

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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

Supply Sources

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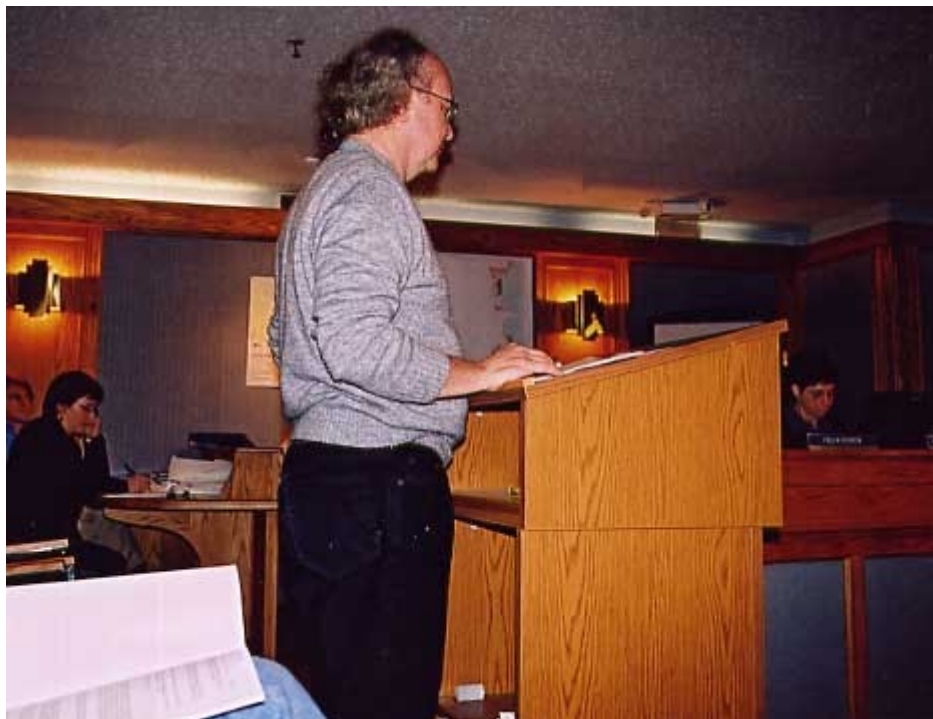
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PRESENTATION TO THE SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT

By Will Koop, BCTWA Coordinator,

November 10, 2004.



Re: Is It Feasible to Protect the SCRD's Community Watersheds Under Community Forest Tenure?

"May you live in interesting times", which contains both a blessing and a curse, became famous shortly after Robert F. Kennedy used it on June 7, 1966 during a speech in Cape Town, South Africa. Scholars have confirmed this is not an ancient Chinese proverb, and the only saying close to it in Chinese literature is: "It's better to be a dog in a peaceful time than to be a man in a chaotic period." Whatever its origin (some believe it to be Scottish), it certainly applies to the Sunshine Coast Regional District and its efforts to protect the community's two Watershed Reserves, Chapman and Gray Creeks from logging and mining.

You are not merely living through "difficult and interesting times," you are very much at the centre of the struggle for control in order to protect the community's water supply from human industry. Due to the intensity and acrimony over the past few decades and the publicity this has engendered, the legitimate protection of your watersheds is apparently considered by government to be an undesirable

provincial precedent, despite the fact that other water users have already re-established complete protection, i.e., Greater Victoria (1994), Greater Vancouver (1999), and Nelson City (1995).

It has been reported that the details of the Sechelt “community” forest tenure proposal have not been formally presented to the SCRD Board for consideration, although it is a little kept secret that the watersheds have been proposed for inclusion. According to a Power Point Presentation to the BC Community Forest Association conference held in Revelstoke, April 15-17, 2004, by Kevin Davie, of Anik Consulting Ltd. (retrieved from website, www.rcfc.bc.ca), that discussion is apparently being conducted behind closed doors with the District of Sechelt, in private negotiations with your MLA Harold Long, and Forests Minister De Jong. According to a statement in the presentation material, the community forest applicants have intentionally “maintained a low profile” within the “community”. If this really is a “community” forest tenure agreement, why is the matter being conducted in secret? Perhaps because the same proposal, which included the community watersheds, has already been rejected by the community, twice.

