ECOLOGICAL REPORT SUGGESTS PROTECTION FOR TWO KEY FORESTS

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An ecological assessment using best available science for two forests located on the lower Sunshine Coast, B.C. suggests both areas are good candidates for protection. The author, Allen Banner, RPBio, RPF (ret) worked as a forest ecologist for the BC Forest Service Research Division for 30 years. He is now a consulting ecologist, recently completing studies in the Great Bear Rainforest and field investigations for the Forest Practices Board.

ELF contracted Mr. Banner to provide plant community assessments for The Clack Creek Gallery Forest situated in the proposed Mt. Elphinstone Provincial Park expansion area and for The Reed Rd Forest Reserve in Gibsons. Banner used a methodology prescribed by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (CDC) for assessing red and blue-listed (rare and threatened) ecosystems and overlaid the areas with sensitive ecosystems inventory (SEI) of the Sunshine Coast, completed by Ministry of Environment in 2005. Two days of field work were completed, divided between the two sites which have been BC Timber Sales (BCTS) planned cutblocks for several years.

“From our own observations of these forests, we sensed that each contained interesting features to warrant BCTS bringing in an independent forest ecologist to provide an ecological assessment. They didn’t so - we did,” Ross Muirhead of ELF states. “Banner’s report essentially states that the Clack Creek Gallery Forest while not technically old-growth (250 years plus), contains significant older attributes as a mature forest, such as a multi-storied canopy, dead standing snags, and a varied understory of plants. Such mature forest containing red and blue-listed ecosystems have excellent potential for eventually providing the full ecological functions of old-growth forests.”

“The Reed Rd Forest Reserve was identified as having a well established understory of sword fern, tall salmonberry, huckleberries, and red elderberry under a canopy of tall Douglas-firs (one measured at 70m tall) with emerging red cedar and hemlock,” says Hans Penner, also of ELF. “The ecological analysis that Banner used, scored each block as fair to good for ecological integrity. He went on to say that this ranking for the two blocks must be viewed in the context of the highly disturbed Chapman landscape unit. Such stands should be considered as candidates for conservation within a much needed focused strategy for rare and threatened ecosystems on the Elphinstone slopes.”

The full report: ‘Ecological Reconnaissance of BCTS Blocks A93884 and A91376 near Roberts Creek and Gibsons, BC’ can be found at: loggingfocus.org

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