

**AN OPEN LETTER TO BEN MARR,  
MANAGER OF THE GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL  
DISTRICT, NOVEMBER 21ST, 1996:  
UPON YOUR RETIREMENT**

[Note: This five page letter, written by Will Koop, was distributed to all Greater Vancouver Municipal Councils.]

Since February of 1990, you have administered the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) as Regional Manager. Over that period of time, in your related capacity as Commissioner of the Water District, you have been responsible for directing a number of significant processes, reports, and recommendations for the GVRD Water Committee and Board Directors concerning the Greater Vancouver watersheds. Some of the more important matters include:

- the 1991 public review process and resultant recommendations for the management of the Greater Vancouver watersheds; reports by Thurber Engineering on forest management issues and turbidity generating events;
- the ecological inventory; the spotted owl investigation and recommendation process;
- recommendations for more road building and clearcutting;
- annual budgets and project expenditures;
- future options for continued clearcutting in the Seymour Demonstration Forest area;
- the program of public tours;
- educational material;
- and the issue of prohibiting public interest groups access to the Greater Vancouver watersheds.

It is quite clear that, from all of the matters just presented, and from years of personal observations and comments presented in my reports and letters, the underlying directive by yourself and the administrators of the Water District is the defense and continuance of logging activities in the Greater Vancouver watersheds. This directive stems both from a dubious revision of the Greater Vancouver watersheds policy in 1967, known as the Amending Indenture, which the GVRD has still not addressed, and from provincial policy guidelines that mandate the multiple use of community water supplies, which you yourself once had a direct role in formulating.

While you were the Chief Engineer of the B.C. Water Investigations Branch, the B.C. Environment and Land Use Technical Committee formed the provincial Task Force for the Multiple Use of Community Water Supplies (the Task Force) in February 1972, and chose you as its Chair. You held this position until 1976, when you became the Deputy Minister of Environment. Even then, for many more years, you supervised the Task Force in your position as Chair of the Environment and Land Use Technical Committee. For almost ten years the Task Force was responsible for formulating a provincial multiple land use policy of community water

supplies, despite numerous concerns and objections from the Boards of Health and from many Regional District citizens.

For instance, the following quotation is from a letter of response you sent as Chair of the Task Force in January 1974 to a concerned citizen about the Chapman Creek watershed, the Sunshine Coast Regional District's water supply:

It has often been asked why logging activities are permitted in a community watershed, considering the forest's importance on regulating runoff, erosion and water quality in general. Experience in British Columbia and other areas of North America has indicated that a largely over-mature or decadent forest heavily infested with disease and insects, with thousands of snags and dead tops inviting lightning strikes, and with a heavy litter of windfall and deadfall timber rotting on the ground, is not in keeping with sound conservation, good water protection, or with good forestry practice. In order to meet the water quality and quantity requirements of a watershed such as Chapman Creek, logging operations must be planned and conducted in such a way that any potential deleterious effects on the environment will be minimized.

In retrospect, the "potential deleterious effects on the environment" which you assured that very anxious citizen became catastrophic for Chapman Creek and the Sunshine Coast. Almost the entire valley, which is quite long, steep, and high, was roaded and clearcut. During B.C. forestry week last May 1996, I participated in a guided tour of the Chapman watershed. About half way up the valley the tour bus was forced to stop because of extensive cutslope failures and road washouts. Since intensive logging began in the 1970's, the Chapman watershed has incurred over 250 landslides. Last winter, the Sunshine Coast Regional District had to close down the intake approximately 20 times because of high turbidity readings.

Prior to and during the creation of the Task Force, the provincial ministries of Forests, Mines, and Agriculture were determined to justify and legislate a provincial multiple land use policy in community water supplies, at the expense of short and long term water quality standards and risks to those communities. The repercussions of that resource-use dominant policy has and will continue to unfold for many years to come, at the expense of public health, and great financial cost to community and municipal coffers.

