

BC Forest Tenures Branch, PMFL Program Review

To Whom it May Concern,

If a serious PMFL policy review is part of the Coast Forest Sector Revitalization Initiative, then I hope the BC government will finally come to the realization that unregulated overcutting of PMFL on eastern Vancouver Island is a serious ecological problem that has degraded entire watersheds, and foreclosed many economic options for future generations in the forest sector. Forest Sector Revitalization will now take a lot of patience, waiting for forests and watersheds to recover, since there is no magical solution to years of unbridled greed.

Grand theft is generally treated as a crime in Canadian law, but in this situation where large private forest land owners have been allowed to liquidate immature timber resources in just a few decades that should have lasted several generations, the crime is upon unborn victims. It has been justified with the euphemisms of "efficiency" and "economic rotation", embellished with all sorts of reassuring and "green" verbiage designed to convince the public that no significant crime was being committed. This rapid overcutting of very immature forests in recovery from previous clearcutting has produced a flood of small low value logs with a high percentage of juvenile knotty wood and lots of sapwood. This premature extraction is targetting well-adapted native species such as Douglas Fir and Red Cedar that naturally live for several centuries, so the potential of clear durable mature wood like we all still remember, combined with sufficient mature forest habitat for many other dependent species, has been totally squandered.

This flood of "small wood" has not contributed much at all to local community economics, since harvesting, processing and loading ships is all highly mechanized, and any value-added economics offshored, perhaps where wood quality simply does not matter. But if these same trees had been allowed to grow to maturity through good forest stewardship and provincial statute, BC manufacturers of high quality wood products could have build a sustainable economic future around the guarantee of a reliable high-quality clear wood supply, on the very best timber growing lands in BC.

Instead, the second and even third growth in many watersheds is now gone, several downstream communities have received Boil Water Advisories because topsoil and watershed hydrology has been destabilized by the excessive removal of forest cover on steep slopes, and crucial salmon habitat and biodiversity values that have evolved for millennia have been thoroughly degraded.

This inter-generational crime is not unique to BC, but came about through concerted industrial lobbying and a complacent provincial government allowing the PMFL Association to essentially write their own "guidelines". Absent in these standards was a real and enduring commitment to community-based value-added economics, to a non-declining standard of wood quality, and to ecosystem-based watershed management that stabilizes water flows and temperatures, and also provides essential habitat for many terrestrial and aquatic species at risk. The result has been a methodical destruction of all three of these cultural and ecological values, in a region that was once legendary for it's forest bounty.

As a clear symbol of how fast and blind we have rushed from the glory days of the Tall Timber Jamboree to just picking through the guts and feathers, with no serious thought given to carbon sequestration in forests or durable wood products, government officials and investors rolled into Campbell River not long ago to promote the 'wonderful economic opportunity' of building a disposable chopstick factory.

But the only realistic and revitalizing solution now on the PMFLandbase is a serious legal commitment to the kind of forestry that respects and ensures maturity, both in the age of trees harvested, and in how people might best use the wood with a lot more reverence. For the forests, this barely takes "forest management", just a lot more time and human patience. For BC, and especially BC pensioners that now own and benefit from these timber companies, this requires another process of truth and reconciliation about land use practices, and recognition of the "results-based" damage that an anthropocentric focus on short rotation silviculture and a political "freedom from regulation" can cause over such a large area of Vancouver Island's inland landscape.

Then there's the unsettled issue of "The Great Land Grab" (a term used by the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group) in how the E&N legacy was created in the colonial days, and how First Nations on eastern Vancouver Island now have almost no land to build their futures on. But that's another difficult topic for another "Program Review".

Sincerely,

David Shipway
Cortes Island BC