

Western Canada Wilderness Committee,

Mid-Island Chapter

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Press Release

Thursday, November 22, 2007

Wilderness Committee Calls on Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities and Union of BC Municipalities to Stop Vancouver Island Forest Land Liquidation

Qualicum Beach, BC At its special meeting, Wednesday, Qualicum Beach Municipal Council passed a resolution for the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities and the Union of BC Municipalities, presented by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Mid Island Chapter, calling for an immediate, "...moratorium on the sale and land transfer of all land currently zoned as Forest or Resource Land and a moratorium on development approvals within those forest lands..."

"What companies are able to do in these early stages of their real estate sell-off will determine whether the E & N lands which comprise 23 percent of Vancouver Island, can obtain significant public benefit in exchange for these removals in order to create a protected area strategy for this historically under-protected region of Vancouver Island," explains Annette Tanner, chairperson of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee's Mid Island chapter, who requested Qualicum Beach Municipal Council approve the resolution and move it forward to the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities (AVICC) and Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).

"As a result of the historic E & N land grant, only 2 percent of this huge and magnificent coastal region of the Island, has been protected as parks," Tanner continues. "Protection of community drinking watersheds, wildlife corridors, the survival of the threatened Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem, access to recreational land and to safe, locally grown food, depend on sustainable land use planning."

The resolution also addresses other points, such as the fact that the original withdrawal of

E&N lands from the public domain in the late 1800's occurred without recognition of Aboriginal title. The resolution also stresses that the reduced taxes on private forest lands as a result of forestry licensees entering into tree farm licences were part of a social contract with British Columbians in return for sole access to public timber with an objective of stable employment in dependent communities.

-for more information contact Annette Tanner, 250 752-6585 or cell 240-7470

Backgrounder:

Qualicum Beach Council passed the following motion: "THAT Council supports the following resolution and instructs staff to send it to the Province with a copy to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities for the Union of BC Municipalities."

LIQUIDATION OF ISLAND HERITAGE

WHEREAS only two percent of the 1883 Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E & N) Railway land grant on south-eastern Vancouver Island, which encompasses 23% of Vancouver Island, has been set aside for the protection and control of community drinking watersheds, the conservation of wildlife, the preservation of one of the most endangered old growth ecosystems in BC, and for public enjoyment and use for the approximately 87 percent of Vancouver Island's population that live within the E&N land grant lands and where there is a compelling need for increased access to recreational land as well as clean water and safe, locally grown food dependent on sustainable land use planning;

AND WHEREAS forestry licensees paid reduced taxes on their private lands as a result of entering into tree farm licences, and entered into a social contract with British Columbians, in return for sole access to public timber, with an objective of stable employment in dependent communities, and now being allowed to sell this forest land for development, is a breach of that social contract which was entered into with a Tree Farm Licence contract and would require compensation to the public

and a stringent examination and scrutiny of the original contract for the historic E&N land exchange as to the intent, legality and conditions of the land transfer and the status of the elements of that agreement so that the terms of the contract can be presented to and be understood by Federal, Provincial, Local Governments and the public:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Qualicum Beach requests as an urgent matter, that the Federal and Provincial Governments declare a moratorium on the sale and land transfer of all land currently zoned as Forest or resource Land and a moratorium on development approvals within those forest lands within the original E & N land grant area, especially those in the CDFmm (Coastal Douglas-fir, moist maritime biogeoclimatic zone), so as to enable the federal and provincial lawmakers the opportunity to create appropriate legislation to enable the public to control and manage decisions within the private forest land areas within the E & N lands that ensure that all land use, especially where sensitive ecosystems are concerned, are orderly, sustainable, biologically defensible and that this legislation be made in the public interest so that the protection of community drinking water and wildlife corridors can be achieved through the acquisition of community drinking watersheds in these lands to fully protect the drinking water, air and livability of the region.

Background:

- The original withdrawal of E&N lands from the public domain in the late 1800's occurred without recognition of Aboriginal title. The deficit of crown land within the E&N land grant area requires the co-operation of government, First Nations and all other private landowners for a conservation strategy to assure protection of community drinking watersheds and the survival of the Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem.
- Many private E&N lands were combined with crown lands post World War Two, with often larger areas of adjacent crown lands for the sole use of these private licensees, so that the licensee could practice permanent forestry on their

private forest lands in return for exclusive access to public timber and reduced public compensation (taxes) on their private lands.

- TFL licensees entered into a social contract with British Columbians, in return for sole access to public timber, with an objective of stable employment in dependent communities, and the agreement to practice sustained yield forestry defined as growing “a perpetual yield of wood of commercially usable quality from regional areas in yearly or periodic quantities of equal or increasing volume.”
- TFL licensees were required until recently to mill their wood in local communities - as determined by the appurtenance clause. This is no longer a TFL contract requirement.
- All forest land in a TFL is required to comply with the Forest and Range Practices Act, but when private lands are deleted, these lands are no longer obligated to meet these environmental standards.
- Deletion of public land from a TFL at one time required the province to pay compensation, when in excess of a one percent reduction in the Allowable Annual Cut for public purpose. No similar obligation is required when private lands are deleted by a licensee for a private purpose.
- Canada is a signatory to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED): Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 21, Rio Declaration and the Forestry Agreement and Ocean Conference. The BC government carries the full global responsibility to keep these ecosystems within the E&N land grant from extinction. Continued unsustainable forest harvesting and lack of protection for the Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystems have resulted in a global ranking as provincially at-risk (RED) and critically imperiled.
- The Forest Practices Board ordered the BC Government to protect endangered ecosystems through a conservation strategy under section 132 of the Forest and Range Practices Act.
- Management of forests for carbon storage, requires longer, not shorter forest rotations, in contrast to the intent of the 2007 Coastal Forest Action Plan.
- Since approximately 87 percent of Vancouver Island’s population resides within the E&N land grant, there is a compelling need for increased access to recreational land as well as clean drinking water and safe, locally grown food. Further unsustainable logging practices are contrary to the real efforts to reduce CO2 emissions as the population continues to increase.