

Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS)

Pointers for Landowner and Neighbour Contact

While most Wildlife Trees are monitored from public lands, there are often opportunities to make contact with either the property owner or other local residents.

Be Aware of Opportunities to Introduce Yourself:

- While making observations, be aware of opportunities to introduce yourself to local people who approach you.
- You may have people come up and ask you who you are and what is so interesting. See this as an opportunity to introduce yourself and the program.
- If you want to initiate contact you could:
 - 1) Drop off some information on the program at the landowner's home with some notice that you will return. This gives the landowner some time to read up on the program and think about any questions that he/she may like to ask.
 - 2) Return to the landowner at a convenient time (weekend afternoons, early evenings if you know the landowner is working).

Respect the Landowner and be Diplomatic

- Always respect the landowner's opinions and interests, even if you do not agree with them.
- Dealing with different personalities can be a challenge. Some landowners will not share your views.
- Nothing is gained by forcing an opinion, and it may cost a future chance to build understanding and to protect the wildlife tree.
- Many landowners will have stories and anecdotes they want to share. See this as an opportunity to expand on your information about the tree you are monitoring and to gauge the landowner's interest in protecting it.
- Always take the time to thank landowners if invited to view the tree up close or if they take the time to re-tell a story.
- If the landowner invites you to come onto their property to do a monitoring session, ensure that it is clear whether the invitation is for "one time only" or "whenever you need to monitor the tree".

Be Encouraging:

- When explaining your work, emphasize the value and importance of the landowner's wildlife trees. If the landowner expresses interest, elaborate.
- Provide an opportunity for the landowner to become involved as well. Ask the landowner to make their own observations, if they are interested, and take these into account.
- If the landowner is interested, share your observations or send additional information later. Keep them in the loop!

Build Community Support:

- Take the opportunity to promote the program you are representing. Inform the landowners of the importance of this community contribution.

When Answering Questions:

- LANDOWNERS MAY ASK YOU QUESTIONS THAT YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO ANSWER. FOR INSTANCE, THEY MAY ASK YOU ABOUT TREE HAZARDS OR IF THE TREE IS A SAFETY CONCERN. THESE ARE QUESTIONS FOR A CERTIFIED ARBORIST. ALSO, THEY MAY ASK YOU QUESTIONS YOU MAY NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE ANSWERING. ANSWER QUESTIONS YOU FEEL CAPABLE OF ANSWERING. DON'T FEEL YOU HAVE TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. STICK TO DISCUSSION OF THE NEST TREE, BIRD BIOLOGY AND THE PROJECT.
- Provide a contact name and number for the landowner to find out additional information e.g. WiTS Program Coordinator (Ian Moul wits.bc@shaw.ca or (250) 890-0713).

Confidentiality:

- **It is important NOT to release personal information about the landowners to others or to include their name and address in any database without their permission. If the names and addresses are to be added to any reports, the landowners should also be asked if this is okay to do.**

Think Safety:

- Make sure others know where you are monitoring and when you are expected back.
- If possible, go with a partner. If you have a cell phone, keep it with you (but on silent).
- If you ever feel uncomfortable, listen to your inner voice. Simply thank the landowner for their time and return to your vehicle.

If the Landowner becomes Confrontational (very rare):

- The best thing to do is not provoke the person further. Don't argue back!
- Listen politely and seek the first opportunity to thank them for their time and leave.

Maintain Trust and Credibility:

- Establish a good reputation. Word of mouth is the most important advertisement. Build trust by following up on any questions or concerns the landowners might have. With time, you are likely to receive invitations from other property owners with wildlife trees who are willing to take part in the program.
- Credibility is essential. Don't make promises you can't keep.