



**ForestWise - Fall 2006**  
**The E-Newsletter of the British Columbia Forests Society**  
[www.forestsociety.com](http://www.forestsociety.com)

**Table of Contents:**

1. Introductory Remarks
2. Society Business
3. Editorial Commentary
4. Featured Article(s)
5. Concluding Remarks
6. Membership Application form

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**1. Introductory Comments**

Welcome to the first newsletter of the British Columbia Forests Society. ForestWise is the quarterly e-newsletter of the Society. In addition to communicating with members, ForestWise is intended as a forum for presenting ideas about improving SFM in BC's forests. Letters and articles about issues, from all perspectives, will be published. Let's have some constructive debate!

Please help us network with everyone in British Columbia interested in forest stewardship by forwarding to them a copy of this newsletter, and directing them to our website for more information: [www.forestsociety.com](http://www.forestsociety.com)

Consider becoming a member of the Society. Annual memberships for individuals and families are \$10, and for groups or organizations are \$25. There is a mail-in membership form at the end of this newsletter.

Members will receive this newsletter quarterly via e-mail, and can participate in Society activities through their local branches, which are intended to be established in many communities throughout the province. Your local branch will take a direct interest in local forests, as well as working with provincial issues, to promote and monitor forest stewardship and build a sustainable future. You may wish to help to establish the first local branch of the Society in your area!

*Letters, Ideas, Questions, Suggestions* - contact ForestWise at: [forestwise@shaw.ca](mailto:forestwise@shaw.ca)

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## **2. Society Business**

### **a. Introducing the British Columbia Forests Society**

The British Columbia Forests Society is a non-profit, volunteer society formed in 2004 and is based in Victoria, BC. Its main goal is to foster public dialogue on forestry issues, by providing information and encouraging discussion and debate about sustainable forest management (SFM). Members of the Society are people interested in SFM, including: the public, foresters, forest technicians, biologists, educators, researchers, politicians, organized groups, companies and many more. The plan is to have the Society operate throughout our province, with head office in Victoria and branches in many communities.

The Society believes it is important for people (in addition to our SFM decision-makers) to have a significant and influential role with our forests. To do this, they need information and education which is the basis for knowledge, awareness and understanding. Unfortunately, for some time in BC, there has been a lack of readily-available and balanced forest information, and corresponding opportunities to be involved with SFM in a meaningful manner. The Society will address these shortcomings and encourage an ongoing and constructive dialogue throughout the province. People should be involved with SFM as a part of their daily lives and not only when a hot-issue hits the media. We need to be proactive and not reactive.

The Forests Society is not a lobby-group, think-tank or advocacy group focused on a single issue, but instead provides balanced comment on important issues to (and with) the many players involved with SFM in BC. This includes governments, environmentalists, industrialists, public groups, and communities (including First Nations). We will publicly address the range of options for a particular subject rather than endorsing any single option, and may support other organizations that are taking a balanced approach.

The mandate of the Society allows for any SFM subject to be addressed, those that are provincially significant or regional and local issues. Some of these may include:

- A vision and future for BC's forests
- Roles of governments, industry, communities and people
- SFM legislation and policy (including forest land ownership)
- Forest information and education
- First Nations opportunities, forest research, threatened and endangered species, cattle management, water management, timber tenures, harvest rates, non-timber forest products, forest recreation, parks and wilderness.

To address these subjects, the Society will undertake and participate with many activities: provide balanced comment on the issues; provide input to the development of sound SFM plans and strategies; organize conferences, forums and workshops; hold community meetings; provide readily-available, accurate and balanced forest information; develop documentaries; monitor SFM performance; work to incorporate SFM into the school K-12 curriculum; advise people and communities; and respond to questions from the public.

### **b. Meeting minutes**

At the first Annual General Meeting of the Society, held in Victoria on July 5, 2005, the following members were elected as Board of Directors, and Executive, for 2005-2006:

Balaski, Ken	- Victoria	Vice-President
Drage, Harry	- Victoria	President
Mitchell, Andrew	- Sidney	Secretary/Treasurer
Travers, Ray	- Victoria	
Wagner, Bill	- Sooke	

**Membership:** The first branch of the Society has been formed, for South Vancouver Island. There are 12 members, from the Victoria area and Duncan.

**Constitution:** The Society Constitution was approved, with recognition that modification would be required as the society grows. All members received a copy.

**Charitable status:** The question of charitable status was addressed, and the decision made not to proceed at this time, although the issue would be researched and information brought forward for further discussion at a future meeting.

**Newsletter:** An editorial group was established to produce the society e-newsletter. The first edition will be Fall 2006. The group will develop editorial policy for consideration by members, including the subject of how the society will communicate to the public and the media.

