

SELECTED ARTICLES REGARDING PUBLIC CONTROVERSY

OVER LOGGING IN THE SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT'S

WATERSHED RESERVES, CHAPMAN AND GREY CREEKS, 1990-1998

Coast News, May 28, 1990
No action on Chapman erosion
by Rose Nicholson

The problems that are causing muddy water in the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) water supply were studied in reports that came out in 1974 and 1975, but nothing has ever been done about it.

At the May 24 regional district meeting, Director Jim Gurney, chairman of the Public Utilities Committee, told directors that slides in the Chapman Creek area are a continuing problem. Conditions get worse every year as erosion on the steep slopes wash mud and gravel into the creek.

"In some cases," Gurney explained, "whole islands, with the trees still standing, are sliding down the slopes. It's rolling down as you stand and watch it."

He went on to explain that the terrain is composed mainly of loose sand and gravel, which, combined with the steepness of the slopes, creates a highly unstable condition. The natural tendency in such a situation is for the land to seek its 'angle of repose', but roads cut into the bank work against this. Every year the slides get bigger, and, said Gurney, "I'm not sure what we can do about it now."

Stop gap measures have been to push the slide material over the side of the road where it gets ever closer to the creek, and where finer material is washed into the water supply with every rain.

"The reports recommended that this material be hauled out of there," said Gurney. "But that's never been done."

The earlier reports were prepared by the Forest Service, and Adrian Scott, the SCRDR planner at that time, prepared a detailed summary of remedial actions that should have been taken to alleviate the problems caused by the construction of logging roads in the area.

"As far as I can see," said Gurney, "none of those recommendations have ever been carried out."

Gurney proposed that a video be prepared to show the present conditions, and that this be used, along with a strongly worded request that the Ministry of Forests "undertake remedial action that should have happened 15 years ago. They did a lot of work, but nothing ever came of it."

"What do you suppose the possibilities would be for some kind of legal restitution?" asked Director Gordon Wilson. "We have problems with chlorination now."

"We're not talking about a few dollars," added Gurney. "We'll spend a million dollars on the reservoir next year, largely to offset the problems. That may not solve the problems. We'll still probably have to do some secondary chlorination. And the problems will still go on. People will still not have quality water."

"We have documentation," said Wilson. "If we can demonstrate that the government has been negligent, I wonder what our case would be. Maybe we should get a legal opinion. If we were successful, the ramifications on past practices could be quite substantial."

May 28, 1990, Coast News.
Water concerns won't save Tetrahedron
by Rose Nicholson.

"I'd like to stress that there's an expectation that we're going to save the Tetrahedron plateau by addressing the water concerns. We're not going to do that. That's not going to happen," said Director Jim Gurney at the May 24 Sunshine Coast Regional District meeting.

Gurney was basing his statement on a preliminary meeting with Dr. Golding of the Department of Forestry at UBC who has been hired as a consultant to assess the Tetrahedron situation.

"It will not be possible to halt the logging in that area (on the basis of water concerns)," he continued. "We can change it, but a way can be found around any problems that logging will cause to our water supply. We should

not expect that our water supply can be used to stop the logging.

“When they (forestry) do an Integrated Watershed Management Plan, the thrust is ‘how do we log without hurting the water’, not ‘how do we not log’.

“If we want to preserve it as a wilderness area, we should do it for those reasons (as wilderness). Dr. Golding’s remarks suggested that it would be very hard to find technical reasons why logging will hurt the water. He’s being very honest with us. So don’t expect that he is going to come back and say that area should not be logged. “If we want to preserve the Tetrahedron plateau, we should do it for the right reasons.”

Gurney went on to say that he has the impression that Interfor plans to start logging on July 1.

“That disturbs me,” he said. “I thought we had an agreement they would hold off on the logging ‘til the report was in. Their concern is that we’re using the report as a stalling tactic, and I don’t think that happened.

“What I’m concerned about, when you begin to put time constraints on it, you’re creating a confrontation situation. We’re creating another Stein, another Carmanah. We’re going to have two sides of the community butting heads, and I don’t think we need that. I think we have to do what we can to head off that kind of confrontation.

“I would like to suggest that we write a letter to the chief forester of Interfor and ask for a meeting as soon as possible. I don’t believe that all of the alternate cut areas have been explored. I also understand that Interfor has been given the option of not cutting those blocks. Before, they were compelled to by Forestry. That’s not official, but that’s what I hear.”

“The general public should know that we’re doing all we can to preserve Tetrahedron,” added Director Jeremy Frith.

“It’s up to the public at large to decide on what they feel can be done. We have asked the Ministry of Forests to consider it as wilderness area, and they have not given us a lot of assurance that they will give it that kind of designation.”

Director Peggy Connor suggested that a resolution being put forth by the Associated Boards of Health at their annual meeting in September may provide some ammunition for the Tetrahedron cause.

The resolution will ask that local boards of health be given some say in resource planning management on the grounds that community water supplies can be affected by logging.

“The health officers that sit on the Integrated Watershed Committees are very helpful,” added Gurney. “They tell the foresters what problems they are causing.”

The Press, Tuesday, May 29, 1990

1976 STUDY SAYS CHAPMAN CREEK IN DANGER

Province ignores anti-logging

by Phillipa Beck

The provincial government ignored recommendations from a Chapman Creek area watershed study 15 years ago and as a result water users on the Sunshine Coast are now suffering the consequences, regional directors heard May 23.

Area E director Jim Gurney said a 1976 forest service study warned that logging was causing “major sedimentation” in drinking water.

The study, commissioned under former SCR D planning director Adrian Stott, recommended an immediate halt on logging at the north end of the watershed.

It also stated no more roads should be built close to Chapman Creek.

“I can find no evidence that any of the things recommended in the report have ever been done,” Gurney said.

“They did a lot of work, spent a lot of money, and nothing ever came of it.”

As a result the regional district will spend close to \$1 million next year on a second reservoir necessary “to offset problems caused by logging,” Gurney said. Soil erosion caused by bad forestry practices is causing massive mudslides into Chapman Creek, he said.

But he did not expect a recently selected hydrology expert, UBC professor Dr. Douglas Golding, to suggest logging stop in the watershed.

Regional directors chose Golding on a recommendation from their consulting firm Dayton and Knight. He will be leading a four-member team of regional planners and forestry reps to study the effects of logging on the Chapman and Grey Creek watershed.

“Don’t expect that he’s going to come back with a report saying there should be no logging,” Gurney said. “He is a UBC forestry professor. We are finding the academic community is considerably influenced by (the Ministry of) Forestry, which is heavily influenced by corporations.”

Gurney said the Forest Ministry gave Interfor, the logging company that holds a permit for 30 hectares of timber around Chapman Creek, the option of not cutting in that area.

But Interior’s area forester Chris Ortner said the company intends to start logging July 1, Gurney said.

Ortner denied the charge. Interfor will respect whatever Golding recommends, he said in an interview Friday.

“We want to operate there for the long term, the next 20 years. Nobody’s going to sacrifice their long term presence for 20,000 cubic meters of wood, just a third of a year’s cut.

But Ortner said he did not expect Golding, head of hydrology department in UBC’s forest faculty, to recommend a moratorium on logging in the two cutblocks.