By example, the government and industry also recognized that road access and clearcut logging in the largest population center's water supply, the Greater Vancouver watersheds, which once had the strongest provincial legislation against logging, would certainly help to administer their policy of multiple use for the remainder of the province. When the first public enquiry into the Greater Vancouver watershed management proceeded in 1991, the Council of Forest Industries was very clear on its interpretation (or bluff) of what a cessation of logging in the three watersheds meant, in terms of public consciousness, to the province's timber industry:

The Water Committee is charged with making a decision that is going to have substantial impacts throughout the province. There are over 80 community watersheds in B.C. that are also an important source of timber to the forest industry. These communities are closely watching the events of the GVWD.... we cannot afford single-use designations,

especially when, in the case of the GVWD watersheds, all information points to the need for integrated use of the forested land. (Submission #46, May 1991.)

When you became the Regional Manager of the GVRD, the mayors and citizens of Greater Vancouver had just lost a bitter battle with the Social Credit government over the construction of the natural gas pipeline in the Coquitlam watershed, an issue which the Task Force is also directly responsible for including in its multiple use philosophy. It was also a time when the Medical Health Association was becoming increasingly concerned about the issue of water quality, and when the Western Canada Wilderness Committee had launched an important campaign on the same issue of logging in the Greater Vancouver watersheds. These two movements essentially forced the 1991 public review of logging in our water supplies.

Just two months prior to the January 1991 initial public review document, a large landslide, which initiated in a Seymour valley clearcut, made the Seymour reservoir turbid for weeks and raised public awareness on the effects of logging. Incredibly, this incident was left unmentioned in the January 1991 draft public review document. The GVRD's consultant, in the May 31, 1991 Thurber Report, improperly concluded that the matter was unrelated to logging. Overall, the August 1991 final public review report (*Final Summary Report*) is poorly written, replete with both weak information and with a prevalent bias for the continuance of road construction and clearcut logging.

During the 1991 public review process contractors were busily logging in our watersheds. Despite recommendations and initiatives brought to the GVRD Board Directors from the public review to halt logging in the watersheds, and despite an administrative failure to not renew a logging contract in late 1991, the Water District and the GVRD Board approved logging in our watersheds for the 1992 year. This decision, largely influenced by an IWA (International Woodworkers Association) delegation, proved to be quite costly. When forest ecology consultants for the Water District found that many of the 1992 candidate areas for logging did not reflect a revised rationale for logging, the contractor sued the Water District, a matter which was finally resolved in 1995, costing the taxpayers somewhere between one to two million dollars.

Since the "public review" and the resultant resolutions passed by the GVRD Board in 1991, the Water District has embarked on a long and expensive inventory program of the Greater Vancouver watersheds. The terms of reference and rationale behind the ecological inventory, which stem from the final 1991 public review document, is simply to develop a model, an interpretive program, for a continuance of road construction and logging. It can be argued that, given the prominence of the Greater Vancouver watersheds as a symbol by the forest industry, this model will be used as a new directive for the continuance of logging in community water supplies in the province, and elsewhere, which is in keeping with the original mandate of the provincial Task Force, which you once chaired and supervised.

In keeping with this multiple use agenda where we hear the repeated refrain that water quality is the primary concern, the Water District has, since 1991, continually attempted to steer the Water Committee in that direction with numerous proposals and projects. Objections to these proposals by concerned citizens at Water Committee and Board delegations has, on most occasions,

prevented or modified those proposals, indicating that there are still some very serious concerns about the Water District's motivations and proposals.

Aside from the Water District's ongoing singular ambition to log in our watersheds, one of my greatest objections is the systematic manner in which you, Water District administrators, most of the Water Committee members, and the GVRD Board have refused myself and public interest groups access to the Greater Vancouver watersheds to view and understand how forestry management activities are affecting the landscape, despite the fact that the Board passed a resolution in September 1995 to allow public interest groups access. The reasons given by our Water District administrators about this matter, and the manner in which they have been emphasized by them at Water Committee and Board meetings, is indicative of the Water District's control of public information, a matter which I find utterly reprehensible. For instance, when video information concerning erosion problems above the Capilano reservoir was presented to the Water Committee in March 1995, concerns were focused on my trespass rather than on understanding the problem. In other words, the information I presented, which embarrassed the Water District, was met with excuses, evasion, and denial. This information, and that from another interrelated trespass incident in November 1995 regarding the Capilano reservoir landslide, which I made available to the Water Committee and the press, resulted in you and the Water District recommending retributive legal measures to either ban or fine watershed trespassers, rather than attending to the real matter at hand - the erosion and transport of sediment. Should these penalties not be directed towards those responsible for causing these erosion problems to occur, continue, and degrade the public's water supply? The public must now reexamine the access policy in order to make it consistent, equitable, and meaningful. From my understanding, there are two important matters which need to be attended to:

