

BC (BRITISH COLUMBIA) TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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A Strong Public Advocate for Legislated Protection of BC's Drinking Water Sources (Since 1997)
(Website: www.bctwa.org)



“COMMUNITY” FORESTRY IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

CROSSING THE LINE

The late 1990s witnessed the creation of a new and controversial association promoting “alternative” forestry in community/ domestic watersheds in BC. Its inception can be traced, in part, to some forestry-minded citizens in the divided community of Harrop-Proctor (west of Nelson City), who wanted to create a profit making venture by logging the community’s three drinking watersheds (Proctor Creek, a Category One Watershed Reserve), against the wishes of other community members who didn’t. Unlike many other communities fighting against the provincial government’s intentions to log in their watersheds, Harrop-Proctor’s community and consulting foresters capitulated, and, giving up the struggle, decided to make a deal with the government of the day (if you can’t beat them, join them). They, and their associates, went through two mutations. First, they joined forces with others intent on similar profit ventures and formed the **BC Community Forestry Association (BCCFA)**, which included the Creston Valley Forest Corporation (CVFC), the Kalso Community Forest Corporation, and the Harrop-Proctor Community Forest Licence holders. Through this newly formed Association they rationalized and then promoted logging in community watersheds.

Then came the second mutation, the “cloaking mutation”, when the BCCFA merged with five eco-forestry societies and First Nation groups (the majority of which were not logging in their community watersheds at the time). Calling itself the **BC Community Forest** (minus the “-ry”) **Association** in March 2002 it consisted of: the Cortez Ecoforestry Society, the Burns Lake Community Forest, the Bamfield Huu-ay-aht Community Forestry Society (now in the Supreme Court challenging BC's timber allocation program, calling it a take-it-or-leave-it policy that could condemn them to the fringes of the forest industry), Kitimaat Village, and Esketemc First Nation. The three “community” groups then devised an “ecosystem” management plan and sought international forest product certification by the Forest Stewardship Council through the Silva Forest Foundation (Silva), the eco-forestry consulting business of professional forester Herb Hammond and his wife Susan. They also solicited political support from prominent environmental groups, such as the East Kootenay Environmental Society (EKES), which is also a shareholder of CVFC, and from other recently created environmental organizations, such as Forest Ethics and Dogwood Initiatives.



Camp Run Creek, a *Land Act* Category One Watershed Reserve, reserved for “maximum protection” in 1973, now under threat from logging by the Creston Valley Forest Corporation, the town of Canyon’s water supply.

Three groups EKES, BCCFA, and Silva subsequently met together with provincial government appointed facilitator George Hoberg in Nelson on June 24, 2002, during the stakeholder review process of the proposed *Results Based Forest Practices Code*, to advocate logging in community watersheds. As troubling, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), which during the 1980s had been a particularly strong provincial voice against logging in community watersheds at Union of BC Municipalities’ annual conferences, also began to capitulate. The RDCK is now a partner with the CVFC, currently logging in the Arrow Creek Watershed Reserve that Erickson and Creston citizens and elected politicians vigilantly struggled to protect from 1940-1996 (see our website, under *Presentations*, for the January 2002 report on the Arrow Creek Watershed Reserve). Government support for Community Forests can be seen for what it is - another attempt to download the massive problems created by its ill-conceived timber supply policies that citizens and municipalities once fought so hard to defeat. And now, as old forest timber supplies wane, eco-foresters are left competing with conventional forestry companies, by promoting their kinder, gentler logging, not in the working forest, but in the public’s drinking watersheds instead.

WHAT STARTED IT ALL?

There is little question that since the 1960s successive BC provincial government political administrations have attempted to alter deeply entrenched public attitudes and have ignored existing provincial legislation and policy on the protection (“single-use”) of public drinking water sources. By March 9, 1981 Mike Apsey, the Social Credit Deputy Minister of Forests, and formerly vice-president of the Council of Forest Industries, informed Cabinet’s



Environment and Land Use Technical Committee that his “Ministry was becoming aware of growing public concern over other use of lands around [drinking] watersheds”. He noted that there was “the danger of losing flexibility and returning to a single use concept of land.” In a joint public relations scheme, government and the forest industry cynically instituted the concept of “multiple use” (later, “integrated resource management”) to counter “single use”. The “multiple use” agenda

was the underhanded and largely secret policy of transferring Public (Crown) forestland dedicated to “single use”, into the operable timber harvesting land base. That went against specific recommendations in the 1944/45 Sloan Forest Resources Commission, and was counter to subsequent directives in Forest Service Inventory manuals.

