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DL33 not protected

Site called not prime land

By **LISSA ALEXANDER**

NEWS REPORTER

Despite a new land use order by the province stating protection of the Coastal Douglas fir (CDF) ecosystem on Crown land will increase to almost 40 per cent, this won't include the controversial DL33 site in Nanoose Bay.

The majority of new areas selected

for protection are on the east coast of Vancouver Island, between Courtenay and Nanaimo, however, Nanoose Bay's District Lot 33 is not one of the areas selected and resident Kathy McMaster isn't pleased.

"Yeah it sounds really great, but on the other hand since there is so little Crown land they really should be setting aside all that they have," she said.

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Minister leaves for holidays after announcement

Only nine per cent of CDF is on Crown land so this 40 per cent only increases the overall amount of CDF protected from five per cent to about six per cent.

The language is unclear, McMaster said, and the statement about protecting 40 per cent is just "trying to muddy the waters all over again," she said.

Minister of Forests and Range Pat Bell made the announcement on July 30, along with another announcement that the province will protect an additional 38,779 hectares of old-growth forest on Vancouver Island.

Bell left for his vacation shortly after the announcement but his public affairs officer, Cheekwan Ho, said DL 33 wasn't chosen because "when compared with other candidate parcels, DL 33 did not rank as highly as those when considering criteria such as parcel size, adjacency to already protected areas, risk of being disturbed, landscape context, and ecological diversity."

She had also said previously that



LISSA ALEXANDER PHOTO

Kathy McMaster is upset that DL33 wasn't even mentioned in an announcement by the province to increase protection of Coastal Douglas fir ecosystem.

the main reason it was not selected for consideration in the LUO was because the First Nation in whose territory it is located did not support its inclusion.

A recent Forest Practices Board Report said a ground check done by an independent vegetation consultant confirmed that all of DL 33 was

CDF.

In a recent interview Bell said his professional biologist stated it was not "prime" CDF, but he would confirm whether his biologist had made an error.

"A more recent examination by ministry staff, following the release of the Forest Practices Board report, did not alter

the initial assessment that the parcel did not rank as highly as other CDF parcels for potential protection," Ho said.

The Forest Practices Board report also stated in their June report, that in order to move ecosystem viability of the CDF from high risk to moderate risk, the then five per cent of protected area would need to be increased to 10 per cent.

To move it to low risk the protected area would need to be increased to 20 per cent, otherwise the ecosystem would be "unlikely to persist."

With the Land Use order only increasing protection to six per cent the CDF still sits at high risk.

Al Gorley, Chair of the Forest Practices Board, said the announcement was a step in the right direction, but ultimately private land needs to be dealt with, as 80 per cent of the CDF is on private land.

When asked if the government should have protected more in order to bring the ecosystem viability to at least a moderate risk Gorley responded, "they've

got tough choices to make. So they have a bit more under their control obviously but you know they have to make the trade-offs that they have to make."

Gorley said the provincial government has all the information the FPB has and the decisions lie in their hands. Whether DL33 is "prime" or not is a relative term, he said.

"Obviously it's high value to somebody but relative to all the other Douglas fir, I don't know," he said.

Ho said the cutting permit application for DL33 by the forester for the Nanoose First Nations indicates plans to harvest approximately 18 hectares of the district lot and not the entire 64 hectares.

"There is a tenure requirement that a healthy, well-stocked and free-growing stand that is ecologically suitable must be established and maintained," she said in an email.

In a recent interview Brent Edwards with the Nanoose First Nations, said they plan to log this summer.

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