“I’ve known him for eight years, I understand the principles he’s working under,” Ortner said. “Dr. Golding was my thesis advisor, I studied under him.”

Ortner said the SCRD decided without input from foresters to choose Dr. Golding to conduct the watershed study.

If Gurney is now questioning Golding’s intentions “why did the regional district put him up as their candidate,” Ortner asked.

“Where is Gurney coming from? He’s shooting down his own guy a week after they pick him.”

While regional directors are waiting for Golding’s report, they voted to produce a video showing the effects of logging in the watershed in the last 15 years.

It will be designed to show the area could have been saved had the government upheld recommendations 15 years ago, Gurney said. The original study recommended the province turn the watershed over to the SCRD to administer.

The video will be sent to the provincial government and Harold Long, MLA for Mackenzie.

Coast News, July 16, 1990.

Tetrahedron logging deferred by Rose Nicholson.

The Ministry of Forests has declared a temporary deferment of the planned July logging of the Edwards Lake cut block in the Tetrahedron until the completion of the Local Resource Use Plan (LRUP) at the end of this year. Harvesting of the Batchelor Lake cut block will be allowed to proceed, subject to the modifications that will be recommended in the Golding report.

At the suggestion of the Regional District, Interfor has been given the option of logging the timber on land that the Regional District is holding for a planned expansion of the golf course in Roberts Creek in exchange for the Edwards lake cut block.

The LRUP will provide detailed information on water, recreation, logging, mining and any other resources. The first stages of the study are under way with inventory studies of landscape values and recreation resources almost complete. In a recently released Options Report for the Sunshine Coast Timber Supply Area (TSA) the Ministry of Forests has summarized the issues to be dealt with in the preparation of the resource management plan. They are asking for public input and the responses will be reviewed by the Regional Manager who will make recommendations to the Chief Forester who will then formulate a plan that will be effective for the next five years.

“If we don’t address all of the issues now, particularly water management, we’ll have to come back and do it later on,” said SCRD Director Jim Gurney.

“Once we resolve the issues, between water and timber, then we will have to resolve the issues between the water and recreation groups and try and confine that to local operations.

“We could have the big guns from off the Coast coming in here and demanding recreation opportunities in the Tetrahedron, and that, quite frankly, scares me as much as the logging. We could have things like skiing chalets up there. If we can address it totally at the community level now, it’s done, and we’ll have control.”

In a conversation with the Coast News, Chris Beach of the Tetrahedron Alliance deplored the decision to go ahead with the cutting of the Batchelor Lake cut block as one more example of the erosion of the last small old growth wilderness area on the Sunshine Coast.

“And the LRUP provides no guarantee that the Edwards Lake cut block will be saved from logging in the future,” he warned. “The study will not protect wilderness values in this area.”

Interfor has not yet (at the date of writing) accepted the offer of the golf club timber. In a conversation last week with the Coast News, Chris Ortner said that the second growth lower level timber is a much lower grade than the old growth at the higher elevations and it would be impossible for them to recover the \$600,000 costs already incurred in preliminary development of the Tetrahedron.

He also said that there are no roads in to the Roberts Creek site, so “there’s no way we could log there this year.”

**Vancouver Sun, August 3, 1991, H1.
Ministry sued over logging roads,
by Ben Parfitt, Sun Forestry Reporter**

The Sunshine Coast regional district is suing B.C.’s ministry of forests over damage caused by faulty logging roads in the watersheds that provide the area’s drinking water.

According to one district official, the ministry has ignored the problem for too long.

“If the turbidity problem is not addressed at source it’s only a matter of time before we’re in a crisis situation,” said public utilities committee chairman Jim Gurney.

Gurney said the ministry knew about damage to Chapman and Gray Creeks 27 years ago when it conducted studies of failing logging-road banks in the region.

Despite being faced with clear evidence that “there needed to be some major work done to stop erosion problems and improve culverting and ditching” along logging roads, nothing was done, Gurney says.

Now the West Vancouver-based company that does water-engineering work for the Sunshine Coast says a very costly cleanup is required to turn things around.

“We have not done an estimate,” says Agris Berzins, president of Dayton & Knight Ltd., “but we would be talking in the millions of dollars.”

If the cleanup isn’t done soon, adds Gurney, the district could be looking at an even more costly solution — installation of a \$20-million filtration system to deal with siltation problems.

In a statement of claim filed last month in B.C. Supreme Court, the regional district alleges “logging and logging-related activities have and continue to cause deterioration to the water quality in the creeks and watershed areas.”

Further, the ministry of forests “has negligently permitted or allowed logging activities to take place to an extent that has damaged and continues to damage the regional district’s water system.”

Senior forests ministry officials including deputy minister Bob Plecas and assistant deputy minister Wes Cheston met in Victoria last Friday to discuss the problem with representatives from International Forest Products Ltd., the company currently holding cutting rights in the region.

Interfor did not build any of the roads that are now failing, but inherited the problem when it bought a forest licence covering the area last year.

It has proposed spending about \$400,000 to rehabilitate damaged roads; rebuild some sections of eroded road beds; and clean up ditches and culverts that channel off runoff water.

Gurney said the plan is a good start, but he doesn’t believe that money will cover fixing up some of the old slide areas that continue to damage local water.

Younas Mirza, manager of the ministry of forests’ engineering section, said last Friday’s meeting was held to discuss “how much money it would cost and who should be responsible for the costs.”

“The basic conclusion was the work Interfor is proposing to do is reasonable. And it should improve the quality of the water if that is done. And we are still look into the cost-sharing aspects of it.

Mirza said he can’t explain why the ministry is acting now when it could have done something a lot sooner.

A ministry study in 1974 detailed seven different areas in the Chapman Creek watershed where logging-related activity had increased the flow of sediment into the creek.

On one stretch of logging road several “large washouts” had occurred due to a logging road being abandoned “without adequate safeguards.” The end result was that “1,600 to 2,000 cubic yards soil” were deposited into the creek.

“I wish I could answer why nothing was done. There were reports in ‘74 and ‘75 that made recommendations

about what should be done. And unfortunately nothing was done. Some work was done last year by Interfor with some contribution by the ministry of forests. But, unfortunately, because of the heavy rainfall last November, part of that was washed away.”

Last November proved to be the last straw, said Gurney. Heavy rains pounded the poorly built roads triggering two slides and the “total collapse” of one section of road.

The first slide occurred when an old logging landing gave way, traveling “several hundred feet down the slope and across the creek,” Gurney said. Logs, debris and stumps were deposited directly into Chapman Creek. A second slide in an old slide area wiped out \$20,000 worth of work done by the ministry last year, Gurney said. In a third incident a culvert failed and in the ensuing rush of water and debris a large section of road was washed away.

A month later the regional district decided it was time to act.

“We passed a motion to seek a court injunction to stop all logging until the improvements were made. We tabled that to give forestry an opportunity to respond,” Gurney lays. “They were to prepare a complete reclamation plan for Chapman Creek. To date, we have not seen a reclamation plan from the ministry of forests. We are told one is being prepared, but we have yet to see one.”

“Fred Lowenberger, Interfor’s chief forester, said the company has already shown good faith by beginning work on repairing roads leading into the watershed. And it’s awaiting word on its reclamation plan now before the ministry of forests.