(1) Since 1991, the Water District has failed to address the long term problems associated with roads in our three watersheds. There should have been, and ought to be, a process in place to put most of the roads in the watersheds to bed, that is, to recontour the landscape to its original form and slope. The reason that this has not occurred is twofold: (a) to do so would be to admit that roads are indeed a problem; and (b) that to remove the access roads would conflict with the Water District's private aspirations in keeping those roads open for future logging proposals. Because of my findings and concerns that erosive road related problems were not being reported to the public, I wrote the Chair of the Water Committee and the Water District one year ago asking that they provide detailed information to the Water Committee on a regular basis regarding all road maintenance problems in the watersheds, a matter which has been left unattended to.

(2) There has been an absence of providing honest and descriptive information to the public about the state and condition of the public's watersheds as a result of forestry management. In this respect, there has been a complete lack of process to invite public interest groups to inspect the watersheds. Relatedly, there has been too much silence around the ongoing process of the ecological inventory, a contractual restraint on the ecological consultants to openly and carefully update the public on their methods and findings. There has also been no public process in place to review the relevance and the economics of the ecological inventory, to allow the public to participate in the goals and terms of reference of the ecological inventory, or, in the pursuit of understanding, to

participate with the consultants during their field work in the watersheds. If the Water District's goal is to continue logging in our watersheds, then how will the findings of the ecological consultants be interpreted by the Watershed Management Department staff?

In the face of it all, should the GVRD even be contemplating future forest management activities in our watersheds? There are good reasons to both discontinue logging in the watersheds and to repair the damage already done. Recently, the City of Portland, Oregon has banned logging in its water supply, the Bull Run watershed. On September 30th, 1996 U.S. President Clinton passed a federal Bill to stop logging in the Bull Run watershed. On July 26, 1996, prior to the passage of that Bill, President Clinton's Executive Office Chair wrote:

As you probably know, Portland is one of only a half a dozen metropolitan areas in the United States that enjoys a totally unfiltered water source. This fact only underscores how unique and vital the Bull Run Watershed is for the million people in your area that benefit from nature's natural filtration system, and how important it is to do everything we can to protect the watershed.... The President supported the efforts by Senator Ron Wyden, Representative Elizabeth Furse, and Mayor Vera Katz to prohibit logging the Bull Run Preserve.... In the case of the Bull Run, it is categorized as a Key Watershed, which requires a detailed analysis to assure high-quality water and habitat protection. Thus the Bull Run Watershed is protected from clearcuts, so we can help ensure that the water supply for the people of Portland will remain pure and safe for years to come.

The Bull Run watershed was once protected by U.S. Federal law from logging until the U.S. Forest Service violated that law in the 1950's by secretly inducing Portland municipal guardians and engineers to abandon their protection of the Bull Run. After 15 years of road building and clearcut logging a Portland doctor took the City and forest companies to court and stopped logging in the Bull Run in 1976. However, Republican Senator Mark Hatfield helped to change the original Federal law in 1977 to allow logging to continue. Ironically, the same Senator, who realized the error of his ways, courageously introduced the recent U.S. legislation to once again protect the Bull Run from logging. During the 1991 public review of the Greater Vancouver watersheds, the Water District incorporated questionable information on the Bull Run by U.S. Forest Service hydrologists as an argument to continue logging in the watersheds. And by example, the Greater Vancouver Water District should now follow the path of the City of Portland, and ban logging in our watersheds, as Greater Vancouver's policy once did.

As Cities like Portland and Victoria have wisely reversed their policies about logging, as communities throughout British Columbia have and are beginning to realize the repercussions of multiple land use policy in their water supplies, the GVRD must once again show leadership and courage in banning logging, and incorporate a long-term vision of once again protecting our watersheds. It is time that managers of the GVRD become fully accountable to the public about their policies and proposals for the Greater Vancouver watersheds. And it is also time that the provincial government re-examine its policies on the multiple use of community watersheds in order to establish a long-term vision for the benefit of community health and economics. It's high time for a change, time to face the music.