January 16, 2021

Submission made to the shishalh – B.C. Land Use Planning table
by Ross Muirhead, ELF Forest Campaigner

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Section 2

Interest

2. How important are the following items to you when considering and resource management in the swiya?

5. Other (please specify below)

With the increasing recreational use and future demands on the lower Sunshine Coast from within and outside our region, it’s clear that more forest lands need to be secured in some form of protection, such as parks (co-managed shishalh Nation – BC Parks), Wildlife Habitat Areas, Ecological Reserves, Cultural Values Protection Areas, etc. There are only two protected areas above Highway 101 between Egmont and Langdale, The Big Tree Rec Site (44ha) and The Elphinstone Provincial Park (140ha divided in 3 separate parcels). The Elphinstone Park is poorly designed with no connectivity between the 3 parcels, leaving all remaining forests open to future logging operations. People from around the world visit the Elphinstone Forests, mainly to use its extensive mountain biking trails and are shocked when they realize that logging is occurring in this high use area. I support collaborative management of new protected areas between the shishalh Nation and the provincial government.

Section 3

Process Values and Opportunities

5. Other:

There have been several ecological assessments looking at the Elphinstone Forests that should be integrated into this planning process and used to guide decision-making. They are: “Environmentally Important Sites and Streams on the Sunshine Coast”. An initiative by the Federation of BC Naturalists, 1998. Included is a complete list of 165 mushroom species.

“A Conservation Review of the Mt. Elphinstone Provincial Park Expansion Proposal”, by McCrory Wildlife Services, 2015. Included is mapping showing that even though 30% of the
area has been logged, the remaining 70% is critical to protect to secure its rare biodiversity. https://loggingfocus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Elphinstone-Conservation-Review-June-2015-McCrory-Wildlife-Services.pdf

Since this process is going to take until 2023, logging cutblocks could be approved in sensitive areas leading to more biodiversity loss in a landscape with already diminished biodiversity due industrial development. I would like to see a deferral on the approval of cublocks in the Mt. Elphinstone Park expansion area (even ones that overlap the boundaries) and deferral of blocks in all red and blue-listed plant communities across the swiya.

6. As we plan for the future of the swiya, what opportunities do you see in this planning process. Please describe:

As a settler, I would like to hear from a shishalh Elders group or knowledge keepers, about their relationship to the swiya that may include: a field trip, Zoom presentation and stories shared.

Section 4:

Goals and Outcomes

5. What goals or outcomes would you like to see the land Use Planning process advance? Please describe:

The process should include an ecological assessment of the entire swiya examining each biogeoclimatic zone and plant community with the objective of knowing how much is left. For example, in the Sechelt Landscape Unit, the CWH dm zone has only 4.6% of the original old growth remaining. The recent Old Growth Review Panel's report should be integrated into land management. One important recommendation is that any zones with only 10% Old Growth remaining should be protected and remaining Mature Forests be recruited as Old Growth Management Areas to bring up the shortfall of Old Growth. I would like to see the parties agree that future logging planning be restricted to Tree Farms where silviculture (tree planting, thinning) has led to Mature forest conditions. This will result in higher volumes and economic benefit.

Section 5:

Planning Scope

6. Do you have any concerns regarding the broad scale land use planning for the swiya? Please describe:

My main concern is that business interests within the two governments will target and carve up the last of the Old Growth and Mature Forests that are critical to protect at this stage of the swiya’s environmental history.

9. Reflecting on your concern(s), do you have any suggestions for how those concerns could be addressed? Please describe:

One way to avoid the over-reach of future industrial development is by using the best science to guide the future planning of the swiya. Following other high-profile planning process that have occurred in B.C., such as in Clayoquot Sound and The Great Bear Rainforest, I urge the parties
to appoint a Scientific Panel to provide expertise in the ecological sciences to guide land use planning for where economic development (logging, mining, hydro plants, etc.) can take place without impacting the overall environmental integrity of the swiya.