Asked whether he thought it fair that Interfor pay for logging-related damage from roadbuilding 20 or more years ago, Lowenberger replied: “That’s a loaded question. Well, let’s put it this way. I guess these roads were built to a standard that was acceptable in the ‘70s, ‘60s or ‘50s or whenever they were built. So the question is: Who should pay to make it right?”

While Lowenberger feels it’s “unfair” that Interfor be made to foot the bill, he knows the ministry may argue otherwise.

“Their point would be when you bought these licences you bought the assets as well as the liabilities. So, I guess, it’s not a clear thing,” Lowenberger said.

Interfor is no stranger to the kind of problems now occurring on the Sunshine Coast. Because it was a relative latecomer to the game, the company was forced to acquire much of its tree-cutting rights by buying old licences. So it has inherited a lot of other company’s problems.

In the Kyuquot area on West Vancouver Island, Interfor is paying to have old roads it didn’t build repaired.

Asked how much it is costing the company, Lowenberger said: “Hundreds of thousands. I can’t tell you how much, but it’s a lot of money. And it’s not us. The ministry of forests have been involved in rectifying these problems too.”

Mirza said the ministry has spent about \$665,000 in logging-road rehabilitation in the last two to three years. And every indication is a lot more money will have to be spent to correct the errors of the past.

“It’s probably going to increase regularly because we do have quite few problems,” Mizra said. “In the next five years or so we should be reaching the peak.”

In addition to the repair work, the ministry also services existing logging roads for public use and repairs and replaces old bridges, Mizra said. The cost to the taxpayer, he said, is about \$10 million a year.

Mirza cautioned, however, that on logging roads under active use by logging trucks, all upgrading and repair costs are borne by the forest companies.”

Coast News, March 1992.

Chlorinated SCRD water puts district arena on thin ice by Stuart Burnside.

To add to a growing variety of problems facing the Sechelt arena, the quality of the regional district’s water supply is apparently making it difficult to keep the ice in suitable condition for skating.

Arena manager Vicki Speck told the Sechelt parks and recreation committee Thursday that the equipment used to make the arena’s ice has to work “harder than it ever had” to keep the skating surface hard. She pointed to SCRD use of chlorine to counter the high acid content of regional water as the source of the problem.

“The regional district put a chlorine system in place to treat the water sometime last year,” Speck told the committee, “and it’s affected our plant’s ice-making capability.” She said it might be necessary to consider



The Sechelt Arena's ice making equipment is working over time to keep the quality of the ice at an acceptable level. Arena employees and management blame the problem on the chlorine content of regional district water. They say the amount of chlorine so high that it hinders freezing.

File photo

buying a water purification system for the arena to solve the problem, at a still undetermined cost. Speck noted that the arena's chief engineer Ken Robinson has asked the regional district for a break down of the substances added to the water system, but said she was certain the chlorine was the culprit. "Any chemicals like (chlorine) really affect the (ice-making) plant's ability to function," she said. Robinson, who has worked at the arena for 10 years, agrees with Speck's assessment of the situation. He said because the ice-making plant had been recently overhauled and was working "as efficiently, if not more efficiently than it ever had," the only possible problem was in the water itself. "The regional district switched to a new (chlorine) process last year," Robinson said. "In past years, the temperatures the plant has had to operate at have ranged from 16-19 degrees (Fahrenheit). Now we have to drop the temperature down to 12 and a half degrees to get the same quality of ice." Robinson said that chlorine in the district's water supply would act, effectively, as an anti-freeze. He explained that impurities in water, like chlorine, rise as the water freezes.

The Press, October 19, 1992
SCRD to sue Province
by Tod Maffin

In a surprise development late last week, Sunshine Coast Regional District directors voted to take the provincial government to court.

The SCR D decided Thursday night to seek an injunction to halt all fertilization and logging around the Chapman Creek watershed until the Integrated Watershed Management Plan is finished.

The move followed word that the Ministry of Forests had given International Forest Products Ltd. (InterFor) permission to log another area and use fertilizer near the watershed. InterFor and Ministry officials could not be reached for comment because of press deadlines.

In leading debate of the regional district resolution, director Jeremy Frith lashed out against the forests service, charging them with "acting in bad faith."

"About a year ago, the Ministry of Forests raised concerns with fertilizer in the watershed and they investigated its use," he recalled. "Now, here we are one year later and we learn this is about to happen in two weeks."

Frith pointed to a 1974 report, adopted by the Ministry, the findings of which they now appear to be directly contradicting. The recommendations contained in the report, said Frith, would have removed cut blocks from the working forests. At some time, apparently they were added back in — without anyone's knowledge.

“Trees keep coming down. Those promises have not been kept,” Frith said.

The injunction, if won in court, would be lifted when the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) was completed.

Director Brett McGillivray agreed, and said he found the forest service attitude to be “immoral and unethical.” He added the SCRDC were taking part in a process set up by the Ministry—the IWMP—to help manage and direct the forests, but then the Ministry jumped in without consulting them. “I can’t emphasize enough what is happening here,” he said.

“Here we are, trying to protect the water using a process (the Ministry of) Forests set up, and they turn around and use it against us.”

The fact that water users nearby were apparently not consulted about the logging and renewed fertilizer use was particularly distasteful to McGillivray.

In moving the resolution, Frith said he believes the SCRDC would have legitimate grounds to be granted the injunction because they believe the Ministry has not followed through on the recommendations of that 1974 report.

Frith was visibly frustrated. “We all sit here speaking almost into a vacuum,” he said after the resolution passed unanimously.

“This watershed should have been jointly managed with complete Regional District consultation. In the last twenty years, that has never happened.”

“Now that we’re in the process of that, the activity is as if we don’t even exist.”

But director Cy O’Leary was quick to point out the motion did not imply the SCRDC was taking an anti-logging stand. He said the main Lower Mainland watersheds at Capilano and Coquitlam are treated with the respect and protection “as the Sistine Chapel verging on sacred.” He said the Chapman Creek watershed could one day serve most of the Sunshine Coast’s water requirements.

Local watershed activist Roger Lagasse was in the audience and told directors he felt their motion did not go far enough in protecting other watersheds. Lagasse’s position is one of an overall injunction against all activity near watersheds.

Regional District lawyers are expected to file the injunction early this week.

October 29, 1992

SCRDC plans injunction

by Dean MacPherson and Susan Thome

Regional directors plan to use the power of the court system to stop logging and fertilization in the Chapman and Gray Creek watersheds, source of much of the coast’s drinking water.

At their meeting last Thursday directors said they plan to pursue a court injunction halting logging in the watersheds, and have the SCRDC’s solicitor suggest possible actions to stop the use of fertilizers in the watershed, specifically around Gray and Clough Creeks.

Director Jim Gurney said the logging and fertilizing program violates the principle of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan, something the SCRDC “bought into” three years ago.

Directors maintain that an interagency report prepared in 1974 recommends the Chapman Creek watershed be removed from the working forest, a recommendation they say the SCRDC acted upon.

“Somewhere in the intervening period this area has been put back in,” Gurney said. The forest company planning to log the cutblocks doesn’t want to be penalized for the ministry’s actions, a spokesman said Tuesday. International Forests Products hasn’t been officially notified of the planned injunction, said Mike Bell, Interior’s operations manager for the Sunshine Coast.

