

SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning and Community Development Committee – May 10, 2018

AUTHOR: Julie Clark, Planner

SUBJECT: BC TIMBER SALES OPERATIONS 2018-2022

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the report titled BC Timber Sales Operations 2018-2022 be received;

AND THAT the SCR D respond to the BCTS referral with the following comments:

1. The SCR D does not support logging license A91376 located on District Lot 1313, which should be reserved for environmental protection as per ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and the Skwxwú7mesh Nation;
2. A strategy for the protection and/or restoration of trails surrounding cut blocks G041C4F6 (West Sechelt), G042C4F8 (Mt. Elphinstone), G043C3ZJ (Mt. Elphinstone), Licence A93884 (Mt. Elphinstone) G043C3ZH and G043C3ZP should be confirmed with local trail groups;
3. Public safety measures be implemented to communicate forestry activity to recreational users, including signage posted on all recreational trails leading to cut blocks, specifically G041C4F6 (West Sechelt), G042C4F8 (Mt. Elphinstone), G043C3ZJ (Mt. Elphinstone), Licence A93884 (Mt. Elphinstone) and G043C3ZH and G043C3ZP;
4. In support of monitoring and protection for marine life near logging activity, SCR D recommends that BCTS commission eelgrass mapping in coastal and tributary areas near proposed logging activity in Jervis Inlet - Hotham Sound, Deserted Creek, Brittain River, as well as coastal and tributary areas of Howe Sound near proposed logging activity - Rainy River, McNair, McNab and Potlatch Creeks, and that the mapping data be shared with the SCR D;
5. Ensure that both *shíshálh* Nation and Skwxwú7mesh Nation are consulted and that all harvesting-related activities undertaken comply with the *Heritage Conservation Act*;

AND FURTHER THAT SCR D's position on logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds be conveyed to the Ministry of Forests Lands Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to request that a clear limit of zero risk to drinking water quality and quantity be established including:

6.
 - a. **Define a drinking water protection strategy for proposed forestry operations that has the goal of achieving zero turbidity, zero sediment and zero pathogen input to nearby creeks or streams from forestry activities;**
 - b. **Establish a monitoring and data sharing program**
 7. **The forest in the Coastal Douglas Fir Biogeoclimatic Zone be removed from the Timber Harvesting Land Base.**
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BACKGROUND

On March 7, 2018, the SCRD received a referral from BC Timber Sales (BCTS), Sunshine Coast Natural Resource District regarding 2018-2022 Operational Plan Information Sharing.

Each year SCRD receives a 5-year operating plan from BC Timber Sales (BCTS) as a referral for comment. BCTS shares proposed harvesting and road building activities in order to understand stakeholder interests in advance of anticipated harvesting. Operational plans are guided by the Chinook Region's Forest Stewardship Plan, which is updated on a 5-year cycle. The current Forest Stewardship Plan was recently updated and provides direction for 2018-2022.

In response to the operational plan referral, SCRD submits comments in consideration of local land use planning, environmental leadership, community interface concerns and other community interests. SCRD relies on data and feedback from a variety of sources to prepare comments, such as: Official Community Plans, Advisory Planning Commissions, Natural Resources Advisory Committee, Sunshine Coast Trails Society, species mapping, heritage protection, and trails.

BCTS is a Provincial Corporation who is responsible for harvesting approximately 20% of British Columbia's Annual Allowable Cut and operates under the legislative and regulatory frameworks of the *Forest Act*, *the Forest Range and Practices Act*, *the Wildfire Act*, *BCTS Regulation* and *the Wildfire Regulation*.

BCTS has a mandate to provide credible representative price and cost benchmarks through auctions of timber harvested from public land in British Columbia using sound forest management practices.

BCTS has a mandate to harvest 313,027m³ of timber annually in the Sunshine Coast Natural Resource District, which includes the area of the SCRD and Powell River Regional District. To achieve its mandate, BCTS attempts to distribute the cut blocks across the Sunshine Coast, rather than harvesting 313,027 m³ in one area at one time. This includes harvesting timber in Community (drinking) Watersheds. The harvest level is averaged over a five-year period and if not met each year, the level accumulates each successive year until it is met.

In January 2000 the Board adopted resolution 27/00, Recommendation No. 13 which declared that the SCRDC is not in favour of logging in designated community watersheds or watershed reserves. Since then, staff have endeavoured to review resource referrals with this resolution as a guiding principle. This long-standing position has been held for the purpose of protecting water quality to drinking water standards.

In March 2011 the Board adopted resolution 147/11, Recommendation No. 9 which stated (in part) that the SCRDC does not support logging in the Dakota Community Watershed.

