

## Logging in Our Watershed

When I awoke to the sound of chain saws and feller bunchers on the front face slopes of Shawnigan Lake last January I was horrified. How in this day and age was a forest company justified in creating a massive eyesore in a major recreation and residential area? How could competent authorities allow a significant intervention in a public watershed without so much as a “how-do-you-do” to the people using the water? As Chair of the province’s Forest Practices Board, I was used to the care and attention paid to both watershed and visual impact by forest companies operating on crown land. Of course the work done at Shawnigan was conducted on private land where the regulatory requirements are much less exacting and the audit scrutiny thinner on the ground.

I asked the CVRD Environment Commission and, through them, the CVRD Board to carry a complaint to both the Private Managed Forest Land Council that is supposed to be looking after private forest operations and to the Ministry of Forests. The CVRD Board agreed to act and quickly met with both parties. The approach was to ask government to insist on the same standard of practices on private forestland that they require on public land. Board members met a second time with the Minister responsible for forests at the September meeting of the Union of BC Municipalities to ensure that the issue would not be ignored. As a result, forestry officials are conducting a review of the Shawnigan clearcut. The Regional District expects to get a considered response from government and we should be vigilant to ensure that the response is satisfactory.

Below is the first document that I presented to the Regional District in February 2011 to propel this initiative.

With respect to the logging that has been conducted during January/February 2011 on the west shore uplands of the Shawnigan Lake Watershed the following questions will be asked at the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Environment Commission:

1. Who is the owner of the forestland that has been logged?
2. Who actually planned the logging layout?
3. Who conducted the logging?
4. Was the Regional District informed of the impending logging or consulted prior to the onset of logging with regard to the anticipated visual impact on the lake environment or the hydrological impact to the watershed?

5. Given the size of the opening, what specific professional considerations were given to the visual and hydrologic impacts?
6. Are the conduct of the planning, consultations and logging practices consistent with the private managed forestland regulations and the forest certification obligations of the company?
7. Is the logging that has taken place consistent with the environmental management intentions of the draft OCP for South Cowichan?
8. Has there been any indication that the logged land will now be put forward for sale and subdivision?

If the answers to these questions indicate that the Regional District was not systematically informed, or consultations were not carried out, or that professional consideration of the impacts were not made or that they are inconsistent with the practices normally required by the private managed forest land regulations or the certification body, or withheld due to “private corporation” privilege and if the rapid completion of the logging is in any way anticipatory of the conditions of the OCP that might have led to lesser impacts, or that the corporate intention is to create further rural settlement sprawl, then serious remedial action needs to be taken on behalf of Shawnigan residents whose visual backdrop has been affected, whose water supply may be affected and whose OCP intentions may be bypassed.

This note constitutes notice of motion for the March meeting of the Environment Commission. In the case of unavailable or unsatisfactory answers to the above questions...

**Be it resolved that the Environment Commission recommend to the Regional District Board that a formal complaint be made to the Private Managed Forest Land Council regarding the situation and a formal response from them be provided to both the Regional District and the Environment Commission.**

Failing a satisfactory response from the PMFLC, then

**Be it resolved that the Environment Commission recommend to the Regional District Board that it make urgent representation to the Minister of Forests to invite the Forest Practices Board to conduct an audit of the oversight practices of the Private Managed Forest Land Council with specific reference to the Shawnigan Lake Westshore Logging Practices and their outcomes.**

Failing a thorough and satisfactory airing of and resolution to the issues involved and a commitment to avoidance of any repeats of the situation, then

**Be it resolved that the Environment Commission recommends to the Regional District Board that they lodge a formal complaint with the relevant Forest Certification body and request both a formal audit and that the results of the audit be provided to the Board and the Commission.**