
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2006FOR0170-001388
Nov. 15, 2006

Ministry of Forests and Range

HOUSE ARREST AND \$60K FINES FOR KOOTENAY TIMBER FRAUD

VICTORIA – Following an investigation by Ministry of Forests and Range Compliance and Enforcement officers and the RCMP Forest Crime Investigation Unit, a man has been sentenced to six months' house arrest and a fine of \$10,000 for timber fraud.

Darrell Oliver Thomas of Westbridge, British Columbia, was sentenced Nov. 6, in B.C. Supreme Court in Nelson, after pleading guilty to one count of fraud over \$5,000. While under house arrest, Thomas must be home between 5:30 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. on work days, and 24 hours a day on non-work days. He has also been ordered to perform 100 hours of community service. CD Lumber, owned by his wife, Cassandra Thomas, was also fined \$50,000 as a result of the investigation.

Thomas ordered 11 truckloads of spruce, balsam and pine to be timber marked as though they came from an area approximately 50 km away from the actual harvest site, where he had another timber licence, with stumpage rates that were approximately 75 per cent lower. The difference in the calculated rates amounted to about \$14,800. Stumpage rates vary based on timber species, market value, harvesting costs and other factors.

The fraud occurred near Rock Creek, approximately 50 km east of Osoyoos, in May 2000. Compliance and Enforcement Special Investigations Unit officers began their investigation in March 2002 during the course of a routine inspection and conducted numerous interviews and site assessments. The investigation was then handed over to the RCMP Forest Crime Investigation Unit for further investigation and then to Crown Counsel, which resulted in Criminal Code charges being laid in September 2005.

Timber fraud and other forest crimes are estimated to cost taxpayers millions of dollars in lost revenue each year.

The Compliance and Enforcement Branch is responsible for enforcing forest management laws and combating forest crimes such as theft, arson and mischief. Its staff conduct more than 16,000 inspections a year to assess compliance with forest laws. The vast majority of forest operators are fully compliant with government regulations that protect forest values and public revenues.

If you have information about a forestry crime, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or contact your nearest Ministry of Forests and Range office.

-30-

Media Jennifer McLarty
contact: Public Affairs Officer
 250 387-4592

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.