The immediate question that should be asked is why has the SCRD not been consulted about the supposed inclusion of these Watershed Reserves in the Community Forest Tenure, given the fact that the SCRD has adamantly opposed logging and mining in the two Reserves over the span of some three and a half decades? The simple answer to this disturbing question is that the government, since the early 1970s, has consistently ignored your formal requests for control, and clearly seems to be intent on eventually erasing your, and the remainder of the *Land Act* Watershed Reserves established throughout the 20th century.

In response to our September 20, 2004 letter to Forests Minister De Jong concerning the community forest tenure program, and the inclusion of community and domestic drinking watersheds, we received a letter on November 4, 2004 from Tenure and Revenue Assistant Deputy Forests Minister Bob Friesen. It is very clear from the letter what the provincial government’s intentions are. As you see from the copy of that letter before you, it clearly states:

“Community forest agreements are like any other under the *Forest Act* in that they must adhere to the requirements under the Forest and Range Practices Act, which has been widely recognized as being in the forefront in the protection of the environment, including water.”

In other words, community forest tenures will be subject to the *Forest Practice Code Act* and recent permutations contained in the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Forest Act*, clearly not adequate for protecting community water supply.

With regard to legislated protection and local community control over drinking watersheds, the present Community Forest Tenure program appears to be a shell game intended to trick the public into having the *Land Act* Watershed Reserves legally reassigned to the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. Many communities, which have been very active in protecting their watersheds, are under the mistaken impression that community forest tenures will deliver control and the means of formal protection over their drinking sources. Bob Friesen’s letter clearly confirms this is not the case.

The Harrop-Proctor Community Forest Licensee is logging in a Category One *Land Act* Watershed Reserve, which the government designated for “maximum protection”. The Creston Valley Forest Corporation, which includes the Regional District of Central Kootenay as a recently formed shareholder, has an approved 15 year non-renewable license to log in Arrow Creek a very contentious Category Two Watershed Reserve, and in two Category One Watershed Reserves, Sullivan and Camp Run Creeks.

Yesterday, November 9, 2004, Ron Greschner, presently in charge of the Community Forest Tenures with the Ministry of Forests Tenures and Engineering Branch, informed the BC Tap Water Alliance that his Ministry just sent out applications to the over ninety community forest tenure applicants last week. According to him, there is a 120-day period for applicants to register their tenure interests and provide mapped boundary information. After receiving the applications by the end of next February 2005, the Ministry of Forests will make decisions on awarding the Tenures, probably after the next provincial election.

In other words community forest tenure applicants are now deciding where to draw the lines.

We believe that Community Forest agreements are a good idea originally developed by concerned citizens in the late 1990s, as a reaction to destructive logging practices. **However, such agreements, including initiatives for ecoforestry management, have no place in the public's drinking water sources. We urge you to take this opportunity to restate the SCRD's objections to the inclusion of the Chapman/Gray community watersheds in a community forest tenure, while the applicants are preparing their formal mapped proposal** (November 2004 to February 2004).

In closing, I would like to bring to your attention to another letter the BC Tap Water Alliance received, this one from the Township of Spallumcheen, dated November 3, 2004, regarding our October 18, 2004 press release, *Union of BC Municipalities Emergency Resolution Once Again "Urges" Campbell Government to Protect BC's Drinking Watersheds*, the SCRD's September 25, 2004 Emergency Resolution.

"At the regular meeting of Township Council held on November 1st, 2004 the following resolution was adopted: "That Council of the Township of Spallumcheen endorse the UBCM Emergency Resolution B65 which urges the Provincial Government to protect British Columbia's drinking water by enacting legislation that will empower local government water purveyors to protect the community watersheds used for potable water." The Township appreciates the support of your organization in pursuing with senior government the passage of legislation that will protect British Columbia's community drinking water sources."

Thank you.

Will Koop.
BC Tap Water Alliance

(Note. Along with a copy of the Assistant Deputy Forest Minister Friesen's letter, the SCRD also received the following attachments with the above presentation:

- a copy of our Newsletter No. 2 on *"Community" Forestry in Your Drinking Water*;
- the October 12, 2004 press release, *Sloan Commission Template for BC's Drinking Water: Broken by Government*;
- the May 22, 2002 press release, *Alliance Urges Campbell Gov't to Honour Sunshine Coast Referendum and Petition for Community Control of Drinking Water Sources*;
- and a copy of the 90 more applicant names for Community Forest Tenure proposals provided to us by the government.)