongoing struggle against private investor group, Brookfield Asset Management (BAM) whom operates on the island as Island Timberlands. They are one of Canada’s largest corporate powers and own a

large part of the Cortes' old growth forests. Carrie Saxifrage, in her article, *Logging of pristine BC island forest to begin in January by Brookfield Asset Management*, explains part of the politics of BAM on Cortes: "...following this purchase BAM divided the private and public forest land assets, closed the mills, and restructured the management of private forest lands for faster harvest and more export of raw logs." As a private investor the company is keen on profit, and has dramatically increased raw log export, resulting in a decrease in local forestry jobs on Cortes and an increase in planned clear cuts. Torrance Coste, in an online blog titled: *Activism, Solutions and Community: A Networking Trip to Cortes Island*, explains that BAM has land holdings of 2,700 acres and wants to clear-cut but due the continual activism of united Cortisians² the company has not been able to carry out their proposed clear cuts.

In a possible effort to counter Brookfield's clear-cut practices and implement alternatives, the Klahoose First Nation and the Cortes Community Forestry Co-operative have entered into a 50/50 partnership to manage crown forests on Cortes Island. The provincial government approved the Community Forest Application for Association (CFA) in 2012. According to the British Columbia Community Forest Association website, the area covers 3,775.5 hectares on Cortes Island, and the partners can harvest up to 13,600 cubic metres of timber a year.

Lessons learned

² Cortisians: a colloquial term for Cortes Island locals.

1. Road or water access to trees identified for harvest is important when planning which areas to use for eco-forestry. This is because hauling out lumber without road or water access can be tiring and not economically efficient (Camp, 53).
2. Tie ones harvest timing to specific markets (Camp, 44). All literature I read recommended this. Figure out ones markets and then either take specialty orders to fill or time the harvest to when the market is in need of the product you are providing.
3. Engage in partnerships when mutually beneficial. The Cortes case study exemplifies something that without partnership may have not been possible.
4. Have faith in the power of grassroots protest. Both the Slocan valley and Cortes case studies show that citizen protest, over time, can make large-scale change. Otherwise both mentioned communities would not have present day control of their forests.
5. The case study of Wildwood shows that selective logging is profitable over time. Not only is it profitable, as Merv made two thirds of his income from Wildwood; it leaves a legacy of a healthy resource rich forest.

Therefore, in the context of the Galiano learning center, I have two recommendations to make. The first is to start realizing the centers goals in respect to selective logging. In this process it would be wise to look at information Silva Forest Foundation has published and made available on their website. Contacting them to explore partnerships is highly recommended; their contact can be found in Appendix 2 of this document. Secondly, I believe that trees could be identified for harvest by the Center's garden coordinator. As the garden expands, trees may be identified to be shading out the garden. Thus, certain trees could be selected for harvest on the basis of shading out the garden. This timber could be milled on site and used for on site building. Although the price may be similar to out-sourcing lumber, there is an intrinsic value to wood that once grew, was milled, and then contributes to on-site structures on the Galiano Learn center property.

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Appendix 1: Galiano Learning Center management area map



Appendix 2: Contacts

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