

Partners in Training

Forest Worker Training: A Success Story in Progress

Heather Deal

A primary goal of the Watershed Restoration Program (WRP) is to provide training and employment opportunities for forest workers who may be affected by timber harvest reductions and by the Forest Practices Code. Within WRP, training designed for this group has been limited. One limiting factor was the relatively small number of manual field techniques used specifically for restoration projects. Another has been the uncertainty over who would deliver this training.

In the spring of 1998, New Forest Opportunities Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Forest Renewal BC, began to coordinate training and employment of displaced forest workers in the Pacific Forest Region (Region 1). MELP's WRP Technical Coordination Section was asked to provide a training program for these forest workers that would focus on field techniques. As we developed the course, it quickly became apparent the curriculum would have to address information about the whole watershed to be relevant to the participants. Through a series of meetings and discussions with individuals at MOF, New Forest Opportunities Limited and Forest Renewal BC, it was agreed

the course would cover watersheds from top to bottom. The resulting course would be appropriate not only for displaced forest workers, but for fishers, community stewardship group members and others.

A central concern in developing this course was the choice of instructors. While there are several well-qualified professionals who could handle this material with ease, the nature of the audience suggested a different approach. We chose to go with experienced field personnel with proven abilities to make presentations. Two such people (Lloyd Burroughs and Caroline Melville) were already demonstrating WRP field techniques for MELP on Vancouver Island. The Forestry Continuing Studies Network (FCSN) assisted in identifying a third instructor with a specialty in up-slope and forestry topics (Dick Yates). Over the next months, the instructors and WRP/MELP Technical Coordinator Office worked together to develop a curriculum and course materials.

We designed the course to expose participants not only to WRP field techniques, but also to give them a basic understanding of watersheds, their natural processes and how past logging practices affected those processes. The resulting five-day curriculum is a combination of classroom and field sessions. One full day is spent in the classroom introducing participants to watersheds, including map, compass and air photo reading exercises (Figure 1). Days 2 and 3 are spent on slope stabilization techniques, with extensive bioengineering field-work (Figure 2). Days 4 and 5 are spent on aquatic restoration, including riparian assessments, fish habitat assessments, building in-stream log and boulder complexes and touring existing projects



Figure 2. Boston Bar participants building a live pole drain as part of their bioengineering training.



Figure 1. Boston Bar participants learning air photo reading from instructor Lloyd Burroughs.

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Figure 3. Instructor Caroline Melville explaining fish habitat assessments on the Keogh River in Port Hardy.

(Figure 3). The curriculum is highly adaptable to local needs and resources.

This course has now been offered four times through New Forest Opportunities Limited, including two deliveries to First Nations bands. The training package is also rapidly gaining interest among other groups and organizations. International Forest Products in Campbell River recently provided the course to a crew of their workers. Several community organizations and Fisheries Renewal BC groups have also expressed strong interest. Custom training packages incorporating portions of the course are being developed on request.

Employment and project opportunities are arising from this course. Our pilot delivery (Port Hardy, July 1998) was to a group of New Forest Opportunities

Limited workers with no specific project lined up for future WRP employment. Four of the participants were hired onto a WRP project directly from the course and that crew has since been recruited to help with a project in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Subsequent deliveries have been to groups with projects already approved. One particularly adept crew in the Fraser Canyon has been in demand for other projects in the area. Following the course, one organization has been actively seeking funding for further WRP projects. Several community groups are requesting this training as part of restoration project proposals.

Each delivery produces positive responses from both the participants and the organization responsible for offering the course. Workers often start the course wary of an “environmental class”. By the end of the week they have a understanding of the whole watershed, how their actions on the slope affect the stream below, and how they can add to the restoration of these systems in which they work and recreate. Most importantly, they gain enthusiasm for restoration work. It is our hope that a variety of organizations continue to seek out this type of holistic training for their field crews.

For a course description or information on contracted (private) course delivery, contact:

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Technical Tip

Compressed Air Technique in Restoration at Rebman Creek

Ron Randall

The goals of the Rebman Creek Restoration project were to provide overwintering spawning and rearing

habitat for the resident trout species of Rebman Creek and to provide employment for local unemployed forestry and mining workers in Wells and Quesnel. Creation of summer rearing habitat was also an objective, because the small pools in the creek had dried up the previous summer. Rebman Creek is located in the Willow Watershed, approximately 50 km northeast of the city of Quesnel.

The proponents for this project were Weldwood of Canada, Forest Renewal BC, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, LGL Ltd., Northwest Hydraulic Consultants Ltd., and Randall and Associates.

Seven riffle structures and pools were constructed at