Critique of BC Timber Sales A87124 (TrailFest Wagon Forest)
East Wilson Creek Location
Report Date: 2010/03/31

To support our request for cancellation of the above block, we reference BCTS’ Site Plan with Elphinstone Logging Focus (ELF) providing follow-on comments.

IMPACTS TO TRAILS

1. BCTS Site Plan for A87124 states: “Trails must be re-established or relocated by clearing for a minimum width of 1.0M for the length of the trail any large woody debris, branches, and twigs that have been deposited onto the trail during wind firming pruning, harvesting and road building. When the trails junction with roads, the trail must be cleared to ensure a smooth transition between the road and the trail. Minimize machine traffic on trails throughout the block and retain non-merch trees where practicable within 10 m of the trail from FC to FC 14.”

   ELF COMMENT: The above plan tells us that there will be no buffers on any of the established trails, including TrailFest-Wagon, except for the odd tree within 10 m of a trail. This approach leads to destruction of the existing recreational features of the area. One may argue that trails through a clear-cut can still be used by the public; however the value of a trail leading through a forest cover will be lost from a view-scape and aesthetic perspective. We suggest that the value of the trails post-harvesting will drop to near 0.

2. A subsequent Amendment was made in the Site Plan regarding the above recreational comments. I will not quote all of the details, however some of them include: “There are no legally established recreational trails in the vicinity of this proposed block or roads as per section 56 of the Forestry and range Practices Act (FRPA). However, there are a number of trails for which authorization under section 57 of FRPA have been provided to Sunshine Coast Trails Society to construct, rehabilitate or maintain trails. These trails will be re-established or relocated upon completion of harvesting. In addition, based upon consultation with the Sunshine Coast Trails Society, other trails for which there is no formal authorization will also be re-established upon completion of harvesting.”

   ELF COMMENT: Above points suggest that even though several of the trails in the cutblock received approval to be established under FRPA they guarantee no long-term protection of them. Forestry operations (logging) over-rule their prior establishment. This runs contrary to the other jurisdictions and countries (notable UK) where pre-existing trails have rights to be maintained even with a change of ownership of the land that they may run through. It may be written into the FRPA
that trails can be logged across and re-located, however that doesn't mean it's an ethical approach to take. If logging proceeds, a well established trail will be altered from their present intact state to a line through a clear-cut. ELF does not accept this status quo approach of abusing a high recreational area.

FOREST HEALTH CONCERNS

1. From the Site Plan for this block, it states: “A windthrow assessment was completed by Forsite on March 15, 2010. The dominant winds were identified from the SE and assessment resulted in a high windthrow hazard for portions of the block. This includes the NW boundary running from FC 22 to FC 4 adjacent to the Str 2 and East Wilson Watershed for the southern boundary of WTRA2." ELF COMMENT: BCTS proposes a pruning treatment for this area to lessen the blowdown risk. WTRA2 is the Wildlife Tree Retention Area located in the middle of the block. BCTS is acknowledging that this central protected area will be subject to blow-down, along with the edge bordering Wilson Creek drainage. What we have documented of other tree patches left behind on the Coast is that 30-40% of the trees eventually blowdown, and tree needles are subject to increased sun exposure resulting in drying out of a high % of needles, leading in some cases to tree mortality. The block will be exposed to high (un-predicable) velocity southern winds coming off the Salish Sea, resulting in more forest edge being lost over time. WTRA2 contains blue-listed plant species which become vulnerable due to wind throw (loss of shade) leading to negative changes of the micro-climate of this patch.

SOIL ASSESSMENT

1. The Site Plan notes: "Soil Erosion is high throughout the block due to the Sandy and Loamy soil texture. Take the following precautions when using ground based machinery: 1. Minimize the number of passes on trails, 2. Time operations during drier soil conditions, avoid wet areas, and stop operations if rutting is greater than 16 cm. 3. Use adequate ground puncheon when hoe forwarding. 4. Pull and disperse puncheon with completion of how forwarding. The Max. Allowable Soil Disturbance for roadside work areas is 25%." ELF COMMENT: By using a clear-cut method in this block, large exposed areas will be subject (at risk) to rain and possible rain-on-snow events. These sensitive soils (Sandy and Loamy) are at risk to erosion and mineral loss. As a result, the re-growth of this area will be compromised. The re-established of the trails that intertwine this area (old skids roads, biking & walking trails) to any standard that is acceptable will be highly compromised due to heavy machinery crossing over sensitive soils. Hydrological patterns will be disturbed as soil erosion along road banks will lead to widening of ditches increasing peak water flows.

CONCLUSION

To proceed with logging in the TrailFest-Wagon Forest is not acceptable based on BCTS’ own assessments and the community’s wish for the area to be included in an expanded Mt Elphinstone Prov. Park. We have not even touch upon the relevant subjects of the carbon loss resulting tree cover removal, and the economic loss-opportunity of the government selling carbon offset credits.