In 2016 and 2017 the SCRDC adopted resolutions which maintained the SCRDC's position that it does not support logging in the community watersheds or watershed reserves for the purpose of protecting water used for drinking. In response to the 2017-2021 BCTS Operations Plan, the SCRDC refined its position regarding logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds. In support of protecting drinking water, a clear limit of zero risk to drinking water quality be established to protect from impacts of sediment, turbidity and pathogens.

Forestry activity can result in risks to water quality. Activities, such as road construction and harvesting have the potential to affect runoff patterns and stream flow as well as increase the risk of erosion, landslides and mass wasting, thus increasing sediment loading in the stream system and increasing turbidity levels in receiving waters.

SCRDC position on forestry activity in Community (drinking) Watersheds is that zero risk to drinking water quality associated with sediment, turbidity or pathogens is acceptable.

2018 Referral

The purpose of this report is to obtain SCRDC Board direction on the following:

- 2018-2022 BCTS Operations Plan referral comments
- That the SCRDC's position on logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds be conveyed to Ministry of Forests Lands Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) to request that a clear limit of zero risk to drinking water quality be established.

DISCUSSION

A summary of previously referred cut blocks is provided below. Comments are provided regarding newly referred cut blocks added for 2022. Staff prepared two maps that include the proposed cut blocks in the SCRDC (Due to file size, these maps are hosted on the website and not included in the agenda package <http://www.scrdc.ca/agendas-2018>). BCTS has provided a summary spreadsheet of 2018-2022 Operations Plan (attachment A) and their referral maps can be viewed online at <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/BCTS/areas/TCH/FSPDSC-IS-2-2017.htm>. Cut blocks and their corresponding BCTS map sheet are referred to throughout this report.

Previously referred cut blocks:

- A total of 9 cut blocks remain in community (drinking) watersheds (8 in Dakota Community Watershed, 1 in McNair Community Watershed), scheduled for auction between 2018 and 2021.
- Mt. Elphinstone cut block G043C3ZP located on DL 1313 (Elphinstone map sheet) has been delayed another year to enable the SCRDC to continue dialogue with the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and FLNRORD. It is now scheduled for auction in 2019.

In 2016, the Board resolved that the SCRDC maintain its position that it does not support logging license A91376 located on District Lot 1313, which should be reserved for environmental protection.

It was noted by BCTS that delaying harvest of DL 1313 increases pressure to harvest timber in other areas within the 1,500 hectare proposed Mt. Elphinstone park identified in the Roberts Creek Official Community Plan (OCP) Map No. 2.

The following table is a summary of previously referred cut blocks that have immediate proximity to existing trails.

Cut block or license	Year to be auctioned	Map Sheet	Trails Affected	Electoral Area
G041C4F6	2018	West Sechelt	Short and Sweet	B
A93884	2018	Elphinstone	Wagonroad Access 1&2, Trailfest Wagon Road, Jones, Davie, Svenn's Sortie, Plus Vite, Dale's Connector, Caroline's Connector and Lower Caroline's.	D
G042C4F8	2019	Elphinstone	Hijacked, Amuse Bouche, H'ors D'oeuvre, and Plus Vite.	D
G043C3ZJ	2019	Elphinstone	Pacheko St Trail.	D

Trails provide important opportunities to experience the forest. It is recommended that BCTS continue to work collaboratively with Sunshine Coast Trails Society to inform plans for trail

restoration work and public safety measures resulting from BCTS logging or road building activity.

Eelgrass and Forage Fish

Eelgrass is an important aquatic species for ocean ecosystem health. Eelgrass beds filter water, reduce the effects of coastal pollution and nutrient loading from runoff, buffer coastal areas from extreme weather as well as act as a nursery to forage fish. Eelgrass is important to terrestrial ecosystem health because it functions as an efficient carbon sink. Blue carbon sinks (referring to the ocean plants such as eelgrass) “which cover less than 0.2% of the seafloor, contribute to 50% of the total burial of organic carbon in ocean sediments and therefore rank amongst the most intense carbon sinks in the biosphere.”

The SCRD has access to local eelgrass mapping data has been collected over many years by a consultant on behalf of the Sea Change Marine Conservation Society and the Community Mapping Network. In addition, SCRD has eelgrass data from the Sechelt Indian Government District, Islands Trust and BC Marine Conservation Analysis. Not all areas of the Coast have been mapped.

SCRD reviews a variety of referrals with development applications that could potentially impact coastal environments. Eelgrass mapping data is used in the review process, where data is available, recommendations are made for development that protects eelgrass. Where data is not available, it is recommended that a Qualified Professional is sought to determine if eelgrass is present, and if so, adjust development plans to ensure protection of eelgrass and forage fish.

In the 2018-2022 BCTS Operations Plan substantial logging activity is proposed for the areas of Jarvis Inlet (Hotham Sound, Deserted Creek, Brittain River), Rainy River, McNair, McNab, and Potlatch Creeks. Cut blocks in these areas are near to the ocean or concentrated upstream along major creeks. These cut blocks will increase the cumulative impacts in these creeks and watersheds which have experienced considerable recent BCTS activity and potentially increase impacts in coastal areas.

