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General Manager Christmas Message

As we close this calendar year, I'd like to reflect on the accomplishments of our Community Forest and review our successes and challenges that lie ahead.

First and foremost, we would like to express our deepest gratitude towards our community for their understanding and support through the 2023 fire season. We also want to thank everyone involved in this year's firestorm to keep our communities safe. We were all challenged this year beyond our wildest imaginations, and our communities coming together is a testament of our resilience.

At the commencement of our fiscal year, for the first time in its history, we were in a position of operational certainty. We had officially commenced our 5-year harvest plan implementation and brought to completion our 6-10-year planning. The operational 'total chance plan' in the context of the new management plan (2020) and our allowable annual cut (2020) had for a moment, brought forth implementable fiber supply security. This was a humbling experience with a sense of pride and joy to finally get to the stage of seeing aspects of our work in the last 6 years come to fruition.

Unfortunately, it did not last long enough for a celebration, as the 2023 Fire season brought that to the forefront. The 2023 Fire season, in particular the Tintagel Fire Complex estimated at 90% within the community forest tenure area, will have profound impact to our fiber supply into the future.

With the support of our local ministry office, through our continued communication, collaboration, and the existing tenure administration designed for community forests, we pivoted to fire salvage. Similar to our dead pine salvage focus, this shift will help us defer the commencement of our 5 yr green harvest plan. After the 2023 fire season, this has become more important than ever!

If anything is certain in this industry, it is the constant change, the need to be adaptive, innovative and nimble. The ability to adjust your plans is essential for success. We will need your support now more than ever, as we tackle the challenges of developing new strategic focus to create fiber security for our community.

Even with the uncertainties brought about by the 2023 wildfire season, we have continued to focus on maintaining our core values and deepening our understandings of land management, reconciliation, and environmental stewardship. We continued our journey with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification and have been using any opportunity to educate and share the work of the FSC, and why we continue to maintain certification.

This past year we continued our efforts in landscape fire mitigation and prescribed fire activities and our efforts were confirmed when the Tintagel complex met up with some of our landscape fire works in Boer Mountain.

I want to acknowledge that such activities may bring about emotional strains in community members, and we want to assure everyone that we complete these activities with the intent of creating community safety and ecosystem resilience. Collectively, we need to recognize that we live in a fire-based ecosystem, and as such, our day-to-day life, and our forest management must reflect strategies that support this frequent landscape disturbance.

We continued our efforts in making education and communication a priority of the BLCF. Our Journalism student continued working on growing our public relations via social media as well as planning events to increase student engagement and awareness of the career opportunities that exist in natural resources management.

Due to the Tintagle Fire, we took our 10th annual BBQ event on the road by cooking and delivering the food purchased to the firefighters and contractors working the frontline.

Your Board of Directors is a dedicated team of volunteers coming from diverse backgrounds that represent all aspects of our community. I encourage you to meet them and discuss the strategic direction of BLCF. I continue to emphasize our focus on long-term strategic goals “beyond the beetle” and my goal is to continue demonstrating the important social fabric that BLCF has in our community. These goals are meant to support the long-term prosperity of Burns Lake Community Forest and all the benefits it brings to our communities.

I want you all to join me in celebrating our successes and support us in the upcoming challenges we will be facing. I encourage community members to explore all that BLCF does in our community and to support us staying on the path of success.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us via info@blcomfor.com or via phone (250) 692-7724 to schedule a specific time to discuss matters that are important to you, or follow us on all Social Media @BurnsLakeCommunityForest to learn more!

On behalf of the Board and staff of Comfor Management Services Ltd. and Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd., I want to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Frank Varga RPF
General Manager
Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd
COMFOR Management Services Ltd

