

Save Our Holmes Society

10694 Youbou Road,

Youbou BC

V0R 3E1

November 25, 2021

Dear Members of the Cowichan Watershed Board,

I write this letter in Youbou, in the territory of the Coast Salish People. For thousands of years their civilization has fulfilled a sacred responsibility to care for the land, the water, and the other living things in the place where we now live.

The Save Our Holmes Society was formed in 2017, after TimberWest announced logging plans at a public meeting. Community members clearly and passionately expressed their deep concerns that slides, habitat loss and watershed destruction would begin as soon as logging roads appeared on the steep slopes above our homes.

What astounded me then and continues to inspire me now is how my fellow citizens feel about watersheds. Protecting the sources of pure, abundant water is more crucial than preventing slides that pose a risk to lives and property, based on the number of times it was brought up at the meeting.

Having said that, slides do remain a very real concern to us. The connection between logging and slides has been understood for decades. However, rains measuring over 100mm per day can also trigger slides. The CVRD's report "A Changing Climate" gave us a sense of what the next decades could look like. Droughts, forest fires, floods and slides are not just possibilities, they are daily news. Intact, diverse forests are our ally in the climate emergency.

We stand firmly in opposition to logging Mts. Holmes and Good, but we stand more strongly for watersheds. It was with relief and gratitude, therefore, that we came across the Watershed Board's submission to the BC government regarding the Private Managed Forest Lands Act.

Although we don't see the Cowichan Watershed Board's recommendations in the revised act, we wholeheartedly agree with all of them. They will guide our initiatives as we continue our efforts on behalf of watersheds and all the living things that depend on them.

The Cowichan Watershed Board's submission says it all: "Sustainable forest management practice goals should be updated to reflect the challenge of managing under unpredictable ecological change associated with a rapidly changing climate –monitoring and reporting is key to learning and adapting. Goals need to reflect the requirement of "whole of watershed" thinking and true ecosystem management at all scales - watershed, sub-basin and site."

We try to imagine what the Cowichan Valley would look like if even these few examples of CWB's recommendations were enacted:

- *Include water quantity as a public environmental value.*

Youbou's drinking water source is Aquifer 190. It is an unconfined aquifer and is impacted by drought conditions. Forests capture, store, filter and release water slowly over the year.

- *Revise riparian protection regulations to account for windthrow and connectedness of small streams to downstream water values (e.g., fish habitat, domestic water).*

On a walk through a proposed cut block, we saw and heard many creeks and underground springs. The springs release into the lake providing cool water for Kokanee salmon. Logging roads can bring springs to the surface.

- *Develop a new legislative tool that can be readily applied to protect species at risk on private forest managed lands.*

Roosevelt Elk are a Blue Listed species. They are thriving in the current conditions on the mountains. The primary potential threats to the rare and SARA protected Cowichan Lake Lamprey from forestry practises include deposition of sediments and fine woody debris, riparian habitat destruction, and changes in hydrology and water quality.

- *Include in regulation the requirement for public access to relevant information and/or studies relevant to public environmental values.*

Information regarding environmental impacts should not be proprietary.

- *Have different protection and reporting requirements (in regulation) for large and small landowners (i.e., comparable to approach on Crown land for small Woodlots versus large TFLs and TLs) to reflect potential impacts to public environmental values (e.g., when a large landowner manages a significant portion of a watershed, protection measures and public reporting requirements need to be more stringent due to the greater potential for impacts). Large landowners jointly establish (and make publicly available) a landscape level, ecosystem-based plan for harvest over time (age-class distribution targets and sensitive areas)*

This would add a level of accountability that is so necessary in these precarious times for watersheds.

- *Private forest land owners should also receive incentives for restoration practices and retaining forests.*

Who could possibly disagree with this recommendation?

The Cowichan Valley is so fortunate that such a thoughtful, intelligent, and principled group of people is working so diligently to protect watersheds and all those dependent on them. On behalf of Save Our Holmes Society, I thank you.

Respectfully,

Karen Deck

President, Save Our Holmes Society