

TREE FROG NEWS

By Mary Tracey

Keeping me and everyone else in the forest sector abreast of the latest news and opinions relevant to our industry is the goal of the Tree Frog Daily News Service—a free e-newsletter from Sandy McKellar that encapsulates the day's news stories, op-eds, blog entries and industry announcements. Although initially motivated for personal reasons, the service has since become her passion.

According to Sandy, it started with wanting to give back and support the people, the organizations and the non-profits who have helped and supported her in the past. However, the task of making sure they were aware of what governments, NGOs and the public were thinking and saying about their world gradually consumed her such that the “task” has now become “her passion”. In a nutshell, the Tree Frog Daily News is like “an indicator species representing the health and vitality of the sector” (her words not mine).

As most people know, tree frogs are often described as indicator species – the “canary in the coalmine” for the forest ecosystem. And as Sandy will tell you, the reason for this is that tree frogs live their lives in the water and on land, being both aquatic and terrestrial. They are also able to breathe through both internal lungs like we do, and directly through their moist skin. However, the skin provides a very poor barrier to toxins in the environment, and thus changes in their health are indicative of changes in the surrounding environment.

Putting two and two together, it was in this vein that the Tree Frog News was created. After more than ten years working in

communications for the forest sector, Sandy McKellar decided to start out on her own and the first order of business was to stay on top of the breaking news, in BC and around the world. Sharing the stories she found with her non-profit forest education colleagues and her previous employer, the Truck Loggers Association, McKellar began to develop somewhat of a fan club of readers who looked forward each day to the stories she would send them. As the followers grew, so too their areas of interest also expanded, and soon the Tree Frog News was carrying stories under three distinct categories: Forestry, Carbon & Climate Change, and Wood Products & Green Building.

Being ahead of the game, knowing what communication and legislation challenges lie ahead empowers individuals, managers and leaders to make intelligent and informed decisions. When public opinion becomes tainted with misinformation and influenced by radical special interest groups, the sector needs to be well aware of current opinions in order to respond to the press or create their own news with balanced and rational information.

In this context, those of us in the front lines of forest communication appreciate the Tree Frog service for its “indicator” value and find it an indispensable part of our day. As Makenzie Liene, Manager of Sustainability and Community Affairs for Island Timberlands put it, “A large part of my job in forestry communications is understanding what is going on in the news. Ensuring you have covered all of the articles means sifting through a significant amount of unrelated information. The Tree Frog News service saves me hours of work each week. It’s a much needed efficiency for myself and the industry as a whole!”

Without paying for a professional news clipping service, there are few sources that provide a cross-sectoral collection of daily news coverage. Even with the doom and gloom that permeates today’s stories, most people are happy to know both the good and the bad. In fact some, like Dan Carson, a silviculture forester with Kruger, say, “I do not know how I lived without it.”

We can no longer think about forestry in BC as something we do in our own backyard, because our backyard has sparked great interest in jurisdictions around the world. Early on it was the old growth in Clayoquot Sound; today it is the carbon sequestration capacity of our forests and wood products. We can learn from practices across the ocean, and share research and knowledge in this global industry with partners around the world.

Bill Dumont has worn his share of hats in the BC and global forest sector. Once the Chief Forester at Western Forest Products he later consulted for the Malaysian forest sector, and knows how important it is to stay on top of current events. One of the first to endorse the Tree Frog News, Bill comments that, “nobody provides a unique and valued forestry and environment news service on the BC and Canadian forest sector like Tree Frog does, it can be counted on to provide timely, relevant and need-to-know daily forestry news updates.”

Rod Bealing, Executive Director, Private Forest Landowners Association adds, “I can think of few places in the world where forestry plays a bigger part in people’s lives than BC. Elected officials and policy-makers pay close attention to what’s in the news here. And because public policy has such a huge impact on forest management, it’s immensely valuable for people in the forestry business to also know what’s going on in the media. Tree Frog is a great way to keep tabs on the main forestry news items in BC and North America.”

Thanks Bill and Rod. I couldn’t have said it any better myself. ■



Tree Frog
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Tree Frog's Forest Sector Daily News



Sandy McKellar
604.916.9117
sandy@treefrogcreative.ca

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