

For Immediate Release

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Co-operation Key to Survival of Coastal Forest Ecosystem

VICTORIA – An investigation report released today upholds a public complaint about proposed logging in a rare forest type near Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island.

Local residents filed a complaint with the board when they discovered about one-third of the 64-hectare parcel of coastal Douglas-fir forest, known as DL 33, was slated to be logged, contrary to provincial government promises.

“In order to meet an Interim Measures Agreement with the Nanoose First Nation, the Province did not abide by its commitment to defer issuing new forest tenures until its stewardship strategy was in place,” said board chair Al Gorley.

As part of its stewardship strategy for the coastal Douglas-fir (CDF) ecosystem, the Province identified 1,600 hectares of Crown-owned forest for potential protection. However, the Ministry of Forests and Range issued the tenure for DL 33 before the proposed protection order was approved, on the basis that it did not include DL 33. The ministry has not yet issued a permit to begin logging.

“Taken in isolation, DL 33 is important, but is not the real issue,” said Gorley. “It is a symptom of a problem that has been more than 100 years in the making. Given the large proportion of CDF on private land, and competing interests and priorities on provincial land, there may be little the Province can do on its own to ensure long-term viability of this ecosystem.”

The Province controls just 23,500 hectares (about nine percent) of the remaining CDF forests, and has protected 7,600 hectares to date. The proposed order would protect another 1,600 hectares. The board’s report notes that the stewards of private, federal and local government lands will have to participate further in conservation if greater viability of the ecosystem is desired.

This is the board’s third complaint investigation involving management of the CDF by the Province. In 2005, the board recommended a conservation protocol be developed before any further logging of CDF on Crown land. Then, in 2007, the board recommended the Province finalize a stewardship strategy for management of this ecosystem.

The Forest Practices Board is B.C.’s independent watchdog for sound forest and range practices, reporting its findings and recommendations directly to the public and government. The board is required to investigate public complaints about forest planning and practices.

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A backgrounder follows.

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