

I am presenting this report on behalf of the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club which is located in central Vancouver Island.

Twenty years ago, almost all the forest land around here was managed under the Tree Farm License system. The tenure holder, beginning with Macmillan Bloedel, and then Weyerhaeuser, had their TFL44 sustainably certified under the Canadian Standards Association, which requires a public advisory committee for oversight, giving us a forum for input on recreation values. With information provided from all outdoor user groups we inventoried the logging road network and compiled a list of the important roads to keep publicly accessible.

However, once the private lands were removed from the TFL, we lost any input to over half of our most important areas for recreation, and in recent years we are finding that even access to these roads is being increasingly restricted. I realize that this is outside of the scope of your inquiry, but I think government intervention will be required if there is to be any public access to the private forest lands on Vancouver Island in the future. This is a particularly important issue here because the south access to Strathcona Park, and the only access to several BC Recreation Sites and two Regional Parks is through private forest lands and these areas are now cut off from public access most of the time.

Shortly after the private land was removed from the TFL, additional sections were put under the jurisdiction of BC Timber Sales, who became certified under the American SFI standard, which does not require any public advisory board. We felt we were losing input into almost all of our important recreational areas.

However, in the last few years we have established a better relationship with the Ministry of FLNRORD. We are now considered a stakeholder, and get invited to provide input to Forest Stewardship Plans (generally a meaningless exercise since the area under consideration is so large), and to see the layout of the upcoming year's cutblocks. However, since recreation is not a value that is managed for under FRPA, there is very little difference that our input can make.

We have noticed that in the last few years there has been a great increase in the number of people using the backcountry for recreation, especially in the 20 to 40 year age range, and often with dogs. They are looking for new trails to hike, especially those with scenic alpine views. And there are more families with young kids who are wanting a safe beach at a lake or river where they can picnic or camp. Our parks (at least those within a day's drive of population centers) are already at their maximum capacity on many days. Many areas in the working forest could be used for recreation without significantly reducing the annual cut—alpine and sub-alpine areas are mostly unproductive, and riparian areas are usually protected. Even some prime low-level old-growth areas may prove to be more valuable protected as tourist attractions that they would be if harvested. Making it easier for the public to access these areas also reduces the pressure on the provincial parks, and a modest fee for camping might offset some of the costs involved.

We would also like to see changes in the road deactivation requirements. Mainlines, even when not in use, should be kept in drivable condition, at least for 4WDs. This would allow faster transport of fire-fighting equipment if needed, as well as providing access to the lakes and streams in each valley. As well, we would like to recommend that specific branch roads leading to high value alpine recreation areas also be kept 4WD accessible. This could be accomplished at

very little extra cost if the waterbars and cross-ditches were constructed to the standards that are laid out in the BC Resource Roads Engineering Manual. There appears to be a wide disparity in the skills of different machine operators, but an insistence on wide swales and moderate approach/departure angles would serve both to protect the road and the vehicles using it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this subject, which is becoming increasingly important. I am reminded of the slogan "Share the Forests" from 20 years ago. Now again, there are pressures on the forest from many directions, and this motto is more timely than ever.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Carlson
for AVOC