



Successful sort

Volvo wheel and tracked loaders are proving to be an important part of Clayoquot Forest Management successfully managing a massive TimberWest log sort operation on Vancouver Island.

Story & photos by Ron Mullins

In the forest industry these days, you have to hit the ground running--just ask Clayoquot Forest Management Ltd.

The company recently took control of TimberWest's Race Point-North Island log sort operation situated on Johnstone Strait north of Campbell River, B.C.

This Vancouver Island timber sort facility, although an important component of the West Coast forest industry, had recently experienced some unexpected business interruptions. Revitalization was immediately necessary.

The recipe that TimberWest used is as follows: Start with an ample supply of old and second growth timber. Add the experience of two seasoned industry veterans to manage the operation. Blend in an excellent crew of experienced forestry professionals. Add an ample dash of expertise from a heavy equipment dealer that fully understands the forest industry. Stir in sufficient amounts of Volvo forestry wheeled and tracked loaders. Bake for days in the warm (at least in the summer) Vancouver Island sun.

The result: up to one million cubic metres of timber unloaded, sorted, banded, boomed and shipped to customers throughout the United States, Canada, Japan, China and to various other timber customers around the world on an annual basis.

Don McMillan and Hugh Anderson, principals of Clayoquot Forest Management Ltd., are the two seasoned industry veterans managing the Race Point log sort under contract to TimberWest.

TimberWest Forest Corp. runs fully contracted harvesting operations and is a leading player in the coastal industry in the growing and harvesting of second-growth timber. Almost 80 per cent of the company's annual private land logging is done in second-growth stands.

Combined, McMillan and Anderson have over eighty years experience in the Canadian coastal forest industry. They have seen good times and difficult times in the industry but today's market is different yet again. As partners, they both agree that to be successful in the current forest economy and to establish a solid foundation for growth, management teams need to be innovative.

"We operate this yard seven-thirty. Seven days a week, thirty days each month," McMillan pointed out. "We knew that to be successful we needed crews that were knowledgeable and flexible. But crews without efficient, reliable equipment won't spell success either." McMillan went to work on the numbers and putting together the right crew, while Anderson started work on securing the right equipment.

Anderson knew exactly what the operation needed to get on its feet, be productive and financially successful. He approached another local major equipment dealer, but there seemed to be a lack of interest in what they were trying to do.



“So I was driving to the office one morning and my regular route took me right past Great West Equipment. I didn’t know that much about Volvo equipment but I had known Doug Meier for a number of years, so I stopped in to see him. We put together a deal over a cup of coffee and five days later we were up and running. Volvo and Great West have been just fantastic.”

Meier is the general manager of Great West Equipment’s Campbell River operation. Great West Equipment is Volvo Construction Equipment’s premier dealer in British Columbia.

The Race Point sort yard accepts timber delivered by truck and trailer from TimberWest’s woodlots all over Vancouver Island. In addition, timber is boomed in from other operations along the rugged British Columbia coastline. It is sorted by species and size, bundled, banded and ‘splashed’ back into the ocean to be boomed to marine loading facilities and timber customers further to the south. Daily, the North Island log sort processes up to 4,500 cubic metres of prime timber.

This work is currently being done by a crew of twenty timber sort professionals and the efficient and effective use of a Volvo L150F wheel loader, a Volvo L180F wheel loader and a Volvo 240BFX tracked forestry loader. All loaders are configured for logging operations with logging grapples and the appropriate safety guarding.

The Volvo L150F wheel loader is both a highly maneuverable and a very effective production machine. Powered by a fuel efficient turbocharged Volvo V-ACT D12E diesel engine that delivers its power through the electro-hydraulic HTE-transmission with Automatic Power Shift (APS), this loader is ideal for fast cycle times while providing industry leading fuel efficiency.

All Volvo wheel loaders feature an intelligent load-sensing hydraulic system, providing exact distribution of power when and where it’s needed, regardless of engine rpm.

Its bigger brother, the Volvo 180F wheel loader, has all the power needed to take on and quickly handle demanding log handling applications. One of the keys to its superior ability is Volvo’s unique, patented and highly reliable lift arm system TP-linkage that is said to give the L180 outstanding lifting abilities as well as parallel movement throughout the entire lifting range. This is further enhanced with Volvo’s Boom Suspension System. This results in exceptional control of heavy grapple loads while maintaining plenty of power and complete control, according to Volvo.

As the “numbers guy”, McMillan always has his eye on the bottom line. “Both of our Volvo wheel loaders are performing above expectations,” says McMillan. “The 180 (Volvo L180F) only uses between twenty-eight and thirty litres of fuel per hour and the 150 (Volvo L150F) does better than that. We’re very pleased with the performance of our Volvo fleet.

“These loaders are fast, maneuverable and the operators just love them. And I like what they do for the bottom line at the end of each shift.”

Both McMillan and Anderson are pleased with what Volvo and Great West have brought to the table, or in this case the sort yard. “We were treated like we were important and that meant a great deal to us,” says Anderson. “We know the economy is slow, especially in the forest industry. We have read all the ugly press reports. But we needed the machines for the heavy lifting, and we needed the people and a success driven equipment supplier to bring it all together and get us



started. Both Volvo and GWE did that for us.”

Today this log sort yard is a beehive of activity from dawn to dark, with a steady stream of logging trucks arriving, being unloaded by the gigantic Wagner stacker, logs being sorted by species and size, then bundled, banded and dumped into the ocean where boom boats bob and weave forming huge booms of logs, while larger ocean-going towboats wait to pull the log booms on the next step of the journey. It’s a symphony of action, reaction and production. It’s obvious that this recipe worked and has produced outstanding results with Volvo loaders being one of the key ingredients.

Recently Clayoquot has taken control of a log sort on southern Vancouver Island and it has added the brute strength of a Volvo L220F wheel loader to offload logging trucks and then sort the timber from helicopter logging operations.

Equipment power, performance and production have proven to be key ingredients in Clayoquot Forest Management Ltd’s recipe for success. They have definitely worked for Don McMillan and Hugh Anderson and the TimberWest Race Point-North Island Log Sort operation. These boys are making a big splash in the forest industry once again.

Editor’s Note: This story was supplied to Logging and Sawmilling Journal by Volvo Construction Equipment.