“We haven’t seen anything in writing yet,” he said, pointing out that the company has fulfilled its obligations for receiving cutting permits.

“Christ,” he said. “We’ve had every agency from soup to nuts out there.”

Interfor is slated to log two cutblocks in the Chapman Creek watershed. Block 201, at 11,000 cubic metres, is scheduled to be logged this year, and Block 202, at approximately 10,000 cubic metres, is marked for late spring and early summer of next year.

Coast News, November 2, 1992

Logging injunction bound for supreme court

by Jane Seyd

A fight between governments on the Sunshine Coast over logging versus water quality is heading to the B.C. Supreme Court.

Sunshine Coast regional directors are seeking an injunction against the Ministry of Forests issuing further cutting permits in the Chapman/Gray creek watershed, until a proper management plan is completed.

On Wednesday, directors Jim Gurney and Jeremy Frith discussed the court action with SCR D lawyer Chris Murdy in Vancouver.

The move came after a five-man falling crew under sub-contract from International Forest Products began logging on a 15-hectare block in the contentious area this week.

It's the latest in a series of fights between the local regional district and the Ministry of Forests over logging in the community watershed, which supplies water to about 20,000 residents.

As overseers of domestic water supply, regional directors say they should be consulted before logging is approved in the Sunshine Coast's only major watershed.

Directors say they're worried about possible erosion and sedimentation from logging affecting quality in the Chapman/Gray creek water supply. And they say they'd like a substantial portion of the higher elevation forest set aside as ecologically sensitive.

For over two years, government agencies including the Sunshine Coast Regional District have been meeting to hammer out a plan for watershed management.

But meanwhile, approval of logging has continued.

Director Jeremy Frith calls that a "father knows best" attitude local government won't tolerate any longer: "We said this is bullshit...what's happening is unacceptable."

Ferd Hamre, operations manager for the Ministry of Forests on the Sunshine Coast, said he met with regional directors about the situation but "we didn't reach any agreement."

Hamre said roadbuilding into the watershed has already been done, and the logging isn't happening in a geologically sensitive area: "My people tell me it's not a problem."

In part, the injunction is being sought on the basis of recommendations made almost 20 years ago in a report which urged joint management of the watershed and restricted logging in the Chapman Creek area.

But "this is a 20 year old report ... things change," said Hamre. "It's quite common not to have every recommendation followed."

About the SCR D court action, Hamre commented, "It's really out of our hands...We're not in a position to say no to a block that's already been approved."

But Frith disagreed. "Forestry are the ones who actually call the shots in these things. Forestry could tell Interfor to stop at any time."

While the Greater Vancouver Regional District allows logging in its watersheds, that doesn't include harvesting in the high elevation mountain hemlock zone, said Frith.

"Here there ain't much left to log at the lower elevations."

Mike Bell, manager of Interfor's local operations on the Sunshine Coast, recently called the court action and directors' comments "a very narrow opinion on the part of the Sunshine Coast Regional District," and said logging would continue as usual.

So far, no direct discussions have been held between Interfor and regional directors over the injunction.

Said Frith, "I haven't seen any will on the part of Interfor to be really cooperative about this situation."

Chris Murdy, lawyer for the Sunshine Coast Regional District, said he is hopeful a court decision will be made on the injunction within the next two weeks.

Murdy said past injunctions against logging have involved native land claims, but this is the first he's heard of involving a local government's concerns with water quality.

The injunction is trying to stop the ministry from using fertilizer in the watershed in the near future.

Undated

Forests fail to quash Chapman injunction

A last-ditch effort by the Ministry of Forests to convince the Sunshine Coast Regional District call off plans to halt Chapman Creek logging has failed, THE PRESS has learned.

According to Regional District sources, the Ministry of Forests called the SCRDR to arrange a meeting aimed at heading off plans for the temporary injunction against logging near the watershed.

Coming out of the meeting, SCRDR Chairperson Peggy Connor said she pressed for better consultation, but stated that officials re-affirmed the Board's original decision to press for the injunction.

Last week regional directors voted unanimously to seek the injunction against logging activity following reports that the Ministry had allocated more cutting blocks to International Forests Products. As well, they had authorized the use of herbicides near the contentious creek.

Many directors charged the Ministry with "unethical practices and of "acting in bad faith."

If won in court, the injunction will be lifted when the Integrated Watershed Management Plan for that area was completed.

Ministry of Forests officials could not be reached for comment.

Vancouver Sun, November 19, 1992

Community fights logging in watershed

by Jane Seyd

SECHELT -- The regional government on the Sunshine Coast says it's determined to protect its watershed from logging.

To that end, it's seeking an injunction from the B.C. Supreme Court to stop the forests ministry and International Forest Products from issuing further cutting permits in the Chapman/Gray Creek watershed until a management plan is completed.

The move is believed to be the first legal action taken by a local government against the Ministry of Forests or a logging company over logging in a community watershed.

Sierra Legal Defence Fund lawyer Stewart Elgie, referring to watershed logging, said "this is the first time the issues have been brought to court."

Jeremy Frith, a director of the Sunshine Coast regional district, said in an interview that continued logging approvals have reflected "a father-knows-best attitude" that local government won't tolerate any longer. "We said this is bull ----. What is happening is unacceptable."

Regional government directors, worried about possible erosion and sedimentation of the water supply, insist they should be consulted before any logging is approved.

Ferd Hamre, operations manager for the ministry of forests on the Sunshine Coast, says he met with the regional directors about the situation but "we didn't reach any agreement."

Roadbuilding into the watershed has already been carried out, said Hamre, and the logging isn't planned for geologically sensitive areas. "My people tell me it's not a problem."

Mike Bell, Interfor's Sunshine Coast operations manager, says unless the company is ordered to stop, logging will continue as usual.

Chris Murdy, lawyer for the regional district, says he is hopeful a decision will be made on the injunction soon. A court date to hear the application is to be set within the next few days.

Vancouver Sun, December 14, 1992

Sunshine Coast logging on hold

A court case over logging in the only major watershed on the Sunshine Coast has been adjourned after lawyers for the regional district and International Forest Products agreed to a moratorium.

The Sunshine Coast regional district northwest of Vancouver had been seeking an injunction against Interfor and the forests ministry to prevent further logging in the watershed until a management plan had been completed.

Under the out-of-court agreement, the injunction hearing was adjourned until an unspecified date with the understanding no logging will take place in the watershed until March. The only activity will be to remove wood that has already been cut by Interfor. The company also agreed to give two weeks notice if logging is to start in the area.

Coast News, April 15, 1993.
SCRD calling for powers to protect water,
by Jane Seyd.

