The Montane Alternative Silvicultural Systems Project: A Research and Operations Partnership

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Coastal British Columbia has some of the world's most productive forested land. The temperate rainforest, and activities of those of us who make our living in it, have drawn this area to the attention of the world. Much has focussed on majestic stands at low elevation, but not all our forest, nor all of its value, is found there. Even our mid- to high-elevation "montane" sites support large volumes of high value timber. Age, species, and structural diversity of these forests provide habitat for many organisms. Because of their position on the landscape, these forests provide the backdrop to spectacular viewscapes and are important upslope components of our watersheds with all their associated values. Here, on Vancouver Island, nearly a third of our total land area is "montane forest." Two-thirds of this has had no recent disturbance; most fits the definition of "old-growth" forest.

As more and more people settle on, or visit, Vancouver Island, the demands on our forests both increase and diversify. Since timber operations began to move upslope thirty years ago, montane forest types have become an increasingly important source of fibre for industry and employment for island communities. That move upslope presented a regeneration challenge that required changes in operational practice. The same approaches used successfully at low elevation did not always work. New approaches, based on better understanding of the ecology of montane sites, developed from cooperation between scientists, foresters, and field staff, focussed the efforts of several agencies and several disciplines on problem solving and adaptive management.

Shifts in population and changing global and local attitudes, present overwhelming pressure to change operational practice again. This expectation of change is captured in the recent recommendations of the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound, which provide a new entry to the forestry jargon: "variable-retention silvicultural system." If only we could say: "No sooner said than done" with confidence, but many questions remain unanswered about the safety, economic viability and environmental sustainability of management systems based on non-clearcut harvest. Once again, the key to finding workable solutions will be close cooperation between the research and operational communities through a process of adaptive management. The Montane Alternative Silvicultural Systems (MASS) partnership has begun this process.

Partnerships such as the MASS run on two principal fuels: people and money. You will see the names of many of the key people attached to the presentations in these proceedings, but there are others that should be acknowledged: Terry Rollerson for calling the first *ad hoc* meetings to discuss how to tackle silvicultural systems research on the South Coast in 1989; Janna Kumi, for her singular devotion to developing the vision of MASS; Ted Kimoto, Ken Buxton, Marv Clark, and Bob Dobbs for marshalling some of the best human resources of MacMillan Bloedel, the Canadian

Forest Service and FERIC; John Drew, Elaine Teske, Henry Benskin, and Dale Draper for their faith that this ambitious project was worth supporting with public money. These partnerships do require money. The MASS project has been generously supported by the Canada–B.C. Partnership Agreement on Forest Resource Development – "FRDA II," by the Forestry Practices Initiative of Canada's Green Plan, and by the core budgets of the Canadian Forest Service, the Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada, and MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. The MASS project has made a difference already. More than 500 forest workers toured the site during or soon after the logging operation and carried back new understanding to their own operations. The project has attracted visitors from around the world, has featured prominently in discussions of Canada's Parliamentary Committee on Clearcutting and the Clayoquot Scientific Panel. In these proceedings, you will find the first results of scientific studies that will continue to provide baseline information for decades to come.