Consequently, when the provincial land base was dedicated to newly created “sustained yield units” (formerly, Public Working Circles) the Ministry of Forests quietly (but not without severe public criticism) began to move “off-limit” single-use watersheds into the Allowable Annual Cut (AAC). This is the origin of the current dilemmas in BC. **Had these lands been respected, as they were intended to be, we would not be logging or conducting other questionable activities in them, and communities would not be divided and fighting amongst themselves about local entrepreneurs intent on raiding them.** Of course, that was the intention behind it all revealed in internal government documents.

“WE CAN DO IT BETTER” & “FORESTRY THAT WORKS”

Eco-forestry must replace current forest practices in what some generally define as “the Working Forest”, but the term working forest should not include drinking water sources. The only way to include drinking watersheds in an “eco-forestry” plan is as reserve areas, off-limits to industrial activities, set aside for water production. Caught between over-allocated timber supplies and a mounting stand-off between communities and logging operations in community watersheds, local eco-foresters began promoting a lesser rate of cut and by arguing for other logging methods, comforted themselves and the concerned public with the notion that, “we can do it better, we can do it right.” But, in fact, that’s not where British Columbians need better logging practices; drinking watersheds are where we need no logging practices. And, that is what these are - eco-forestry practice runs. By choosing what might be considered the “lesser of two evils”, they are, nevertheless, still guilty of the same poor logic. It’s the act of selling “eco-forestry” where no forestry properly belongs that should be condemned, not the worthy goals of eco-forestry itself.

Part and parcel of recent eco-forestry salesmanship in community watersheds are the very tools used for decades by industry-minded foresters meant to brainwash and trick the public: the old jargon, a misleading refrain heard for more than sixty years, that logging “enhances” and “maintains” water quality and quantity; and the “show me” or “demonstration” forestry tours touting the benefits of logging. Both of these marketing tools have been repeatedly, effectively, and enthusiastically employed by eco-forester Jim Smith, the manager of the Creston Valley Forest Corporation (CVFC), one of the central figures in this most recent assault on community/domestic watersheds (i.e., his report, *Creston Community Forest*, in the Silva Forest Foundation’s 2004 booklet, *The Power of Community*, and the recent Feb.12/2004 promotional feature section in the Creston Valley Advance, *Community logging puts environment first*).

Smith is a long time respected forester, who has many followers in the eco-forestry and environmental community. He recently moved back to the Creston area to the small town of Canyon when the CVFC was being formed in 1996-97 to become its planner and manager. Ironically, twenty years previous, Smith fought beside



BC Tap Water Alliance Coordinator Will Koop was on a tour with Jim Smith (left) and logger Ralph Moore (with EKES) in the upper Arrow Creek Watershed Reserve, September 1998. The group arrived to the area in the photo via a logging road secretly bulldozed by the Ministry of Forests in 1995. Ralph Moore was looking at the straight tall old growth forest saying how great those trees would be for the timber markets. Moore sits on the Ministry of Forests’ eight-member Community Forest Advisory Committee.

other prominent members of the public to protect the Arrow Creek Watershed Reserve from logging. Now Smith is saying things like the Reserve “is also an important recreation area”, contrary to the primary rule of the former Erickson Improvement District Trustees and the Ministry of Health since 1929, which bars public access. The US Forest Service used similar tactics to support “multiple use” of sensitive drinking watershed areas by encouraging public recreation within them. The Ministry of Forests in BC also “partnered” with local recreation groups, then funded the development of public recreation facilities in watershed reserves, for the express purpose of reclassifying them under multiple-use, which, unknown to the public, included logging, mining and road-building plans.

Smith and the CVFC are using public relation ploys to influence even high school students to support their “forest ecology” aims (website: www.crestonbc.com/communityforest/). That’s exactly what the Council of Forest Industries did for decades, coordinated in part through “demonstration forestry” tours.

