

Job Story

B.C. BEETLES FIND WORTHY OPPONENT IN VOLVO

Purpose-built Volvo B-Series excavators are helping control spread of mountain pine beetles

ENDERBY, B.C. – Mitch Smith is a logger, not a bug exterminator. Still, Smith and his MiBar Logging crews are on the job around the clock helping rid British Columbia of the mountain pine beetle, a small insect that is wreaking havoc on the province's rich lodgepole pine forests.

Logging in western Canada has always been king. Of late, it has become a 24-hour, seven day a week job as foresters like MiBar are feverishly working to eradicate the dreaded mountain pine beetle. Stopping the voracious mountain pine beetle through mass harvesting of timber is critical to the future of the forest industry not only in Canada, but elsewhere around the globe.

The mountain pine beetle, less than a half-inch long, lives most of its life under the bark of pine trees. Normally these bugs attack old or weakened trees, speeding the development of a younger forest. However, unusual hot and dry summers, combined with mild winters in British Columbia during the last few years, have lead to the largest mountain pine beetle epidemic that Canada has ever seen. To date more than 21 million acres have been destroyed by beetles.

The Battle Begins

The sun has barely peeked above the horizon as Mitch Smith, owner of MiBar Logging, quietly closes the door on his home in Enderby, B.C. and heads out to



Mitch Smith of MiBar Logging says Volvo is helping him get the job done in British Columbia.

the jobsite for another sixteen hour day of supervising the harvesting of heavy pine in some of the roughest, most unforgiving territory that the Canadian Rockies can dish out.



On this job site, a cut block almost 60 miles into the heart of the Cascade mountain range, MiBar crews are operating three Volvo purpose-built forest excavators that MiBar has recently purchased from Great West Equipment, Vernon, B.C.

MiBar crews have been very productive on that site, Smith says, due in large part to the Volvo excavators, including a Volvo EC240B BF fitted with a custom, purpose-built, high forestry cabin and log loading grapple. The EC240B BF is

powered by a highly reliable and fuel efficient 7.1 liter, 180 hp turbocharged, electronically controlled, 4-stroke diesel engine and a variable main hydraulic pump that work seamlessly together in all working and load conditions. "That Volvo machine is ideal for this job," Smith said.

"We are currently operating 10 forest machines, including our three Volvos," Smith said. "Quite frankly, the Volvos give us the best bang for the buck. We've had very little downtime, and as far as productivity and fuel efficiency goes, they are at the head of the class."

He added, "We keep a very close record of our fuel consumption and in any given shift each Volvo uses 25 to 30 fewer liters (6.5 to 8 gallons) of fuel than our comparable machines."

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“THE GREATEST MACHINE I HAVE EVER OPERATED.”

As he does daily, Smith checked with the EC240B BF operator to get a report on its performance. As usual, he found there have been no problems, no downtime and just routine maintenance. “That machine was getting the job done just as it has from day one,” Smith said.

“The design of our EC240B BF, with its forestry-specific boom and arm, provides exceptional lifting ability and minimal tail swing,” Smith said. “That makes it especially well-suited for log sorting and loading in very tight conditions. Certainly this landing is no exception.” In a full tree logging operation like this the stems are often over 15 meters (50 feet) long and the loader must work within just a meter or two (4 to 8 feet) of the truck and trailer while loading to a height of over four meters (13 feet).

Dealer Support is Important

Prior to purchasing his first Volvo excavator, Smith said, he was very knowledgeable about what the competition had to offer, and that he was very impressed by both Volvo and Great West Equipment. “Anyone can sell you a machine, but it is very important to have exceptional after-sale service,” he said, acknowledging the attention MiBar receives from Great West general manager Roger Dobie. “Roger and his crew are just that, exceptional.”

Moving into the jobsite, Smith approached his EC210B BF – fitted with a Waratah 622 harvesting/processing head. He noted that this shift must have gone very well as the processed



Built for tough forestry work, the Volvo EC290B BF is a favorite of MiBar Logging operators.

deck of logs has indeed grown substantially overnight. Harvesting on this cut-block is varied, as many stems are 60 cm (24 inches) or greater on the butt while others are 20 cm (8 inches) or less. “The fast, smooth cycle times of the Volvo engine and its matching hydraulics handle all that with ease,” he said.

MiBar operators, to a person, claim to enjoy the comforts of the Volvo cab. In summer the temperatures can reach well over 30°C (86°F), and they find the quiet, fully climate-controlled cabin to be a great place to work, shift in and shift out. When the cold winds of the mountain winter arrive, there isn't an operator who doesn't appreciate the heated seats that are standard on all North American Volvo forestry machines. Smith attributes the comforts of the cab, the ergonomically positioned controls and superior operator visibility for decreased operator fatigue and increased productivity. “The Volvo cabs are quiet, comfortable and extremely safe,” he said. “These are all qualities that are very important to both myself and my operators.”

Bottom Line is Performance

Austin O'Brien, MiBar's most senior operator, has been charged with building logging roads through what could best be described as extremely unfriendly terrain. Strewn with boulders the size of compact cars, huge tree stumps and laced with swamps and creeks, O'Brien calls this “an ugly place to work.” But this is where O'Brien and MiBar's newest Volvo, an EC290B BF equipped with an excavator bucket and thumb, are hard at work pulling stumps, digging ditches, placing culverts and making every effort to level the ground for what will become a super highway for a large fleet of logging trucks.

A veteran of many challenging logging operations, O'Brien was asked how he liked this new Volvo excavator. He said simply, “This is the greatest machine I've ever operated.”

“I've run excavators from every major and minor manufacturer, and I just love this Volvo,” O'Brien said. “It's fast, powerful, stable and easy to maintain. It's the best.”