### c. Activities

The first formal activities of the Society will begin in 2006/2007, initially focusing on a membership drive. (Note: A booth was set up at the 2006 Convention and Annual Meeting of the Association of BC Forest Professionals, in Victoria, February 2006).

The Board of Directors will consider which activities to pursue. This will be partially dependent upon how many members sign up, and where they are located in the province.

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## 3. Editorial Commentary

This section of the newsletter will feature comments about SFM in BC from the perspective of the Society, and also from the perspective of various contributors to the newsletter. And there will be the opportunity for people to submit letters-to-the-editor.

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## 4. Featured Article(s)

This section of our newsletter will feature thought-provoking subjects and opinions, to aid with constructive debate about SFM in the province. If you wish to contribute or comment, please contact the editor of ForestWise at: [forestwise@shaw.ca](mailto:forestwise@shaw.ca).

*In this first edition of the Society newsletter, we feature excerpts from an interview with the Youbou TimberLess Society (YTS), located in the Lake Cowichan-Duncan*

*area of Vancouver Island. This society was formed following the closure of the Youbou sawmill in 2001, to address issues around the closure including timber supply and log exports.*

## **“Youbou: The Town That Lost Its Sawmill”**

**An interview with Roger Wiles of the Youbou Timberless Society.**

**ForestWise:** *Youbou is situated on Cowichan Lake on southern Vancouver Island. Old pictures from the Cowichan Valley show logs as big as a house, and today the hillsides have vigorous forests of Douglas Fir. Explain the term ‘TimberLess’ in your society.*

**Wiles:** The name ‘TimberLess’ is a deliberate reflection upon our origin. We began as a group of disenchanting sawmill workers who fought to maintain a successful, profitable manufacturing plant in our community of Youbou. We were finally defeated in January 2001 by a combination of BC Government negligence and corporate greed in the guise of TimberWest Forest Corporation. Thus we went from ‘TimberWest’ to ‘TimberLess’.

Our name is ironic because as you suggest, Youbou is surrounded by second-growth timber. Unfortunately much of the landbase here and throughout southeastern Vancouver Island is privately-owned by TimberWest, the largest private forest landowner in western Canada (330,000 ha) and a leading exporter of raw (unprocessed) logs. Their decision to close the mill terminated the jobs of more than 200 employees at a facility that had sustained a local economy for more than 70 years.

We find our somewhat incongruous name as advantageous for publicity - instantly recognized and remembered, even by those who might be unaware of our message. I suppose this is what advertisers term ‘brand recognition’. It has often served as an opening to further our conversation about social injustice and policy change in the forest sector.

**ForestWise:** *It is interesting that you link social injustice to forest policies. Many people see forest policies as directed only at the health of the forest and the forest sector. However the Montreal Process, an international agreement on conservation and sustainable forest management, highlights social and economic justice for people and communities as an important SFM component. Have we lost sight of the idea that BC’s forests are for the benefit of the communities of British Columbia?*

**Wiles:** Surely a healthy forest sector is sustained by a multitude of factors. Pivotal is the underlying ecological health of forests upon which all of our human endeavours rely. Stewardship of the forest landbase and all that it produces is more than just the right thing to do – it is a solemn intergenerational trust. Our political and business leaders have lost sight of this. A successful forest sector must nourish and sustain people. The importance of the socio-economic dimension is critical to communities. Forests are our common wealth and are as vital to our collective well-being as air and water.

Healthy communities depend upon the wealth generated by healthy forests – carbon absorption, oxygen creation, water filtration, land stabilization, fibre production, recreation use and even spiritual pacification. Some of these benefits are not widely recognized as contributing to economic wealth, but they do.

Have we lost sight of the connection between forests and communities in British Columbia? We would argue that provincial forest policy is essentially blind and bankrupt. Existing forest policy is choreographed by the macro-agenda of big business and imposed upon all of us from the top down. Witness the loss in accountability to communities with the negation of the appurtenancy principle in forest licences – all done without consulting those stakeholders most vulnerable and dependent. This is not a model to sustain resources and people over time.

**ForestWise:** *The experience in BC has been that people are very interested and concerned about the question of privatization of our public forestlands. Do you think that the traditional public interest in our forests is being eroded?*

**Wiles:** It is perhaps best to answer your question from the standpoint of our own experience. The Youbou sawmill relied on the timber sourced from public forestlands on south Vancouver Island. In the mid-1950's, the BC government granted Tree Farm Licence 46 (TFL #46) to British Columbia Forest Products. This Crown Licence provided the private company with access to public timber for a term of 25 years, optionally renewable every 5 years in perpetuity. The wisdom of this arrangement was that BCFP (later to become TimberWest) would be assured of a stable, sustainable source of fibre for manufacturing. In turn, the company's shareholders and bankers could dependably capitalize the necessary industrial infrastructure.