Guidelines which set out what should and shouldn't happen in community watersheds like the Chapman Valley are under review by a provincial committee to make them stronger, clearer and less discretionary. But directors of the local regional district which oversees drinking water for the Sunshine Coast aren't convinced the move will be enough to protect water quality. Instead, they are calling on the province to pass strong water quality laws which would have greater power than the guidelines and would rank higher in authority than the Forest Act or the Mines Act in water quality protection. Meanwhile, a working draft of an Integrated Watershed Management Plan which would divide the Chapman watershed into various management zones will be discussed by local ministries April 20 and 21. Under the draft plan, different rules on activities like logging and recreational would apply to each zone. "It's a complex watershed and it's a controversial watershed," said Marion Jamieson, co-chair of the watershed management committee and resource officer with the Ministry of Environment. Currently, guidelines which govern watershed activity are administered by several provincial agencies including the Ministry of Forests, Water Management and Crown Lands. Changes to the guidelines are intended to make them more comprehensive and give more detailed directions on allowable activities, such as logging, says Jamieson. But regional directors say leaving the guidelines as just that - guidelines - and allowing resource ministries a strong say in what happens in watersheds is the wrong approach. "You have the fox guarding the hen house... You have a ministry with vested interests..." said director Brett McGillivray at a board meeting Thursday. So far there hasn't been proper management in spite of the existing guidelines and watershed reserve designations, said director Jeremy Frith. He added that community watersheds need a special legal status which really means something: "If communities have lousy water supplies, you might as well forget about living in them half the time." According to the provincial committee now revising the guidelines, there are over 12,000 watersheds in B.C. Most public concern has centred on issues like the effects of sediment and toxic chemicals on water supply, access, lack of adequate monitoring and inadequate stream flow in watersheds. Potential changes to the guidelines include more rigorous watershed classifications, a regular reporting system and a way of holding companies or individuals liable for any damages. Recently the local regional district had their application for a lease on the Chapman watershed rejected by Crown Lands officials who said it was against their policy to issue leases in watersheds. "In the last 20 years this is how it's been operating," said Margo Elewonibi of Crown Lands. "... We didn't even accept the application."

Coast News, January 31, 1994
End watershed logging, says LRUP report
by Ian Cobb

The author said his report was going to make some heads spin. And based on the recommendations made by the Tetrahedron Local Resource Use Plan (LRUP) Water sub-committee, heads may indeed begin a series of dizzying rotations. Quite simply, the lengthy report, four years in the making, recommends the end of logging in the Tetrahedron area east of Gibsons and Sechelt.

In addition, the report, tabled at a Jan. 25 LRUP meeting at the Sunshine Coast Forest District office, recommends “logging operations cease in the Chapman and Gray Creek Watersheds” which flow down from the Tetrahedron.

Sub-committee chairman Chuck Weatherill makes no bones about it; the entire watershed has to be protected. “You have to have a cheap and potable water supply and Chapman is the best supply we’ve got. I’m not just talking about this (Tetrahedron); I’m talking about the whole nine yards.”

Weatherill said the Tetrahedron “isn’t the only forest in British Columbia” and that the area’s prime importance isn’t the stands of highly valuable yellow cedar or its beauty. Its prime importance is the watershed that feeds water to the majority of the population of the Sunshine Coast.

“Exploitation of timber resources has compromised water quality, quantity and timing of flows. Watershed restoration must now be recognized as the primary goal,” the first recommendation in the Water sub-committee report states. The water report includes a special report written by scientist Dr. Erwin Diener, outlining potential hazards to the public water supply from timber harvesting.

“Logging in the Tetrahedron-Chapman-Gray Creek Watershed may impair the year-round sustained communal water supply and may aggravate the problems encountered by the lower Sunshine Coast Regional District concerning water quality,” Diener says in his conclusion.

Diener also agrees with the 1974 Chapman Creek Integrated Management Study Report in that “these basins should be reserved for the use as watershed areas and any access to them be limited to recreational, non-vehicular use.”

“An area of 2.5 miles has been clearcut in locations 7.5 miles above the mouth on a southeasterly facing side of the Chapman Valley.

“Considerable mass wastage has since degraded the water quality in the creek to a significant degree,” he writes. The alteration of drainage patterns in the area, mostly due to logging roads and inadequate drainage, has created a “proneness” in the area for slope failure.

During the rainy season of 1990-91, a major landslide occurred “due to logging activities,” Diener states.

“Nobody on the face of the earth owes anyone a living,” Weatherill said, referring to logging in the area during the Jan. 25 meeting.

“There is a cost for everything and it’s time society got out of Disneyland and faced that,” he said.

Diener says in his special report that logging of old-growth forests would effectively remove a natural filtration system.

“Tree cover and the water-absorptive capacity of undisturbed, forest-covered soil protect from erosion, and hence siltation of the water supply at high rainfall intensities during the winter months.”

In addition, he says the thick forest canopy also acts as a retardant for the penetration of water into the soil “at a rate that favours optimal retention and discourages flooding and runoff.”

Without the forest acting as a filtration system, Weatherill said, the SCR D would be faced with the enormous cost of installing filtration systems and subscribers would be faced with “\$1,000- \$1,500 surcharges a year” to cover the cost of keeping them going.

Health problems will also result if “turbidity” (clarity of water) problems persist and such problems are becoming more and more common in the province, the report notes.

For example, it cites how boil water advisories have increased in the province from 1 in 1986 to 110 in 1992.

After reviewing the 50-plus page rep LRUP chair and SCR D resource planning officer Barry Miller said, “It is a very well written and researched report.”

The Chapman basin or bowl “is vital to retention of water. If we destroy that retention we’ll be in trouble,” he said.

The report also recommends that the Ministry of Forests’ role be limited to “the restoration and reclamation projects that will be necessary;” the chief forester ensure that requirements for watershed protection are included in the Sunshine Coast Timber

Supply Analysis; an alternative form of authority concerned with the watershed be formed; recreational activities in the area be limited and monitored; and the province should reevaluate “the assumption, inherent in the philosophy integrated use, that logging in community watersheds is in the public interest.”

Coast News, February 28, 1994

SCRD stands w firmly against watershed logging

by Darah Hansen

There will be no more logging in the Chapman and Gray Creek watersheds if the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) has its way at a public hearing Monday (Feb. 28).

“The number one value is water. Everything else must defer to the quality of water,” said Roberts Creek director Brett McGillivray at Thursday night’s (Feb. 24) regional board meeting.

At that same meeting, SCRD board members voted 6-2 to adopt a formal stand against the recommendations of the newly released Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) and asked for a ban on all logging activities in the watershed until water quality and quantity have shown improvement.

The draft copy of the IWMP, designed to maintain and improve water quality in the Coast’s regional watersheds, supports continued logging in the area in combination with continuous monitoring of water quality. The extensive document was developed after nearly four years of discussion between representatives from the SCRDC; provincial Ministries of Forests and the Environment; the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; and International Forest Products (Interfor) and Canadian Forest Products (Canfor).

At Thursday’s meeting, the SCRDC voted in favour of removing the Ministry of Forests from the watershed management team, putting in its place the Sechelt Indian Band which was omitted as a participant in the IWMP process.

Support on the regional board for the IWMP document Thursday came from Gibsons mayor Eric Small and Pender Harbour representative Jane Reid.

Both directors argued that a more “balanced approach” be taken by the board.

“I still think jobs are of vital importance to us,” said Small, taking into consideration the employment of loggers working in the area, while Reid asked that more faith be put in the document’s creators.

“I think every person who helped develop the IWMP recognizes (the importance of water quality),” she said.

And with continued monitoring of the watershed, “I believe logging can continue without sacrificing water.”

But other board members said those arguments are not good enough.

