



MAYOR'S OFFICE

OCT 26 2015

VICTORIA, B.C.

Reference: 217899

OCT 22 2015

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
The City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps:

Thank you for your correspondence of August 25, 2015, concerning the logging in the Walbran Valley and protecting the values associated with the old-growth forest.

The lower Walbran watershed is fully protected as part of the 16,450 hectare Carmanah/Walbran Park and the 25,640 hectares of the West Coast Trail Unit of the Pacific Rim National Park. Although the upper Walbran watershed is outside of the protected area, this area has been designated as Special Management Zone 21 (SMZ-21) under the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan and is being managed under a regime that is focussed on sustaining and conserving the unique ecological values of the area. The Vancouver Island Land Use Plan is available online at: www.for.gov.bc.ca/tasb/slrp/plan90.html.

Special management zones are established for maintaining environmental, recreational and cultural heritage values while the principles of sustainable forest and ecosystem management are implemented. Resource activities including harvesting by the tree farm licence holder within special management zones must be compatible with the identified primary resource values, which in the case of the upper Walbran area are: fish habitat, old-growth biodiversity and recreation opportunities.

Approximately one quarter of SMZ-21 is protected solely for old-growth biodiversity purposes as ungulate winter ranges, old growth management areas and wildlife habitat areas. Supplemental to these specific areas, old-growth biodiversity resources are also conserved on the remaining SMZ-21. The area on the north side of Walbran Creek, known as Upper Castle Grove, is part of the timber harvesting land base within Tree Farm Licence 46 (held by Teal Cedar Products Ltd.). Prior to any harvesting in the area the *Forest and Range Practices Act* requires an approved Forest Stewardship Plan that includes results and strategies to meet the objectives established in the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation as well as land-use objectives established in the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan SMZ-21. Site plans must be completed by registered professional foresters that identify how the results and strategies in the Forest Stewardship Plan apply to the site. These plans must be consistent with landscape level objectives and site level objectives for the SMZ-21.

Page 1 of 2

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Teal Cedar Products Ltd., licensee of Tree Farm Licence 46 has been issued a cutting permit to log a 3.2 hectare cutblock by helicopter that is within SMZ-21 and adjacent to area known as Castle Grove. The cutblock is within the five hectare limit for SMZ-21. The development will not impact the recreational features, or significant trees in Castle Grove. The cutblock is on an aspect that drains away from Castle Grove, there are no streams in the cutblock that drain into Castle Grove, and the opening is not expected to be visible from the trails or features of Castle Grove. Heli-logging leaves the lightest footprint of all logging methods. The cutting permit provides four years for the completion of harvest.

The licensee has indicated to the province and other stakeholders that they have future plans for other small cutblocks closer to the vicinity of Castle Grove. The licensee is willing to work with other stakeholders through the planning process of these future cutblocks to ensure the protection of recreational values and other unique features of Castle Grove. Teal Cedar and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations are reviewing current old-growth management areas and other existing reserves in the area and discussing options for reconfiguration to provide additional protection for recreational features, trails and significant trees in Castle Grove.

British Columbia has taken significant action in terms of conservation and protection of biodiversity values across the province while continuing to be a world leader in sustainable forest practices. Approximately 60 percent of British Columbia is forested land, of which only about 22 million hectares (40 percent) is actually available for use by the forest industry. On Vancouver Island, 46 percent of the forest on Crown land is old growth. Of the 862,125 hectares of old-growth forest, it is estimated that over 520,000 hectares will never be harvested.

Thank you for your interest in this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Thomson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Thomson
Minister