Available eelgrass mapping data in Jarvis Inlet is outdated (1957-1977). SCRD does not have current eelgrass mapping data for the Hotham Sound, Deserted Creek, Brittain River areas of Jarvis Inlet. To SCRD’s knowledge, no eelgrass mapping has taken place or along the coast of Electoral Area F between Langdale and Potlatch Creek. SCRD recommends that BCTS work with a Qualified Professional to collect eelgrass data in these planned areas of high harvest and road building activity and share the data with the SCRD. If eelgrass were found in nearby estuaries and coastal areas, this baseline data could provide the foundation of a future monitoring program in which healthy eelgrass habitats would be one indicator of successful upstream restoration work.

Newly referred cut blocks proposed for auction (2022)

Eleven cut blocks are proposed for 2022. The majority of these blocks are in remote areas of the SCRD: Hotham Sound, Jarvis Inlet and beyond Port Mellon in the Rainy River, McNab Creek and Potlatch Creek Watersheds.

There are 2 cut blocks proposed for 2022 that are near active trails.

Cut block or license	Year to be auctioned	Map Sheet	Trails Affected	Electoral Area
G043C3ZH	2022	Elphinstone	Highway 103 and West Ridge	D
G043C3ZP	2022	Elphinstone	Guy's Gulch	D

The SCRDR recommends that BCTS continue collaborative efforts with Sunshine Coast Trails Society to develop specific trail protection and / or restoration strategies around proposed cut blocks. Public safety measures and signage on trails near cut blocks would also benefit from feedback by Sunshine Coast Trails Society.

2022 Cut blocks in Community (Drinking) Watersheds

As with previous referrals, cut blocks continue to be proposed within Community (drinking) Watersheds in order for BCTS to meet its mandate to harvest 313,027 m³ of timber annually within the Sunshine Coast Natural Resource District. Cut block G053B4DC (Elphinstone map sheet, Electoral Area F), in Dakota Community (drinking) Watershed is scheduled for auction in 2022.

In support of drinking water protection, the SCRDR is not in support of logging cut block G053B4DC in Dakota Community (drinking) Watershed unless a strategy and monitoring program to ensure zero risk to drinking water is in place.

Provincial Strategic Planning: Forest Management Objectives in Community (drinking) Watersheds

BCTS has recently updated its Forest Stewardship Plan (Sunshine Coast Natural Resource District) in which it has added a commitment to do hydrologic assessments when planning for logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds (section 4.2.5 Water in Community Watersheds).

A letter from BCTS to SCRDR on August 15, 2017 states that this new strategy is “intended to mitigate potentially negative impacts from harvesting and road building at the landscape and stand level, and to set clear limits on risks to both water quality and quantity.” SCRDR acknowledges the addition of hydrologic assessments as an important diagnostic and planning tool but recognizes that it does not comprise a complete strategy. In addition, staff raise the following concerns:

- BCTS states that hydrologic assessments will mitigate potential negative impacts, which suggests a level of risk is acceptable. SCRDR’s position is that zero risk from turbidity, sediment and pathogens is an acceptable result of logging activity in Community (drinking) Watersheds.

- Setting clear limits on risk to both water quality and quantity would require a monitoring and data sharing program

Recent community engagement sessions with BCTS have also emphasized that BCTS is not responsible for this level of strategic planning / setting objectives for forest management through policy and legislation. As such, staff recommend that the SCRCD's position on logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds be conveyed to the Ministry of Forests Lands Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and that clear limits of zero risk to drinking water quality be established including:

- a. Define a drinking water protection strategy for proposed forestry operations that has the goal of achieving zero turbidity, zero sediment and zero pathogen input to nearby creeks or streams from forestry activities;
- b. Implement a monitoring and data sharing program.

To eliminate risk associated with sediment, turbidity and pathogens from future forestry activities in Community (drinking) Watersheds, specific controls must be in place, monitored and reported on.

Additional water concerns: Surface and ground water

Surface and ground water impacts of forestry activity are potential concerns of residents who rely on creeks or wells as their drinking water supply.

There are 380 registered addresses above Sunshine Coast Highway in Electoral Areas D and E that are not served by regional water. The drinking water for these properties is accessed by individual wells or surface water from creeks. Provincial data show that there are 120 registered wells, and 113 registered surface water licenses for this area outside the SCRCD's water service area. It should be noted that the actual number of existing wells is expected to be higher, as registration is not a requirement. This same area interfaces with a high concentration of recent and upcoming BCTS cut blocks (BCTS Elphinstone map sheet). The residential properties dependent on surface or groundwater are all downstream BCTS cut blocks.