“It’s very easy to say we can live with loggers and monitor the (impact),” said McGillivray, but “this board has been let down more times because we’ve got this attitude, ‘Oh we can live with that.’”

He called the current situation in the watersheds “desperate,” in reference to the several mud slides which have occurred in the area, a direct result of logging and road-building activities.

The last such slide was recorded in early January when siltation occurred in Chapman Creek after a logging road collapsed in heavy rains.

McGillivray further dismissed the issue of employment.

“This is land-based logging on 10-hectare clear-cuts. There are not a lot of jobs to be lost,” he said.

A sub-committee report released by environmentalists working to preserve the Tetrahedron — an old growth forest which borders the northern portion of the Chapman and Gray Creeks — estimates 23.5 jobs would be lost over a period of one month per year if logging was halted in the watershed.

Meanwhile, Trent Dixon, representing the Sechelt band on the regional board, indicated the band’s outstanding land claims, which cover the Chapman and Gray Creek areas, could have the strongest impact yet on whether the IWMP will proceed in its present form to become a formal document.

Dixon declined further comment on the issue, saying the band will make its position clear at Monday’s public hearing on the IWMP. Dixon was one of the six regional board directors to vote in favour of suspending logging in the watershed.

Coast News, March 3, 1994

Emotions running high over regional district watershed plan

by Darah Hansen

Some were accused of grandstanding and others of using scare tactics as over 150 people gathered Monday (Feb. 28) to argue the controversial issue of managing the Coast’s watersheds.

Central to the evening was the newly released draft copy of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) which was before the public for the first time after nearly four years of study and discussion by the

government representatives who put the plan together.

The IWMP is designed to maintain and improve water quality in the Sunshine Coast's two main water sources — Chapman and Gray Creeks.

Following the meeting, IWMP committee co-chair Marion Jamieson said a second public hearing will likely be scheduled.

Jamieson said it was apparent from Monday's hearing the public needs more time to review and understand the highly technical document.

"When you are inside the process you forget how complex it is," she said.

Monday's hearing was marked by several conflicting opinions put forth by various -Coast interest groups, including the Sechelt Indian Band, the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) and the IWA logger's union. Speaking before the IWMP committee, band councillor Calvin Craigan made it clear the Sechelts intend to have a strong say in any future management of the watersheds.

Because of traditional ties to the area, "we have more interest than anyone here," Craigan said.

Up to this point, the band has been omitted from the original IWMP process which included representatives from the provincial Ministries of Forests, Environment, and Health; Department of Fisheries and Oceans; and forest companies Interfor and Canfor.

Craigan said the band is not opposed to continued logging in the watershed.

But Brett McGillivray, on behalf the SCRDR, called for the suspension of all logging activities in the area until significant "reclamation" of the water quality had occurred.

"We want something very simple — clean water," McGillivray said.

According to research contained in the IWMP document, over 50 per cent of both Chapman and Gray Creek watersheds has been logged in the past.

Since 1946, Chapman Creek has been damaged by 250 landslides, the majority of which are directly linked to logging activities in the area. The last slide occurred in January, 1994.

The Sunshine Press, Volume 2, Issue 23, June 10, 1996.

Watershed plan goes to public - Review time for Chapman and Gray Creek plan "awfully short", says MLA

By Derek McNaughton

The final draft report on the future of the Chapman and Gray Creek watershed — the source of drinking water for almost everyone in the regional district — is now on the table. Already the window for public comment is being blasted as too short.

The Ministry of Forests, logging companies and other provincial agencies are asking people in the district to comment on the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP), the document that will set the course of development in the watershed.

Even before the report hits the streets in an open house scheduled for this weekend, people in the community are condemning the limited time frame for review and comment on the report.

"They want to write it off and get rid of it," said Brett McGillivray, SCRDR director for Roberts Creek. The Ministry of Forests and timber companies who took part in writing the report are "worried about the public reaction," he said.

"The last time they got roasted. There's no question they're concerned."

Sunshine Coast MLA Gordon Wilson also said the time frame was "awfully short," adding: "I think the people here have to have an opportunity to review it."

Community activist Brad Benson said an open forum, in which the community can discuss the merits of logging in the watershed, is needed. He said the way the MoF has approached the final draft "totally fails on how to deal with the community." Benson, too, claimed the ministry is worried the public may again demand no logging in their watershed, a decision which could set a precedent for other communities in B.C.

Allan Lidstone, manager of resource planning in Victoria, said the approach by the ministry so far meets the requirements in the Forest Practices Code, and if the public was unhappy with the process, individuals could seek an extension.

Ferd Hamre, operations manager for the district, said the ministry would be pleased to offer an extension, if it was requested.

“If someone brings it to our attention, I’m sure we’ll be able to accommodate them. Our whole intent is to seek public input. We’re not going to shut the door.”

The IWMP was drafted by members of the forest industry, various government industries and the SCRD — the only body that wants a complete moratorium on logging in the watershed.

Chuck Weatherill, chair of the watershed committee, called the IWMP “a fraud” not based on sound science and said it was absurd to even think about logging in the place where drinking water comes from, regardless of harvesting method.

“This is a joke that’s not funny. . . The watershed is getting smaller and smaller, which diminishes its capacity to provide its most important asset — its water.”

The watershed plan can be viewed at an open house being held at the Sechelt Indian Band office on Friday June 14 at 1:00 to 5:00 pm and 7:00 to 10:00 pm, and again on Saturday June 15 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Call the forests ministry for more details.

The Sunshine Press, Volume 2, Issue 24, June 24, 1996.

Watershed plan poised for approval

By Derek McNaughton

The report on the future of the watershed that supplies drinking water to people on the Sunshine Coast should be approved, the top manager of the Coast’s Forest Service said June 20.

Greg Hemphill, district forest manager for the Sunshine Coast, said while the report calls for logging in the watershed forests that supply drinking water to people from Langdale to Secret Cove, it also outlines ways logging could take place without muddying water quality.

“This plan goes beyond those Forest Practices Code requirements,” he said from his office in Powell River.

“Not too many people have looked at the plan there, but if people do that they will gain a comfort it is a good plan. This should be finalized and put in place,” he added.

The Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) is the last blueprint for development that will take place in the watershed. Last weekend at an open house in Sechelt, the public was invited to comment on the IWMP and make suggestions.

The watershed plan has been a topic of contention for years. About 2,000 signed petition a few years ago demanding no logging in the watershed. The MoF is still accepting public input on the plan that could become the basis for managing the watershed for years to come.

“This second go around was put because there was a lot of interest,” said Hemphill, adding a counter-petition by those in favour of logging the watershed was submitted years ago. Hemphill said people should review the plan on its merits, noting five years

of work from a wide range of parties went into writing the draft.

A bigger risk exists if logging went ahead without the plan, he said, but the most recent draft of the plan outlines enough guarantees to prevent water quality deterioration, such as no logging on steep slopes and restrictions on the type of logging.

The IWMP, Hemphill concluded, had “all the best technical expertise to come up with something that’s reasonable.”

But Brad Benson, a long-time community activist, said the report is flawed because it automatically assumes logging will go ahead without knowledge of whether that’s what the majority of the community wants.

