

Report may change fate of DL33

Forests and Range minister Pat Bell says there's a difference of opinion over the land

By **LISSA ALEXANDER**
NEWS REPORTER

The fate of District lot 33 (DL33) in Nanoose Bay sits on the shoulders of the Ministry of Forests and Range, as they review a document that could reverse an imminent logging operation on that land

The Forest Practices Board (FPB), British Columbia's independent watchdog for sound forest practices, has released a report based on the complaint they received from Nanoose Bay resident Kathy McMaster. Her complaint surrounds DL33, a piece of Crown land that she has been assured contains mature Coastal Douglas Fir (CDF) forest in good condition. McMaster was walking through the forest when she first discovered that there were plans to log the area.



LISSA ALEXANDER PHOTO

Kathy McMaster filed a complaint to the Forest Practices Board and now the Ministry of Forests and Range is reviewing plans to log DL33.

"What a shocker," she said, "Just this last Christmas we discovered the survey tape in the woods, so we kind of swung into action."

Since then she has been working with other organizations in the area that have also

filed complaints.

CDF forest occurs only in B.C. and parts of Washington State. There is only one per cent or less of CDF that is considered "old forest" or "mature". The report states the province controls about nine per cent of

all lands in the CDF, 80 per cent are public land and about 11 belong to federal and local governments.

The report released by the Forest Practices Board is somewhat critical of the government and supports claims it did not abide

by an earlier commitment not to issue new forest tenures in the CDF until a Land Use Objective (conservation protocol) was established. Complaints also question why this 64-hectare parcel of land was not selected for ecosystem protection, and why there appeared to be no public consultation about the proposed logging operation.

Minister of Forests and Range, Pat Bell, said based on information they received from their professional biologist, DL33 is not prime CDF, which is why it wasn't included in the now proposed Land Use Order, and why a forest license was issued to the Nanoose First Nations. The FPB report said based on studies done by an independent vegetation ecologist, all of DL 33 is CDF.

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• The report on the fate of District Lot 33 in Friday's paper indicated 80 per cent of the area is private land, not public as was reported. *THE NEWS* regrets the error.

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First nation poised to log the site soon

"Obviously we have a difference of opinion that's all," Bell said.

"We are reviewing [the report] to confirm whether or not we've made an error here, if we have certainly we would look to review that."

Currently, the Nanoose First Nation has all the documents they need to log — except the cutting permit.

Brent Edwards with the Nanoose First Nation said they have been working for a long time to gain economic benefits within this province, and logging this piece of land would finally allow that.

"We're not a bunch of big capitalists going in there to make money," he said.

"We're a little First

Nation that hasn't had the opportunity to be involved in this economy before.

"The province of B.C. and British Columbians in general have reaped the benefits from resource extraction around here, up and down the Island and in the province, and we're going to do the same thing."

McMaster said she understands the government's commitments to the First Nations, but hopes some other agreement can be made in order to save this rare forest from going extinct.

"They have commitments to the First Nations, yes I understand that, and yes there isn't a lot of Crown land to around in these parts but extinct is extinct," she

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We're not a bunch of capitalists going in there to make money

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BRENT EDWARDS
Nanoose First Nation

said. "If they could get the money that they wanted another way... you can't just magically reproduce a forest like this that has 500-plus year-old-trees; that has extensive wetlands that shelter all sorts of species at risk, you

can't replace that."

McMaster said if the license to log is removed it will free up DL33 for a Wildlife Habitat Area assessment which would identify and document these species at risk, therefore placing it in protection status.

Bell said the ministry is looking at re-evaluating their position based on the CDF, not wildlife or other things.

"It sounds to me a little bit like someone wants to conserve this and is shopping for the best available technique to do that," he said, "and that's not appropriate."

Bell said he doesn't expect it to take the MFR long to review the report and come to a final decision.

reporter@pqbnews.com