Properties above the highway in Electoral Areas D and E are not the only properties depending on water quality and quantity from creeks and groundwater. Within the SCRCD's water service area, which is below Highway 101 in areas D and E, there are 123 wells and 212 surface water licenses that are known.

The table below shows a summary of registered wells and surface water licenses.

	Registered Wells	Surface Water Licences
Outside SCRDR water service area in Electoral Area in D and E (Above Highway 101)	120	113
Within SCRDR water service area in Electoral Area in D and E (below Highway 101)	123	212
Total	243	325

The slopes of Mount Elphinstone above the highway in Electoral Areas D and E (BCTS Elphinstone Map Sheet) are not considered by BCTS to be within a Community (drinking) Watershed, however many properties depend on water quality and quantity for from creeks or groundwater for drinking water and therefore also need clear limits of zero risk to drinking water resulting from logging activity.

Coastal Douglas Fir Ecosystem

According to the Coastal Douglas Fir Conservation Partnership, the Coastal Douglas-Fir Biogeoclimatic Zone (CDF) is home to a unique set of associated ecosystems that occurs on a narrow strip of south-east Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, and the Sunshine Coast. In this region, in the rainshadow of Vancouver Island and the Olympic Mountains, a Mediterranean-like climate exists, and allows for a rich flora and fauna to thrive. The CDF forest is at risk of losing many of the species, relationships, and healthy ecosystems that define it. Confined to a small area on south eastern Vancouver Island and on the Sunshine Coast, the natural ecosystems are competing with human pressures, including development, industrial landscape use, increasing numbers and frequency of invasive species, and increased recreational use.

On the Sunshine Coast, the CDF ecosystems exist primarily between the coastline and the Sunshine Coast Highway in Electoral Area B- from approximately Halfmoon Bay to Wood Bay. Within that area, there is Provincial Land which is considered part of the Timber Harvesting Land Base, which has the potential to logged in the future.

SCRDR acknowledges BCTS's commitment to deferring harvesting activity for the foreseeable future in the rare Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem to ensure conservation priorities are in place (West Sechelt map sheet, Electoral Area B). SCRDR supports removing this area from the Timber Harvesting Land Base and recommends communicating this support to FLNRORD.

Organization and Intergovernmental Implications

The SCRDR and BCTS signed a communication protocol on June 2, 2014. The protocol ensures that BCTS provides timely information about its operational plans and that the SCRDR can provide comments back. Each successive year builds on previous years' plans as new field survey information is collected and stakeholder information is considered.

Staff will continue to work cooperatively with BCTS to identify future opportunities for community consultation.

Timeline for next steps or estimated completion date

As per the Communication Protocol, the SCRDC has 90 days to comment, which provides a deadline of June 5, 2018 to comment on the referral.

Communications Strategy

BCTS staff noted that it is most helpful to receive comments on cut blocks proposed for auction three to five years in advance in order to address comments during forest engineering and planning phases.

This report will be referred to the Advisory Planning Commissions and the Natural Resources Advisory Committee for comment in April and May. A supplemental report including referral comments may be provided at the June Planning and Community Development Committee.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND RELATED POLICIES

Strategic Plan Values: Enhance Collaboration, Embed Environmental Leadership and Support Sustainable Economic Development

The SCRDC is working cooperatively with FLNRORD and BCTS staff to provide comments and feedback on its proposed timber harvesting plans.

Forestry is part of the SCRDC's strategic priority to support sustainable economic development.

CONCLUSION

The SCRDC received the 2018-2022 Operational Plan referral from BCTS and will respond with comments as per the Communications Protocol by June 5, 2018.

SCRDC supports continued collaboration between BCTS and Sunshine Coast Trail Society to ensure trail restoration and public safety measures are implemented for trails impacted by logging activity.

In support of monitoring and protection for marine life near logging activity, SCRDC recommends that BCTS commission eelgrass mapping in coastal and tributary areas near logging activity in Jervis Inlet - Hotham Sound, Deserted Creek, Brittain River, as well as coastal and tributary areas of Howe Sound near logging activity - Rainy River, McNair, McNab and Potlatch Creeks.

In support of protecting drinking water quality, SCRDC does not support logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds. Further, staff recommend taking the SCRDC's refined position on logging in Community (drinking) Watersheds to FLNRORD to request that clear limits of zero risk to drinking water established for logging Community (drinking) Watersheds.

Attachments

Attachment A – BCTS Summary Spreadsheet 2018-2022 Operations Plan

The following maps are available on the SCRD Website (<http://www.scrd.ca/agendas-2018>).
Due to file size, they are not included in the agenda package.

Map of South SCRD, BCTS 2018-2022 Operations Plan

Map of North SCRD, BCTS 2018-2022 Operations Plan

Reviewed by:			
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GM	X- I.Hall X- R.Rosenboom	Legislative	
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