“This, by itself, is enough to put a grade of incomplete on this report and send it back,” he said. “This is serious, serious, serious. The Ministry of Forests is falling into the trap of becoming a public relations arm of industry and it shows in that report.”

Benson acknowledged the importance of logging to the local economy, but asked what the long-term costs would be if the forest was cut and water quality began to worsen.

“The importance of logging is not a reason to avoid environmental health issues,” he said. Benson agreed logging plans in the report were, impressive, but said testing them in the watershed is a mistake.

“If all our valleys were harvested that way, land use disputes would be over. But go to another watershed and prove you can do it, then transfer it, but don’t use our water supply as a test.”

Coast Independent, June 24, 1996.

**Watershed plan raises questions about logging, water quality in reservoirs -
'Water consumers may be at risk,' warns doctor
by Sandra Smith.**

High above the Sechelt Inlet are two major creeks which fill more than 20,000 household water tanks on the Sunshine Coast. The water travels from the Chapman Creek and Gray Creek watersheds, through regional district reservoirs and pipes before it spills into your drinking glass. How we care for the resource is a hot topic these days as government and forest industry representatives wrap up a management plan for the primary watersheds. The final draft plan, released last month, has been six years in the making.

The word on the street is people are upset about logging.

"We have some real concerns about logging up there. In the long-term, some logging activity might be acceptable, but in the short term, we have got to give this place some time to heal," said Brett McGillivray, director for the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD).

McGillivray points to a 1993 forest ministry report which showed 265 of a total 310 land slides in the two watersheds were caused by logging and road building. Local environmentalist Linda Williams is also upset about logging, as well as allowances for mining, in the watershed plan. They say water quality is the primary concern.

Coast Garibaldi medical health officer, Dr. Paul Martiquel, said he worries about the deteriorating level of water quality from the area in recent years. It's what initiated the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) process in the first place, he said.

The plan refers to the frequent occurrence of elevated bacterial counts in drinking water on the Sunshine Coast, the chronic problem of bacteria passing through the chlorination process "as a result of high turbidity levels," and says "water consumers may be at risk" due to the inadequacy of the chlorination process to kill *Giardia lamblia*.

"As the quality of the raw water diminishes, increased amounts of chlorine are required to adequately disinfect the water," states the report.

Said Martiquel, "we do have concerns. ...I feel watersheds should not be logged in because basically there's an increase in instability of the system and an increase in turbidity and that's the bottom line when it comes to health risks Our watershed should be sacred to us and that means nothing - not industry or people - in the watershed in an ideal situation."

But IWMP representatives say logging guidelines in the plan are stringent and go well beyond the mandate of the Forest Practices Code to minimize health risks.

Ferd Hamre, forest district operations manager, said any logging in the area "will happen under a microscope." "It's certainly a controversial subject, the issue of water versus other resources.... this plan goes to great lengths to minimize the risk," he said.

Forest land in the two watersheds accounts for about five per cent of the annual timber harvest for the Sunshine Coast. International Forest Products is the major tenure holder in the watershed forest, said Hamre.

Large public opposition to logging in the watershed occurred in the early 1990s when 1,800 people signed a petition on the subject. Both Hamre and Ministry of Environment spokesperson Valerie Cameron said the planning team considered that.

"With all the different resource agencies represented on that planning team, and given the circumstances of tenure and other things... this is the plan which best accommodated the planning team's interest," said Cameron. But Linda Williams points to public under representation as another major fault in the process which came up with the watershed plan. Of 10 members on the planning team, six are from federal and provincial government ministries, two are from logging companies, one is from the Sechelt Indian Band, and one is from the Sunshine Coast Regional District.

Said Williams, "We've had virtually no input in this process at all. Some people tried to attend IWMP meetings but were either denied access or not allowed to speak."

McGillivray said the SCR D will want to hear what the public has to say about the plan. He said the SCR D has had trouble changing management plans in accordance with public interest.

"It's been a big struggle all along in terms of who the managers are - Forestry mainly and Environment to some degree. How to wrestle control out of their hands is the problem. It's an age-old struggle. What people see is why should 14,000 water users be guinea pigs?" said McGillivray. The draft plan emphasizes traditional logging alternatives such as heli-logging and winter logging, but still includes provisions for road-based logging, said

McGillivray.

One of the most contentious public issues was resolved last year when the government designated the Tetrahedron Plateau as a protected area, precluding industrial development in a 3,000-hectare area of the upper watersheds.

Coast Independent, January 20, 1997

Local control of watershed essential, Coast politicians told

by Jane Seyd

The impact of what goes on in local watersheds and who gets to control it are issues all local governments should look at before the Sunshine Coast Regional District signs a plan which will govern what happens in Chapman and Gray creek watersheds in the future, says a group of local citizens.

It's an issue of local community control, they say, and about provincial management which hasn't shown enough concern about damage to the watershed throughout the long history of the issue.

Local governments need to push for control of the watershed which represents the primary drinking water source for the entire Sunshine Coast, Brad Benson told members of the Gibsons planning committee last Tuesday.

It's a message the group, which also includes Linda Williams and Dan Bouman, will be repeating next month to directors of the regional board responsible for overseeing that water supply.

Patricia Baldwin, chair of the regional board, said directors have agreed not to adopt the Integrated Watershed Management Plan until they've had a chance to hear the concerns of the group and other members of the public. "The principle of us having more control over the watershed is one we're going to look at very closely," she said.

Benson said the three local citizens, who have been part of the Tetrahedron Local Resource Use Plan committee in the past and have researched water issues, have serious concerns about the management plan, particularly since it gives final control of watershed activities to the Ministry of Forests.

In the past, that has meant both logging and roadbuilding were approved in the watershed despite protests from both the Ministry of Health and water management branch, said Bouman.

The ministry made the decision despite knowing risks to the water supply involved, he added.

"The essential question is who is going to make the decisions on behalf of what interests?...Everything that's done or not done in the watershed is done at the discretion of the Ministry of Forests."

At the meeting, Bouman presented committee members with ministry facts showing over 25 per cent of the lower watershed area has been clearcut and over 50 km of roads have been built there. Of that area, over 1,000 hectares are considered high hazard for landslides and over 56 per cent of that high hazard area has been logged.

"The condition of the watershed is not really a matter of opinion. It's a mess," he said.

After hearing the presentation, town administrator Terry Lester said likely the only way to ensure protection of the watershed is for the regional district board to gain title or lease to the area.

Four years ago the regional district prepared to go to BC Supreme Court to fight the Ministry of Forests for approving logging in the watershed and to demand greater control over the area. The court case was later put on indefinite hold pending the outcome of the only-recently-completed watershed management plan.

But reactivating the case may be one option if the watershed plan isn't acceptable, suggested Gibsons Councillor Barry Janyk.

Meanwhile, Baldwin said last week if the regional district is convinced by the group's research, it may be worth taking the issue up with higher levels of the provincial government.

When the final draft plan of the report was released in June, both regional district directors and health officials voiced concern that logging would still be allowed in the watershed, citing the high turbidity levels which have resulted from past logging operations which makes the water more difficult to disinfect.

Forestry officials, however, have said logging guidelines in the plan are strict enough to protect water quality.

Coast Independent, April 28, 1997.
Concerns raised over regional water quality,
by Roxanne Gregory.