For this preferential treatment, it was expected that the company would operate on public lands in accordance with the BC Forest Act and Regulations, pay the prevailing stumpage rates and taxes, and (this is important) adhere to prescribed government social objectives. The latter concept became broadly termed as the 'social contract' including specific 'appurtenancy' provisions - these were the requirements of a licence that obligated a company, in this case TimberWest, to provide stable employment to local communities.

Subsequently, we have witnessed a startling erosion of this social contract. In some cases, government policy has deliberately moved away from appurtenancy, allegedly for reasons having to do with the standardization and harmonization of all provincial TFL contract language. In other cases including ours, the local timber processing requirement was apparently inadvertently 'lost by a blundering bureaucrat'. In the words of a former minister, "the Ministry screwed up". So it is our experience that some forest policy can be altered through a combination of deliberate and accidental change. The first is often misguided and the second in negligent - by both means, the public's interest is not being served. The net affect is a gradual privatization of the public's forests. This view is further reinforced by recent government forest policy changes that allow companies to subdivide TFL's, and freely buy and sell licences with minimal government oversight - TFL#46 was finally sold in May 2004 for 17.9 million dollars.

Compounding these freedoms are generous windfall compensation packages awarded to companies for loss of cutting rights on public land. All of this follows

government's decision to allow private forest lands to be removed from TFL's, a move that liberated over 60,000 ha from TFL #46 in favour of TimberWest. I don't think that the public has yet to understand all of this.

**ForestWise:** *What effects did the closure of the Youbou sawmill have on people?*

**Wiles:** As you can probably guess, the economic and social impacts have been profound. Every family has suffered varying degrees of loss. This has been spelled out authoritatively in a recent publication entitled "Fractured Lives: Results of the 2003 Survey of Youbou Sawmill Workers". YTS in collaboration with the Vancouver Island Public Interest Group (VIPIG) at the University of Victoria, has published the survey analysis and recommendations of Scott Prudham and Rob Penfold, researchers at the University of Toronto. This report gives an overall statistical analysis of how workers' lives were altered, and recommends specific and general provincial forest policy changes to address those people most aggrieved. The report can be accessed through the TimberLess Society website: [www.savebcjobs.com](http://www.savebcjobs.com) Unfortunately the effects upon workers, their families and their community have been dramatic, and are continuing.

*(Note: It should be pointed out that the impetus for this survey came in part from a Deputy Minister of Forests letter that erroneously stated that the majority of workers had found alternate employment through an Industrial Adjustment Committee).*

**ForestWise:** *Forest stewardship is a longterm affair. Is the Youbou TimberLess Society going to continue their interest and efforts in the management of local forests?*

**Wiles:** Our society (YTS) is a creative and constructive response to a very negative and destructive experience. Our vision has always been solution-oriented and longterm in scope. Like foresters, woodworkers know the importance of longterm stewardship. By definition, the forest resource is infinitely renewable and logically it follows that the stewardship horizon should therefore be perpetual.

In June of 2001, YTS became involved with the forest certification debate in BC, participating with the SFI and FSC formulation of standards. In January of 2002, we issued a BC Forest Policy position paper that publicly advocated for fundamental changes. Then in March of 2002, we participated in the Community Forest forum held in Victoria and subsequently were invited to join the BC Community Forests Association. And since 2001, we have been advocating for a new-model community forest in the Cowichan Valley. In addition to all of this activity, other engagements have included participating at universities, schools and service clubs in an effort to impart our message. The campaign will continue. So in answer to your question, as you can see, we intend to be around for many years to come, and stay closely involved in forest stewardship in the Cowichan Valley.

**ForestWise:** *Do you have any final thoughts to impart?*

**Wiles:** As a final comment, and as another part of the overall SFM responsibility, we offer a challenge to the foresters' profession to show civic leadership. After now experiencing firsthand some of the complexities and shortcomings of the forestry

business, our thought is that this group of people, who have specialized knowledge and are by legislation expected to be disengaged from industry and government, is uniquely suited to the role of intermediary. Properly mandated, foresters could arbitrate and resolve many a societal conflict. Their independence and transparency would have to be evident to all factions, but there is a historical tradition of stewardship responsibility that makes the profession an obvious and appropriate trustee.

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## **5. Concluding Remarks**

It is time in BC to strengthen our dialogue about forests, and encourage people to become more informed and involved. It is only through an interested and engaged public that we can achieve the necessary legislation, policies and practices to enable healthy forests and healthy communities. This is all an important part of a sustainable forestry future for British Columbia.



2761 McColl Place  
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## **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**NAME(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PROVINCE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **POSTAL CODE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I/We support the Vision and Mission Statements of the Society,  
and agree to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws.**

### **Society Membership Dues (Annual):**

- Individual: \$10**
- Family/Organization: \$25**
  
- Please specify if a paper receipt is required (e-mail receipt normally issued)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_