



## Moving foward

**B.C. logging contractor Lo-Bar Transport has made some minor modifications to its John Deere 1910E forwarders that have resulted in some major improvements.**

*By Jim Stirling*

Seemingly minor machine modifications can produce major differences. Collectively, those minor changes can significantly contribute to a harvesting operation's overall ability to produce the logs required in a consistent and efficient manner.

Lo-Bar Log Transport has been adept at the practice. Changes made to the log contracting company's two identical John Deere 1910E forwarders are examples. "We widened the bunks on them by about a foot," said Joe Mayhew, logging coordinator who was quarterbacking Lo-Bar's log harvesting side in the Salmon River drainage northwest of Prince George in central British Columbia. "They can carry more payload with the widened bunks, about 18 metres a load," he added. Another modification involved widening the machine's wheel base by about eight inches. "The forwarders are more stable, they're more comfortable for the operator and there's a little more clearance and less damage from debris," reported Mayhew. The modifications on the forwarders emanated from a thorough machine demonstration under Lo-Bar's typical operating conditions. A key part of that process involved asking the machines' regular operators for their opinions, continued Mayhew. That's usually two people per machine. They gave the John Deere's a thumbs up, he related.

"We lay out blocks and build the roads according to the timber," says Mayhew. The goal is to keep distances from roadside to about 400 metres maximum for the 1910s and more typically half that distance. "We have to have the bunchers set up the piles for the forwarders to operate safely on slopes," he added.

A further positive feature on the JD 1910s is the rotating operators cab. "The cab rotates with you so the seat faces the windshield. The machine's designed to follow the crane. There's no corner post right there in front of you. The operators quite like that," continued Mayhew.

Day shifts for the 1910s run from around 5 a.m. to 4 p.m. and not necessitating the operators to be constantly twisting sideways makes a big difference. It emphasizes that a more comfortable operator is a more efficient one and less tired at the end of the day.

Lo-Bar Log Transport is a major log harvesting contractor for Canadian Forest Products Ltd (Canfor). "This year, we'll probably be logging about 700,000 cubic metres and we're looking to grow the company," said Liam Parfitt, director of business development for Lo-Bar. The company plans to build an expanded shop complex on the north side of Prince George this summer.

Lo-Bar operates a logging side out of Quesnel but most of their wood is on the north side of town, explained Parfitt.

Locating the shop closer has advantages like fuel savings. Having the capacity to complete most of your own machine repairs and modifications is essential these days to help keep control of costs, he added.



The two new John Deere forwarders have slotted well into Mayhew's busy north side operation. "We try to average about 50 loads a day," he said. "We deal generally with the more middle of the road size of wood, the medium and small logs."

The piece size at the Salmon River drainage show averaged 0.5 cubic metres a stem. The majority of the cut-to-length stems were being delivered to Canfor's Prince George Sawmill.

Mayhew oversees the more than 20 machines used to maintain the consistent log delivery required by Canfor. The machines include seven forwarders, four processors, three harvesters, two feller bunchers, two dozers, an excavator, two log loaders and a snow plow. Some of the equipment, including the feller bunchers, forwarders and processors, are regularly double shifted. The machines represent a range of equipment manufacturers, like John Deere, Ponsse, Valmet and Hitachi.

Brandt Tractor Ltd., is the John Deere equipment dealer in Prince George. "They take care of us which is why we work with them," reported Mayhew. "With logging equipment, number one is the right machine for the job and a close number two is the service and support you get from the dealer," he said.

Lo-Bar tends to keep its logging equipment fleet up to date. "It's more cost efficient to run newer equipment," he explained. That's why the company keeps close track of each machine's costs per hour. The data factors in when to turn machines over for newer models.

Logging equipment with relatively low hours on the clock also command better trade-in values. It's all part of keeping tabs on the seemingly small things to ensure the big picture remains in focus and allowing Lo-Bar to meet its obligations.