



Battle continues to save Nanoose

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Trying to save an endangered ecosystem is more like a full time job for one local Nanoose resident. But Kathy McMaster said she feels like we're coming to the end of the nearly seven-month battle to save District Lot 33 (DL33).

This is why she has recently sent another letter to Minister of Forests and Range Pat Bell, with an attached report she's been holding on to, until now.

This report, she hopes, will prove that the designation of DL33 as "prime" coastal douglas fir (CDF) is not just a matter of disagreement between one professional and another, as Bell has stated, but the ultimate truth.

"I have had the report since early March but did not make it public as I had hoped [the company with the report] would do the right thing and advise the government they could not harvest in DL33," McMaster said.

DL33 contains coastal douglas fir (CDF) forest that only occurs in B.C and parts of Washington State. Only 9 per cent of all CDF forest left is on Crown land, the rest is on private land. Many residents

and environmental groups have been actively trying to save this forest from being logged since survey tape was discovered on the trees back in December.

After months of correspondence and phone calls to the provincial government and a number of other agencies, McMaster is yet to get any firm answers to her questions as to why this land wasn't chosen for protection in the first place, and whether or not it will be protected in the future.

Although an independent forester confirmed that this land is part of an endangered CDF ecosystem in a recent forest practices board report, Minister of Forests and Range Pat Bell stated that this land wasn't "prime" CDF, according to his professional biologist, and there seemed to be a difference of opinion. He added that this particular part of the region was not of a nature that was significant enough to be included in the Land Use Order for protection. He said he is currently reviewing the FPB report to see if his ministry has made an error.

The report McMaster has been holding on to is an email from a wildlife profes-



LISSA ALEXANDER PHOTO

Kathy McMaster has been fighting to save District Lot 33 from being logged.

sional who was hired by Iverson Forest Management Inc. in Campbell River. This management company was in turn hired by the Nanoose First Nations. In the report the professional states:

"It is my professional opinion that the stands within this licence should not be harvested." She said if the licensee decides to go ahead anyway, she recommends bird surveys be done in the area.

McMaster said this wildlife professional would have been called in by Iverson Forest Management if they had run into a species at risk that they were not familiar with. They are then required to get a report on this species, but that's where the legislation ends, according to McMas-

ter. She said Forest Practices Act allows the licensee to do what they wish with this report, including ignore it altogether. They only have to have it available to government after they harvest, she said.

"It is really in the hands of the guy who is cutting [the trees] down once he's been given that harvest license," she said. "And nobody can get [the report] through [the] freedom of information [act] because it isn't the government that has it, it's the licensee, and that really is outrageous."

McMaster said the management company as well as the wildlife professional are both denying this report.

"She decided that since they weren't going to take her word, that it was dynamite

and she was going to deny it because it could affect her work prospects," she said. But McMaster has a copy of the email and has now forwarded it on to the powers that be, including Premier Gordon Campbell. In her letter to him she wrote

"I call this a cover-up. It is outrageous that a licensee can harvest in an endangered ecosystem in spite of the professional advice received, and your government is apparently OK with this."

She said it was a real struggle for her to come forward with the report but at some point these professionals need to stand behind their work, she said. She did not want to make the biologist's name public at this time however.

Iverson Forest Management Inc. was contacted for comment but did not get back to *The News* before press time. Minister Bell was also not available for comment.

Band administrator with the Nanoose First Nations Brent Edwards said it is probably one of many reports they have received on DL33. But to sum it all up, he said, "We have an agreement with the province to log that."

Edwards said there

isn't much Crown land left available to the Nanoose First Nations, they picked DL33 from a number of lots offered by the province based on the value of the timber, and they are moving forward with that deal.

"If we have an inflammatory remark from somebody in terms of recommendations, we look into those and we try and temper them with what I'd say are the economic realities," he said.

His band has everything they need to access a cutting permit, he said, but they will continue to work with the province to mitigate any environmental concerns. However, they are operating within government regulations, he said.

Edwards said the Nanoose First Nations are trying to set up a meeting with the regional district to discuss some of their concerns. But they have been turned down for other woodlots from the province in the past, and now they are moving forward with what they've been given, he said.

"We're not big, bad loggers, we're negotiating in good faith with the province and looking out for our best interests

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