

NEWS RELEASE



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Top Volunteers and a Climate Change Innovator Honoured by the ABCFFP

The Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABCFFP) presented awards to three prominent forest professionals at a special ceremony last night in Kelowna. Two forest professionals were heralded for their volunteerism and one became the first-ever recipient of the newly created Climate Change Innovator Award.

“Climate change is affecting how we, as forest professionals, do our jobs,” says Christine Gelowitz, RPF, President of the Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABCFFP). “We decided to create an award to highlight the work our members are doing in this important area.”

Alex Woods, MSc, RPF, is the first recipient of the Climate Change Innovator Award. Alex is a forest pathologist (someone who studies forest diseases) with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. He is based in Smithers but works across the province conducting research, monitoring young stands, and teaching about the effects of climate change on BC’s forests. Ultimately, he wants to make sure that BC’s forests are managed in a way that maximizes their ability to both cope with and mitigate against climate change.

Alex is recognized internationally for his work on climate change and forest diseases and has been invited to many international conferences to present his findings. One of his most significant contributions was as the leader of a team that developed a protocol used by forest professionals to assess the health and growth of young managed stands. Use of this protocol has identified forest disease impacts beyond their expected scope, possibly related to climate change, which has ultimately lead forest professionals to take action.

The winners of the volunteer award are Jacque Corstanje, RPF, and Annette van Neijenhuis, RPF. “Normally, the ABCFFP honours one member with the Jim Rodney Memorial Volunteer of the Year award,” says Christine. “This year, we had two outstanding members and I’m so pleased to be able to recognize both of them.”

Jacques Corstanje, RPF, lives and works in Terrace where he has recently started a new position with the Oil and Gas Commission. Jacques has been a dedicated volunteer with the ABCFFP since he was elected to its governing council in 2007. He has sat on a number of committees including a committee that worked with the Wildfire Management Branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations on describing professional services when it comes to fire and fuels management – helping to keep the forests safe to everyone.

Key to winning this year’s award was Jacques’ participation on the ABCFFP’s Professional Practice Committee – a group of volunteer members who determine if the practice of professional forestry is taking place. As the chair of this committee, Jacques helped lead the efforts to build a process that makes it clear when someone is, or is not, practising professional forestry. Jacques and the committee then refined the process by conducting hundreds of practice determinations in the first two years of the program. These determinations are important because it ensures that only qualified people are taking care of the forests.

Annette van Neijenhuis, RPF, works for Western Forest Products in Campbell River where she is a forester specializing in forest genetics and incremental silviculture. Her contributions to the community do not stop with her paid employment. She is an avid volunteer with several organizations including the Vancouver Island Section of the Canadian Institute of forestry, the ABCFP's Network of Forest Professionals, the Marble River Fish Hatchery, and the North Island Invasive Species Partnership.

This past year, Annette was a key part of a province-wide task force dedicated to increasing the profile of National Forest Week in BC. Additionally, she was instrumental in organizing National Forest Week activities for the people of Campbell River.

"One of the fun parts of being the president of the ABCFP is recognizing great members like Alex, Annette and Jacques," says Christine. "It was an honour to share their special moment."

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Attention Broadcasters: Pronunciation Guide

Jacques Corstanje (COR-stan-ye)
Annette van Neijenhuis (van knee-YEN-hice)

*The **Association of BC Forest Professionals'** forestry conference and AGM, is held in different locations around BC each year. Attending are Registered Professional Foresters and Registered Forest Technologists who come to learn from the best, share ideas and best practices, and network with colleagues.*

*The **Association of BC Forest Professionals** is responsible for registering and regulating British Columbia's professional foresters and forest technologists. Today, it is the largest professional forestry association in Canada and the first to include forest technologists. Here in BC, the practice of professional forestry has been regulated since 1947 when foresters first agreed to help protect the public's interest in the province's forests in return for the exclusive right to practise forestry.*

For more information: www.abcfp.ca

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