

May 11, 2005

Chair Ed Steeves and Board of Directors
Sunshine Coast Regional District
Sechelt, BC

Dear Chair Steeves and Board Members:

Re: A Probationary Community Forest Licence Application on the Sunshine Coast

Having followed the Community Forest debate for some time and in reaction to the District of Sechelt's obviously genuine belief that the CF will be looked upon as a good thing 50 years into the future, I would like to add a few comments. These comments are based upon approximately 15 years of completely voluntary interest and participation on land use planning processes on the Sunshine Coast, particularly those involving timber supply, parks and public drinking water.

I accept that the District believes the CF will be a good thing for the Sunshine Coast. I believe that Council needs more information or could risk appearing foolish in retrospect, instead.

Background

Extremely poor resource planning has been the norm on the Sunshine Coast since the Socred government of the day decided to create the resort municipality of Whistler. To compensate for reductions to the provincial AAC that would be required to protect the Whistler corridor viewscape for tourists, the Sunshine Coast became 'the anything goes zone' so that there would be no net loss to the AAC. That is why no matter that we live in one of the most beautiful and diverse ecosystems in Canada with some of its most accessible recreational opportunities only 3% was allotted for protected area. This is why community watersheds have been logged within an inch of their lives. Viewsapes have been badly scarred and visual quality objectives have been unilaterally downgraded. We have landscape units (used for MOF and MSRM planning purposes) with less than 3% old growth remaining. You don't have to be a tree hugger to see where this is going...

The Sunshine Coast is predicting a population explosion.

Chapman and Gray Creeks are currently the only viable water sources that can be developed for community water supply.

Global warming is now recognized and the Sunshine Coast already has a prolonged drought period during which water rationing and now even water metering is being considered. The SCRCD and the District of Sechelt receives drought management funding from the province. Can we really afford to turn over a designated community watershed reserve, for timber supply?

Why do 'environmentalists' keep harping about logging and mining in the community watersheds?

Closed canopies characteristic of mature old growth forests keep watersheds cool and greatly lessens the loss of water to the air. Tall forests 'comb' the atmosphere, which causes airborne water droplets to condense on their foliage and drip to the ground where, even during the summer, the drops percolate through the moss and soil before eventually making their way downhill to be collected by stream beds and channeled to the sea (or our water intakes).

Both Chapman and Gray Creeks have already been over logged. There have been over 500 landslides in the two community watersheds. Our period of drought has lengthened. It now starts earlier and ends later, which can be directly correlated with the cumulative clearing of mature forest. Hydrologists come to these two famous watersheds to study 'what not to do'.

It has also cost *twenty million dollars* so far to do long-neglected road maintenance in the community watersheds. Mass wasting continues and will continue until the watersheds attain the stability inherent in mature forest cover, where the interwoven roots form a net holding the land together. This will happen only over the long term because of the extent of past damage.

Chapman and Gray Creeks are Land Act Community Watershed Reserves deemed to be active until 03/06/9999 (7994 years hence). These are long term designations intended to protect the community's long-term interests versus the short-term interests of any particular party or government. Technically, the SCRDC has the right to request and acquire *Land Act* leases for the protection of community water supply on these two watershed reserves, as a number of other jurisdictions in BC enjoy.

Why do you think Forests' District Manager Greg Hemphill keeps insisting that the watersheds must be part of the CF?

The Ministry of Forests wants the community to accept this unasked for deal because the community watersheds *are not currently available for timber supply*. This can be confirmed even by looking at the DOS Timber Supply Analysis, where the 'Currently Available (years)' field is set at 0 for both watersheds. Mr. Hemphill is concerned that there has not been any logging in these watersheds since 1993. Technically, they are no longer contributing to timber supply and haven't been for two timber supply review cycles. The entire logging chart containing these watersheds (the main body of the CF) is *depleted*. Interfor had requested a number of extensions to their last Five Year Development Plan before they abandoned it because they still could not materialize the timber. A word of caution: the list limiting factors at the bottom of the DOS CF timber supply analysis prove to be exactly the same factors that caused Interfor to abandon the area

I feel it is accurate to say that this is a barely concealed attempt by the Ministry of Forests to co-opt a community forest from the residents of the Sunshine Coast in order to legitimize past actions by the MOF. Once we, the community, agrees to the inclusion of the community watershed reserves in the CF under Forest Act legislation we will have given away all rights to stop any other industrial activity such as logging and mining from proceeding in them. The CF as delineated would also give tacit agreement to the BC Timber Sales that have grown alarmingly in the Chapman Creek watershed since the IWMP was completed, but not ratified by the community.

No offense intended, but it seems to be apparent that the District of Sechelt has been targeted for 'the invitation' because they have been the least involved and thus least knowledgeable local jurisdiction about environmental issues. To compound this problem they have been extremely poorly informed by their consultant.

Since the 1970s when John Hind Smith first raised the alarm about the damage occurring in the watersheds, the SCR D has consistently faced off against activities that have compromised this critical community resource. The SCR D has the legal requirement to provide potable drinking water to the Sunshine Coasts residents, but has had all formal legal mechanisms and administrative instruments clearly created for such a purpose withheld by the provincial government.

Much has been made of the 'silent majority' support for the CF. The public believes strongly in its right to protect water supply from damage and diminishment. The recent 5200-signature petition is clear – no to more industrial activity in both watersheds.

Should the SCR D *agree* to a political solution that will see the community watersheds become legally subject to the Forest Act, as will be the case?

No, not if the SCR D wants to have a legal leg to stand on, on behalf of this community's water supply. Good forest practices *mean* honouring the watershed reserve designations. There is simply no substitute for the natural scheme of things where water is concerned.

Yours truly,

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