



BC TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION

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Forestry Professional Reliance and Wildlife Management.

A submission by the BC Trappers Association.

Trappers are key stakeholders in the management of the forest. Our livelihood and culture depends on integrated resource management that offers equal values for both wildlife habitat and timber supply. Over the past decade we have watched the forests be decimated by over harvesting with no concern for the conservation of wildlife habitat. Many traplines have lost more than half of their habitat and what remains is isolated and unable to sustain a fur harvest, these lines have been rendered unviable and have caused a direct economic loss to the tenure holders as well as impacted biodiversity.

As individual trappers and as an Association, we have made countless requests and comments through the referral system to integrate forest ecology with timber harvest. These requests have not been heeded and have had little, if any effect on changing the development of the forest land base. There has been no concern for maintaining forest corridors or refugia, no attempt to modify or limit access, no consideration for maintaining and promoting growth of a new forest as well as maintenance of the non-forested habitat attributes required by many species to thrive. The results are obvious, one only has to drive through the crown land anywhere in the southern or central interior where there was a pine forest. The forest lands are now a wasteland. The impacts on their ability to sustain forests has been exacerbated in many locations after the fire season of 2017 that burned the large volume of conifer debris left in the cut blocks after logging and burned the duff down to mineral soil, these forest lands are likely unable to produce trees for generations. This is the result of the professional reliance on foresters and forest companies to make management decisions.

In our experience foresters and forest companies have little, to no knowledge of wildlife management or habitat conservation, and no knowledge of trapping. But in reality foresters and forest companies are the managers of wildlife because they control what happens to the habitat. There have been many cases of foresters and their staff ribboning right over marten or cat boxes or other trapping infrastructure without acknowledging their presence, or leaving marten boxes on single stems in the middle of cut over areas as mitigation. When responding to referrals for development very few foresters are aware of what wildlife species that may occur in their proposed cuts let alone have an understanding of the habitat required and how to maintain its function. Foresters and forest companies have had no knowledge of (or ignored) the implications of the Migratory Bird Convention Act and their responsibility to adhere to this international law, and they continue to rely solely on the presence of wildlife habitat areas (WHAs) or ungulate winter range areas (UWRs) to make any habitat management decisions. These legislated features are less than adequate for the maintenance of wildlife habitat as the demise of moose, caribou and marten has revealed. Access management, a key feature influencing the current decline of moose and caribou is never considered in

referrals. And we have heard of foresters and forest companies defending cutting in the dry interior to enhance forest recovery. This is contrary to the ecology of these sites that support a vigorous understory of conifer that has been released by the open stands, and the sensitivities of the dry soils to impact from logging operations results in putting recovery of the forest back by decades.

Foresters and forest companies that we deal with have no understanding of the habitat requirements of furbearers and the requirements for refugia and connectivity between habitats to allow recruitment of populations and occupation of underused habitat. This basic wildlife habitat management knowledge is key to successful integrated resource management. What we have experienced are professionals and forest companies that only know how to log and have limited knowledge or total disregard for other forest values. As such we suggest that professional reliance in the forest industry has been a failure and resulted in negative consequences to the forest resource and other components of the forest ecology (e.g. wildlife).

To start to remedy the damage the forest lands have experienced over the last decade requires immediate and strong action. The following actions are required;

- The annual allowable cut (ACC) needs to be cut drastically and immediately.
- Professional reliance on foresters and forest companies for managing the forest lands needs to be halted immediately.
- The value of other resources in the forest ecology needs to be acknowledged and protected by legislation, and conservation of other resources including wildlife and management cannot be tied to potential impact to timber harvest land base (THLB) but has to include necessary measures to conserve wildlife regardless of the impact to forest development.
- There needs to be oversight provided that is third party and not affiliated with the forest industry. This should include the development of a government body that is majority weighted by ecologists, wildlife biologists, fisheries biologists, and non-forest development dependent resource stakeholders in addition to forestry industry representation.
- Legislation is required that protects other resource use and quantifies compensation to be received by trappers, First Nations, guide outfitters and other users if forest development supersedes their tenures.
- Long term management objectives need to be identified and forest recovery initiatives need to be implemented immediately which include meaningful consultation and integration of non-timber extraction resource and stakeholder values.
- The Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABC FP), its members and forest companies need to be held accountable for the impacts they have caused on the forest land base and to other stakeholders. What has occurred is the equivalent of industry wide malpractice, and a management subsidy compared with other jurisdictions, and those that are responsible need to be held to account if there is to be any faith in government management going forward.

I trust these comments and observations on the failure of Professional Reliance to include other resource values in forest management will help rectify the matter going forward.

Respectfully;

Brian Dack
President of BC Trappers Association.

