

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting
British Columbia's Community Water
Supply Sources

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ALLIANCE ASKS FORESTS MINISTER DE JONG TO REPORT ON NEW “COMMUNITY FOREST TENURE” PROGRAM THAT INCLUDES LOGGING IN BC’S DRINKING WATERSHEDS

Vancouver - The B.C. Tap Water Alliance has sent a letter to BC Forests Minister Mike De Jong (September 20, 2004) with concerns about proposals to log in the province's drinking water sources under the auspices of his Ministry's new "Community Forest" License Tenure program. The Alliance has specifically asked the Minister to list and report on how many of the more than 90 applications for Community Forest Licenses waiting to be processed include domestic-use watersheds. The Ministry of Forests is currently undergoing an extensive province-wide review process that will transfer a percentage of the Crown forest "clawed back" from forest company tenures to new "community" forest licenses.

The experimental "community-based" forestry tenure pilot program began in 1997 under the Jobs and Timber Accord. A handful of licenses were granted at that time. Eco-foresters (promoting alternative forestry) in the Harrop-Proctor community west of Nelson were granted a license to log in three of the community's drinking watersheds. One of these watersheds, Proctor Creek, is a registered *Land Act* Category One Watershed Reserve, established by a government Task Force in 1973 for "maximum protection". Due to the relentless pressures exerted by the BC Ministry of Forests over the last four decades the desperate community of Harrop-Proctor capitulated and bought into the community license hoping to at least control the amount and method of logging. Similar logging proposals immediately met with intense public protest in two other communities: Kaslo and Creston/Erickson, which now also have logging in their community water sources.

"Community Forests as envisioned by this government are just an extremely cynical attempt to get the public to accept logging in their community watershed reserves, certainly one of the most contentious issues that government and the forest industry have been facing for decades," says Will Koop, Coordinator of the B.C. Tap Water Alliance. "Our government has repeatedly refused to honour the public's wishes and provincial legislation that is intended to protect the public's drinking water sources. By illegitimately dedicating the Watershed Reserves to the Allowable Annual Cut in the early 1990s, government has been able to maintain an artificially high rate of cut for a decade, but now the watersheds must be logged and the public is not buying in. Under the banner of community control, these so-called "community-based" tenures, will conveniently transfer the decades long public controversy from the provincial government to local governments who will end up with the choice of protecting their community watersheds or presiding over unprofitable community forests. The whole project is doomed to failure, at the public's expense."

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For more information, email info@bctwa.org. For a copy of the letter to the Minister of Forests, and to read the BCTWA's latest four-page newsletter on this subject, see our website (address above).