

Disputed lot can be logged

Controversial harvest of DL33 may now happen despite efforts of environmentalists

BY DANIELLE BELL, DAILY NEWS DECEMBER 29, 2010

Environmental groups hope for a strong turnout to a highly sensitive Nanoose Bay forest tour, as a cutting permit they worked to block is now approved.

Snaw-Naw-As Forest Services Ltd. received approval to harvest 18.6 hectares in District Lot 33, through a cutting permit and road permit issued on Wednesday.

Environmental protestors and community governments have supported the ongoing fight to block logging by the Snaw-Naw-As First Nation on DL 33, a rare mixture of old-growth forest. The area is home to a variety of wild and plant life and is within the boundaries of the Mount Arrowsmith UNESCO biosphere reserve, one of only two such zones on Vancouver Island.

There has been widespread support to protect the land, including from Island municipalities, which voted to spare it from logging through the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Associations.

Critics are worried logging the 64-hectare district will alter the diversity of the ecosystem, which they say provides services that include carbon sink offsets, winter flood control, mushroom and salal picking.

At an event planned at the entrance of DL 33 on New Year's Day, organizers say there will be petitions available to continue the fight to conserve the area.

Any ideas to protect the area will also be heard, according to Western Canada Wilderness Committee mid-Island spokeswoman Annette Tanner.

"We're shocked," said Tanner of the permit.

"The interest is huge. The public interest is growing all the time."

DL 33 was identified as suitable for harvesting in the B.C. Timber Sales East and South West Coast Forest Stewardship Plan, approved in 2007 and amended in 2009 to include Snaw-Naw-As Forest Services Ltd..

Snaw-Naw-As has indicated that it plans to log in five openings, totalling less than 30% of the area of DL 33, and not in sensitive wetlands. The permits expire in November of 2014.

There is more than 250,000 hectares of the Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem left in B.C., but only 9% is on Crown land. DL 33 did not meet criteria for selection under the land use order.

By law, Snaw-Naw-as Forest Services Ltd. must reforest the areas they harvest and plant trees that are ecologically suitable for the site. DL 33 is in the Snaw-Naw-As traditional territory.

The public is invited to meet for a guided tour and hot drinks at 1 p.m. at the Nanoose Bay Petrocan station on Saturday.

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