PRESS RELEASE
June 21, 2019

CALL FOR TAYLOR RIVER TO BECOME A FISHERIES SENSITIVE WATERSHED

Elphinstone Logging Focus (ELF) calls on the B.C. government to begin the process of designating the Taylor River Valley as a Fisheries Sensitive Watershed (FSW) due to overwhelming evidence that this river is a significant contributor to the Sproat Lake – Somass Rover – Alberni inlet salmon bearing system. In the meantime, all forestry development (logging) should be placed on hold until a review is completed.

The Taylor River system constitutes the main headwaters of Sproat Lake that provides linkage to the Alberni Inlet – one of B.C.’s most famous historic salmon runs. The Taylor is 29 kms in length, draining 65 sq. kms, supporting critical spawning channels for cutthroat and steelhead trout, plus coho and sockeye salmon.

To qualify as an FSW a watershed must meet 2 criteria, 1) they must show ‘significant fisheries values’ and 2) show ‘watershed sensitivity’. The Taylor meets these two criteria due to its well documented large returns, as well as being negatively affected by logging of its valley bottom forests contributing to peak flows which has led to the river breaching off into sensitive channel habitat that fish have relied upon since time immemorial.

“The nearby Nahmint Watershed has much of its headwaters under special management as an FSW to protect the timing of water flows leading into the Alberni Inlet. We believe that the Taylor was overlooked during the regional review of FSW and should be re-considered as it meets the criteria of the FSW designation.” states Ross Muirhead of ELF. “In a June 2019 field visit into the Taylor, we came across a BC Timber Sales planned block A95448 on steep slopes. If the logging of this old-growth forest takes place the river can expect to see increased water flows with unpredictable timing due to re-redireced water pouring off the road system through culverts and over unchanneled slopes. This block is situated in the snow zone and thus will experience rain-on-snow events that creates flash flood condition.”

The Phase 3 of the Taylor River Restoration project to improve and increase the amount of off-channel fish habitat was ironically partly funded by BC Timber Sales, the very agency now planning more logging in the Taylor’s headwaters. The province can no longer afford to have it both ways – extracting timber from sensitive watersheds while trying desperately to protect downstream fish habitat. We urge the government to begin discussions with the original stewards of this watershed – the Hupcasath First Nation to ensure that the natural watershed processes of the Taylor River be conserved through an FSW designation. In the meantime, all planned BCTS blocks that will affect the sensitivity of this watershed to be deferred.

Note attached field notes taken in the Taylor Watershed June 2019.

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