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Sent: Thursday, November 7, 2013 2:34 PM

To: Living Water Smart ENV:EX

Subject: Water Sustainability Act comments

I would like to submit comments from the perspective of a large forest landowner on the October 23, 2013 document. There are seven key areas listed as topics considered in the proposed *Water Sustainability Act*. Our comments by key areas follow.

- The first consideration is to ‘protect stream health and aquatic environments.’ Section 9 of the current *Water Act* has major implications to the ways in which we plan, use and alter our infrastructure network for our operations. Other considerations within the *Water Act* and its interconnections with the *Integrated Pest Management Act* and *Fish Protection Act* dictate some ways in which private forest landowners manage their timber resource over time to its date of harvest. It appears this key area is focussed on understanding and managing base flows within our water systems. What is missing is clarity on i) works in and about a water body; ii) types of pesticide and fertilizer inputs permitted near water bodies (e.g. some chemicals permitted, some not; distance from high water mark); and iii) access provisions/restrictions in boats light of changes to the federal *Navigable Waters Protection Act*. Understanding base flow requirements to ensure our riparian environments have sufficient water over time is also very important for our landscape diversity and overall management.
- The second consideration is ‘considering water in land use decisions.’ Provincial legislation including the *Drinking Water Protection Act* and *Private Managed Forest Land Act* and their respective regulations already address management of water quality expectations for private forest lands. The proposed ‘Water Sustainability Plans’ should consider water needs for our growing forests as they provide several quantifiable and intrinsic values that the public expects.
- The third considerations is ‘regulating and protecting groundwater use.’ Island Timberlands is in agreement that surface water and ground water are connected and both are required for the management of good growing conditions for our forests and the interdependent forest-related values such as fisheries needs and riparian habitats. Island Timberlands would like to see groundwater and surface water licenses provided to only those sources that can track their extraction and use and report it publicly – after all it is a public resource. Water licenses should be considered for crop growers for forest land use as well as other agriculture land use. This information is critical to better develop and project water budgets going forward.
- The fourth consideration is ‘regulating water use during times of scarcity.’ Island Timberlands would like to acknowledge that basic human needs rely on an environment that is also fulfilling its basic needs. This means maintenance of base flows in our water bodies and water access for our growing forests. All decisions should be based on peer-reviewed science using best available information. Each water body, sub-basin and watershed is different. There should be some site-specific considerations made in the management of different areas.
- The fifth consideration is towards ‘improving security, water use efficiency and conservation.’ It is stated that adequate water supplies for agricultural food production are necessary going forward. Island Timberlands feels the same way about water supplies for growing trees – essentially a different type of agricultural crop. An allowance should be equally developed for a “forestry water reserve” similar to the proposed “agricultural water reserve.” Furthermore, the lack of clarity around what ‘area-based regulations’ could look like for land managers/owners is

disconcerting and clarity is warranted. For instance, is this management to remain at the scale of Vancouver Island or be separated down to a watershed level?

- The sixth consideration is 'measuring and reporting water use.' Similar to our remark above, the use of verifiable data is necessary to inform decision makers for water allocation and future use. Thus, consistent water quality and water quantity data would be valuable both for surface water and ground water. Understanding what compliance and enforcement regime will be required, if necessary, and how it will be resourced over time through government party changes is important. The government should not expect many people/organizations to report use unless there is regular follow-up and penalties drawn out in legislation.
- The seventh and final consideration is 'enabling a range of governance approaches.' Island Timberlands agrees that some flexibility may be appropriate in developing an effective model province wide for water governance. However, activity delegation must be clear and only provided to organizations that include landowners and maintain a variety of knowledge, expertise and perspective. Island Timberlands' experience with these groups to date is that if they have a 'centric' focus, such as fisheries management, there is a less collaborative environment and fewer successes achieved than what appears possible.

Please contact me if you require any clarifications.

Cheers,

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