

Oceanside Star | Thursday, November 24, 2011

Snaw'naw'as taking 'mushroom pickers' to court

BRAD BIRD OCEANSIDE STAR

The fight over DL33 is going to court.

Snaw'naw'as First Nation took legal action last Friday to stop "mushroom pickers" it says are obstructing the work of tree falling at District Lot 33 in Nanoose Bay.

But the environmentalists, who are trying to preserve the 160-acre stand of rare coastal Douglas fir ecosystem, filed a case of their own Monday in BC Supreme Court, and the judge ruled that both shall be heard this Friday.

"The judge put it over to Friday," said Kathy McMaster, one of the people hoping to prevent cutting in the controversial quarter section. "They are trying to move it from Victoria to Nanaimo."

The "mushroom pickers" do not have a group name, though members of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee are involved.

The First Nation's legal injunction named a few individuals and some 'John Does' and 'Jane Does.'

The band says the environmentalists are halting economic activity desperately needed by their

people. It intends to log about 25% of the forest.

The activists say the survival of an ecosystem is at stake, which should trump short-term economic gain.

McMaster is hoping the Province can compensate the band for the value of the timber and save DL33. There must be another way to put people to work, besides logging rare stands, she said.

She wrote a letter to Premier Christy Clark last week "begging" her to intervene and stop the logging of DL33.

She said she has penned more

than a dozen such letters in the past two years to Clark and former premier Gordon Campbell, but has never had an actual reply from Clark, just from an aide, and holds out little hope that the Premier will do anything.

Unlike the Brown forest in Qualicum Beach or the Moorecroft United Church land, DL33 cannot be saved by being purchased,

because it is Crown land.

"It's ludicrous," she said. "Theoretically we already own it. It's a Catch-22."

Band administrator Brent Edwards said 12 people who could be working full-time are out of work because of the intrusion.

He accused protestors of "digging holes, creating a hazard for loggers."