During the BC Forest Stewardship Council’s review for forest products certification standards in 2001, Smith stated in his submission: **“I am concerned that blanket restrictions on logging in certain HCVF’s [High Conservation Value Forests] may compromise the intent of the HCVF. In the case of [domestic] watersheds, logging should be allowed where it can be demonstrated that management actually maintains, protects, and/or enhances water resources”** (see our Sept.10/2001 submission to the Forest Stewardship Council against logging in community watersheds, posted on our website). Left out for readers, however, is any reference by the CVFC about the relationship between its recent logging activities that began in late 2003 in Arrow Creek and the recent controversy over chlorination and membrane filtration that will cost taxpayers over \$13 million (not including annual operating costs). Now, that’s “forestry that works”, but only for those profiting on the backs of others. The “public” is left, as usual, absorbing the health impacts and subsidizing treatment and future watershed rehabilitation costs.

WHO IS IN YOUR WATERSHED?

Professional forester Herb Hammond, who once supported the full protection of community watersheds, is a very well known and celebrated spokesman, author and consulting forester for alternative ecosystem-based forestry with the Silva Forest Foundation (Silva) in Winlaw, BC. He is well known not only in BC, but also across Canada and the United States. He has authored books on the subject, lectured extensively, given workshops with communities, First Nations, has written or been the subject of numerous magazine articles, has his own school, and has produced numerous alternative forestry plans for many clients. In 1990, at a forum debate at the University of BC, he recommended the province needed to protect 33 percent of its forestlands. He seemed to be a strong advocate for the protection of domestic/community watersheds.



Herb Hammond (middle) receiving the 2003 “Gold” Canadian Environment Award for “Sustainable Living”, sponsored in part by Shell Canada (president Tim Faithfull to right), and federal Environment Minister David Anderson (left). Herb received a \$5,000 cheque for donation to his favourite charity.

Back in 1993, Vancouver-based Greg Helten interviewed Hammond as part of a half-hour video production on the future protection of the Greater Vancouver watersheds, where he commented about the importance of protecting the public’s forest stands for drinking water. Here’s a quote from the video where Hammond summarized: **“If water is the main goal, better let mother nature run the forests, not people”** (*Greater Vancouver’s Water: Our Future*, produced in May 1993).

The Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance (SVWA), which Hammond later chaired, was formed in 1981 as a result of inter-community opposition to proposed logging in Slocan’s drinking watersheds. Due to continued pressure by the Ministry of Forests on the invasion of drinking watersheds, the SVWA announced a logging moratorium in the Slocan Valley in 1984. Hammond also chaired the BC Watershed Protection Alliance, formed in late 1984 after the first provincial FLOW (For Love of Water) conference, followed by a second in 1988. However, at the third FLOW conference in New Denver in 1999, the acronym was co-opted by a small contingent calling it For Love of Our Work, logging instead.

As recently as February 2001, when the NDP government was holding public meetings for the proposed *Drinking Water Protection Act*, Silva signed on to the BC Tap Water Alliance petition, which ran in a number of newspapers (see our website), calling for the re-legislated protection of drinking watersheds.

After blockades in 1997 failed to protect the watersheds in the Slocan Valley and protestors were jailed, the SVWA struggled to stay active and many of the previous directors who advocated “ecosystem-based logging” stepped down from its Board. In 2002 the new Board of directors, realizing that the only sure way to protect domestic drinking water was to give it full protection as was intended for drinking water, rewrote its constitution, calling again for the full protection of drinking watersheds in the Slocan Valley. **A June 2002 public poll showed that 94% of Slocan Valley residents were in favour of drinking water source protection.** The public poll placed ecosystem-based planning far down on the list for support.

In early 2004, Silva published the *Power of Community - Applying Ecosystem-Based Conservation Planning Across Canada*. The 25-page magazine on alternative forestry also features two long articles on community watershed logging in the Harrop-Proctor

and Arrow Creek Watershed Reserves. Earlier sponsored reviews of one or the other are also available in earlier Silva newsletters of 2002 and 2003. There has obviously been a fundamental disconnect from Hammond's earlier views.

