

Hello Coast Range Staff & Planters,

I hope you are as well as can be given the current state of affairs.

To keep you all updated on the state of the 2020 planting season I have attached the latest DRAFT Bulletin from the WFCA. This 14-page document outlines the proposed measures that are being considered to allow us to proceed with planting this season. (Please see attached PDF file.)

Below, you will see yesterday's email from the WFCA explaining that the WFCA is attempting to work with the Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Health to approve operating guidelines that would allow tree planters to go to work. As you can see in the email below, we are still in a "wait and see" phase as to whether the guidelines will be approved.

The key for everyone at this point is to isolate, practice good hygiene and physical distancing. It is critical that all of us to take this very seriously. Please continue to do everything you can to remain healthy for your sake and the sake of everyone else. Thank you.

Besides the WFCA, we are in touch with our clients and local health authorities to stay as informed as we can as things develop. We will continue to do our best to make informed decisions with your health and safety as our top priority.

We will be adding a link to the Coast Range webpage where we will be posting updates as we receive them. The link should be up by tomorrow—March 25th.

Crew Bosses, please share this email and attachment with all of your planters. Thanks!

Very best regards,

Garth

LATEST EMAIL FROM WFCA:

To all WFCA members and other contractors and stakeholders:

Today the Western Forestry Contractors' Association has asked the Chief Forester Dianne Nicholls to delay the start up of the 2020 Interior planting season. After talking with members of her staff this morning it was obvious there are still too many uncertainties for contractors in the midst of this unfolding pandemic. We also took into considerations what we all discussed at the WFCA open board of directors conference call today as well. Contractors in preparing for the season are already incurring costs for which they may have insufficient, if any, chance to recover through production this year. It seems wisest to call a time out until we have a clearer outlook.

We still have no word yet from the Centre for Disease Control on whether updated COVID-19 industrial camp operating guidelines have been approved. We understand they may be ready in another couple of days. This document is essential to how we would adapt and design our camps and their

operations so we can legitimately conform to what our government expects of us. Our latest communication with Northern Health is that they expect them by mid-week.

At the same time we understand that the senior forestry ministry staff have heard that their counterparts in the ministry of health are preoccupied with threats to the more vulnerable, the health care system, and public safety. Our concerns are not primary at the moment to the health ministry. We do need the close cooperation of these agencies to underpin the legitimacy of us proceeding with the season.

For our part—and we only began to discuss this in detail on today’s WFCA conference call—we have much work to do in designing the extraordinary practices and enhanced measures we will have to take to ensure the safety of our workers and the communities we work in. Not only will we have to develop these prescriptions and make them practical, we will have to estimate their costs so that our government can weigh those against the benefits of planting as many of this season’s seedlings as possible. The advantage of having the delay is that it will give us time to work out in more detail what all this new approach entails. It will also give a clearer picture of what assurances and strategies we will need in order to reduce the exceptional risks we will be taking on in the current upset.

Along with the strategies and operational contingencies we have to develop, we have to reassure communities we are not an additional risk. Already we can see the first signs of skepticism about our crews working in the woods while communities are in mitigation mode. The delay offers us a chance to build some relationships, understanding and, we hope, acceptance for our sector going to work in around communities in B.C and Alberta.

So how long might the delay be? First of all this is only a delay to the start up. It does not mean everything else is delayed. But, of course, there will be cascading effects that will likely upset planning in some cases. In our call this morning with officials we steered clear from prescribing any exact date for the season to start just because there are so many variables to take into account. But we do think, at this time, that we have a two-week delay to contend with.

We understand there are way more details to contemplate. Tomorrow morning we will find out if our chief forester has accepted our recommendation. The position of the licensees will also have to be considered. We will keep you posted as things progress.

On behalf of the WFCA Board of Directors

John Betts
Executive Director