

Standing the Test of Time

By

Robert Meier, President, WA Forest Protection Association

November 12, 2009

Last year—at this meeting—we had an opportunity to celebrate a centennial milestone—WFPA’s 100th Anniversary. While we looked back over our past—the multitude of change this industry and Association has been through—we also looked forward to the next 100 years—our bright future and what we could become, or re-invent ourselves to be. While we had our first inkling that the economy was in trouble, I don’t know any of us who expected such a deep slide into the worst economic climate we’ve seen in our lifetimes and maybe even the history of this Association and industry. While everyone of us in this room has been and still is affected by our financial meltdown, we can also derive some comfort in that we’ve lived through these tough times before and are here to talk about it. Often times people assume that the past is a good indication of the future—but I’m not so sure we should rely on that this time, for to me, it seems like the world and our forestry business is going through a fundamental change. For some, the unknown is a scary place to rest in. For others, it is energizing, enlivening and enriching—just as the unknown of the wagon trains that made their way west in the 1800’s—in search of a better, more prosperous

life. The spirit of those forefathers' set the stage for who we are today—out here in the west—the land of independence, freedom, adventure and eternal hope and faith. It's just that faith in the unknown future coupled with the quality and character of us in the forest industry that will see us through to the other side of our current economic challenge.

Despite others' predictions about our future, I truly believe that the ability to stand the test of time in forestry is self-evident. This is what I want us to rely on, as we begin to think about building the future in this new and changing world that we live in.

Standing the test of time in the forestry business means that we are continually fulfilling a need that society has for our products, jobs, and the environmental benefits that working forests provide. This takes a measure of flexibility and ingenuity as societal values for forest products and forest management has shifted over the generations. For example, our wood was used to build ships and airplanes a century ago—in the future while we continue to provide building materials for homes, we will also provide more renewable energy and other products that we'll hear more about in our panel this afternoon. Standing the test of time also means being

accountable—to meeting the expectations of society, of our employees and of our shareholders—to continually deliver the values that they expect from our forestry operations. Standing the test of time can only happen if we are renewable and sustainable. Our products are produced in a factory called the forest, powered by renewable solar energy. Wood is the very embodiment of solar energy—and so long as we take care of the soils and environment—we will have renewable wood resources forever. Standing the test of time also means that we continue to want to practice forestry. Whether our industry is on this landscape or not, the ground in the Pacific Northwest grows trees very well due to its rich soils and temperate climate. We can use our forest resources sustainably and responsibly in the most productive tree growing region in the Northern Hemisphere, or we can export our source of supply to another country, with lesser environmental regulations. The people on this earth are all users of wood resources, and the projections show that this will only continue to increase. I argue that we want to practice forestry in Washington because we believe in the values forests produce, for people, animals and the environment. In fact, the most environmentally proactive thing we could do for the world is to use more wood, grow more trees, and practice sustainable forestry.

Finally, despite the opinions and social agendas that we have weathered over the years, our forest land doesn't lie. It stands the test of time through continually renewing itself with the next generation of forest. Cared for properly, this can happen in perpetuity. Foresters have all of the right stuff to prosper in the upcoming centuries because we have demonstrated we fulfill a need in society, we are flexible enough to recreate our business to meet the new times we are in, we are accountable in our actions—the forestry business occurs in the open outdoors for all to see, and we are producing a renewable, environmentally friendly product that can sustain itself forever as long as we have people like us who want to continue investing in forestry.

Creating our Future

By

Mark Doumit, Executive Director, WA Forest Protection Association

November 12, 2009

Here we are at WFPA's 101st Annual Meeting, wrapping up the first year of our second century of operation—and what a year it has been for all of us. I think we've all experienced the difficulty of the current economic times. Today we're going to get the latest update from our state economist, Dr. Arun Raha, right before lunch; hopefully he has some good news for us. We're also going to hear from state leadership about what the state is doing to try to improve things—and a special message from U.S. Senator, Maria Cantwell – as we look toward the future for forestry as a green, renewable source of energy. Before we talk about creating our future, I want to look back over this past year at our challenges and successes. Forestry found a lot of bi-partisan support in various pieces of legislation—such as tax credits, for biofuels, recognition of wood as a renewable energy source and expansion of riparian open space to include critical forest habitat. But we were met with challenges that stemmed from the worst economic downturn in any of our lifetimes, and this Great Recession has been the worst one for our industry since the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Successes

Today our Working Forest agenda is focused around how to create our future. As an industry, we're known for our resiliency and endurance, just like our products. While we may not have full control over the external events that we operate in, we do have control over an offensive agenda moving this industry forward into a future that can and will be very productive. We have faith in our ability to meet the challenges before us. The truth is embodied in our mission. That working forests provide societal and environmental value as well as private value to the landowner. This is while being the gentlest land use that mankind knows of, and producing products that we need in our everyday lives. While some may belittle the harvesting of trees, the truth is that cutting trees sustainably is one of the best things we can do for our environment. By increasing demand for wood products, we remove more carbon from the atmosphere—we support local, rural jobs and we maintain forestry as a preferred land. Growing more trees and using more wood is the most environmentally friendly action we can all take right now. Our future relies on the creation of a new paradigm. As Bob mentioned, we are entering into a new era—a future that is unknown to us now—and we must create this future together. We

must be open to new ways of doing business—polarizing debates where forestry is condemned for what it does wrong need to be replaced with a focus on what is going right. For example, after only 8 years of implementing the state’s Forests & Fish law, more than 1,500 miles of fish habitat has been opened on private lands. That is huge progress for the fishery resource and something that benefits every citizen in this state. We need to help our society embrace what is going right, and help them to understand the valuable resource we have in maintaining privately owned working forests on the landscape as a cornerstone to our economy and a healthy environment.

And finally—I offer a new vision for forestry and environmentalists. I see a future where we are working together on new solutions, and in new, market-based arenas. New creative solutions go beyond a regulatory system and must create markets for conservation so that improving the environment becomes an asset to landowners, not a liability. We are solving some of today’s problems like having energy independence and climate mitigation within our industry. There is no doubt that practicing private forestry in a state dominated by public lands issues is one of our fundamental challenges—but we know that there is a place for private

forestry in the largest wood producing region in the nation—and that there are opportunities in the forest that haven't even been dreamed of yet, but if we spend too much of our precious energy and time fighting old, worn out battles we may never see the true potential in the forest. I challenge the environmentalists to come to the table with a new set of eyes and ears and mind set that we need each other—we are all in this together and the sooner we embrace forestry for what it is and can be, the quicker we can get to a bright future.