COMMUNITY FOREST TENURES AND LICENCES

Under the creation of the Jobs and Timber Accord in 1997, NDP Forests Minister David Zirnelt announced a community forest licence program to grant "communities" local logging and forestry opportunities. It began with an advisory committee (to advise the Minister directly) and the creation of three pilot projects (see the Ministry's website, www.for.gov.bc.ca/hth/community). It was during this period that the Harrop-Proctor group applied for a Community Forest Licence, and is also the period when the Kaslo and Creston groups were granted 15-year non-replaceable forest licence agreements to log in their community watersheds. Under these programs is where the highly controversial issue of logging of community watersheds was introduced and supported by eco-foresters. It effectively redirected the government's policy from

forest company and small business tenures to the "community" tenure rationale, thereby taking the "heat" off the provincial government. And, according to the government's advisory body, which included the Creston Valley Forest Corporation logger Ralph Moore, environmentalists and local government were now supporting community watershed logging.

Currently both the Kaslo and Creston groups have applied for community forest licence tenures to replace their non-replaceable forest licence agreements. According to Jim Langridge, Ministry of Forests Director of Tenures and Engineering, waiting in the wings are between 92-97 provincial-wide applications to apparently include more community watersheds as Community forest tenures.

PLEA TO FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (FSC) UNHEEDED

On September 10, 2001, the BC Tap Water Alliance provided a submission to the FSC against logging in domestic/community watersheds in BC (see our website) after participating in its public input/stakeholder workshop in Richmond, BC, on June 21, 2001. The FSC sought formal input from environmental organizations on forest practices standards for national and international certification for "sustainable" and eco-sensitive forms of logging. However, some of its review panel members were or about to profit by logging in the few community watersheds already mentioned and

so our appeal fell on deaf ears. As stated in our submission: "It is our position that there should be no logging in domestic watersheds, and that the FSC should not support so-called alternative logging tenure applications and practices for certification in domestic water supplies. We believe that it is not in the public's greatest interest and good to meddle with domestic water supply forests. To simply "enhance" them as your text states overlooks the fact that these forest stands are of such high conservation value that they simply should not be logged."

THE SCIENCE OF SOURCE PROTECTION

What is the "science" of source protection, you might ask? Haven't heard of it before? Well, it's the study and advocacy of drinking watersheds maintained in their natural state, a discipline yet to be incorporated in the halls of academia free from political influences intended to compromise them. It's the pursuit of knowledge that incorporates all the natural processes that begin with the heavens showering down rainwater onto the living landscape and the full spectrum of influences that water moves around and through on its way to becoming our drinking water.

What do respected forest ecologists all seem to say and agree about? They agree that intact, old, undisturbed forested watersheds consistently produce the highest quality of water and the most stable flows. The following quote is from the BC Ministry of Forests: "Forests play a vital role in regulating water supply and maintaining pristine water quality in British Columbia. The relatively small percentage of the provincial forest land base that is within community watersheds combined with the high proportion of the population that depends on this type of water supply indicates the high value of forests in watersheds" (*Ecosystems of BC*, February 1991, page 73).

Many of our European immigrants to BC (since the late 1800s) understood well the relationship between source protection and water quality. They wisely fought to bring about visionary

protection legislation in BC as a result. They recognized that undisturbed forests gave us a quality and a regular quantity of water that many places in the world had already lost, having emigrated from those continents where their water had been long since compromised.

After thirty years of having the "quasi-science" of multiple-use foisted on an increasingly hostile public, what are the most recent trends? More and more, drinking watersheds that have been compromised by logging, mining, etc., are being rehabilitated to the extent possible and set aside. They include, the Greater Vancouver, Greater Victoria, Greater Seattle, Greater Portland watersheds, clearly pointing to the inescapable fact that these sources should have remained protected as they were initially intended. And, around the world right now, government agencies are increasingly saying that we must reconsider our actions and move to protect these critical sources, before it is too late.

The BC Tap Water Alliance is a non-profit organization, established in 1997, which relies on public donations for its work. Will Koop, Alliance Coordinator, who wrote this newsletter, lives in Vancouver, BC, and will publish a book in the near future on the intriguing history of drinking watersheds and the public's ongoing fight to protect them.

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