Concerns about water quality in the regional district were raised April 24 as part of a discussion about the local watershed.

Some directors of the Sunshine Coast Regional District were surprised to learn there are minute amounts of carcinogens in regional district water as a result of the chlorination process.

The district has been using chlorine as a disinfectant for years.

Representatives from Dayton and Knight - the SCRD's engineering consultants - said "organic" compounds in the water are not being filtered out and that in combination with the chlorination process they produce compounds called Trihalomethanes (THMs) and other cancer-causing substances.

Chapman Creek THM levels after chlorination range from 20-59 micrograms per litre with an average of 35.

While those levels are well within the federal health limit of 100 micrograms per litre, directors felt they were still cause for some concern.

Pender Harbour director Jane Reid said she had no idea there were carcinogens in the water.

"Obviously this is something we have got to address in the near future. We can't leave this on the back burner," she said.

Dayton and Knight has proposed a multi-phase treatment plan including a filtration system to reduce organic substances in the water and to treat natural acidity that can lead to lead solder and copper leaching from pipes. But Sechelt Mayor Bruce Milne noted the recently-approved ten-year capital waterworks plan did not include anything that would reduce the amount of organics in the water.

Brian Carson, who is currently monitoring the watershed systems for the SCRD, noted that during the 1960s, harvesting of alder in the riparian zone along creek banks had resulted in a decrease of 40-50 percent in the "organic" components in the water at that time. There may be a way to improve water quality for less money, he told directors.

Meanwhile, "we have to look at more than the infrastructure needed to provide water, added SCRD Chair Patricia Baldwin. "We must also be more responsible about water quality issues."

Coast Independent, April 20, 1998.
Chapman debate focuses dispute over watershed
by Jane Seyd

From the top of Mt. Steele in the Tetrahedron, on a fine day there's not much sound except the wind. From this elevation, you can see down Salmon Inlet and out into the shining expanse of the strait.

To the south and west is the Chapman and Grey Creek watershed. Through its centre runs Chapman Creek, the massive artery on which the Coast depends for the majority of its water supply.

Combined, the Chapman and Grey watershed covers about 10,000 hectares of land.

For years, this watershed has also been the focus of intense political wrangling over which branch of government should determine its fate. The watershed has also been a flashpoint for debate about what should and shouldn't be allowed to take place in it and who gets the final say.

Now those issues are getting thrashed out in public again as regional district voters prepare to go to the polls May 2 to tell their local government what they think of a plan for watershed management.

The Integrated Watershed Management Plan, a hefty document of over 150 pages, took seven years for a committee headed by provincial government agencies to complete. Essentially, the plan sets out what is and isn't supposed to take place in the various parts of watershed and sets out stricter controls on logging, mining and recreation than exist under regulations now governing Crown land.

What it doesn't do is change the fundamental structure of provincial ministry authority over those activities.

Provincial officials like Valerie Cameron from the water management branch, who co-wrote the document, have urged the regional district to endorse the plan.

At a public meeting last week, Cameron argued the protections for water in the plan were "hard fought." She said the plan is as good as the Coast can expect to get from the government, which isn't likely to simply hand over control of hundreds of Crown land watersheds in the province to local authorities.

Those opposing the plan, like Dan Bouman of the newly-formed Water First Committee, say to sign the plan would mean giving away any bargaining power the regional district has to gain greater control of the local water supply. Bouman says local control is key to the watershed, because the history of the Chapman shows the province can't be trusted to look out for water interests of the Sunshine Coast.

By most estimations, including those of logging company spokesmen and Forest Service officials, the history of the Chapman is an example of terrible forestry mismanagement, which continued through the 1970s and 1980s. Logging and road-building took place on steep, unstable slopes. Over 250 landslides related to those activities have been recorded in the watershed.

In recent years, Forest Renewal B.C. has poured \$2.2 million into the area for restoration work like road deactivation.

There is, however, considerable debate about the extent to which the watershed has recovered, how much more logging may or may not affect water quality and what's needed to keep the problems of the past from repeating in the future.

Who gets the final say on that remains a key issue in the watershed debate.

The local Sunshine Coast Regional District - responsible for the water supply which comes from the Chapman - has long been troubled by its lack of ability to get the province to limit logging in the area.

A pivotal showdown between the two levels of government came in November 1992, when talks to draft the plan for the watershed had already begun. The regional board of the day was incensed when International Forest Products was issued a permit to log in the watershed without consultation with the local government.

To stop further cutting, the board went to court to seek an injunction against the Forest Service and the company. It also sought damages for past destruction of the watershed.

Eventually, an out-of-court truce was reached with terms that no further logging take place until a plan was finished. In return, the SCRDR agreed to put its court case on hold.

In the meantime, the government continued to fight for more control in the watershed, unsuccessfully. In the spring of 1993, an application by the regional district to take out a lease on the upper Chapman watershed was turned down by the Ministry of Crown Lands. Talks to draft the watershed plan continued slowly. But the basic disagreements over who should control the watershed remained.

In next week's Coast Independent, a continuation of this in-depth look at the debate over the future of the Chapman/Grey Creek watershed, with comments from government officials, activists, a water quality expert and logging company spokesmen.

A final public meeting on subject also takes place this week, Tuesday, April 21, 7 p.m. at the Madeira Park Legion hall in Fender Harbour.

Coast Independent, April 27, 1998

Editorial

Hewers of wood, drawers of water

Considering the importance of the issues under discussion in the mammoth watershed management plan for the Chapman, it's amazing there hasn't been more interest in it.

What goes on in the watershed and how has a bigger impact than arenas, pools or the future of the SPCA. But unlike those topics, most people have had a hard time getting worked up about this issue. Watershed plans just aren't "sexy."

To be sure, the watershed debate is a Byzantine discussion, leading through masses of studies, court documents, opinion and the murk of history.

Regional politicians must take some responsibility for the public bafflement over the vote next Saturday. Rather than taking a stand or helping the public figure out what their vote might mean, the board's been content to sit back and let most of us muddle through.

This is one area where the forthright opinions of past regional directors would have been handy.

In struggling through we've come to the conclusion the vote is possibly about two things: first, whether the industrial activity levels laid out in the plan are reasonable, and second, whether the current management authority in the watershed is acceptable.

While provincial officials have been at great pains to stress the second question isn't an issue, it is.

Because, as a read of the plan makes clear, the guidelines of the plan are just that — guidelines. Final say is still

at the discretion of provincial ministry officials.

In the watershed, where concerns of local government over the water source have been easy for the ministries to brush off in the past, this remains an uncomfortable arrangement.

There's every reason why the regional district should have more control in the watershed.

A look through historical recommendations about what should and shouldn't be allowed in the Chapman doesn't fill a person with confidence in the twin ministries' abilities to follow through with putting water quality first on their list. Everyone on the Coast has paid the price.

In order to safeguard water quality, local government needs the authority to go with it. A no vote opens the door to that possibility.

The last page of the watershed report brought the need for that control into focus. It's a list of emergency phone numbers.

Home numbers of local waterworks staff were listed, as were numbers for local health officials and emergency coordinators.

Home numbers for provincial ministry of forests and environment staff who call the shots were not included.

Goes to show whose future is at stake here and who should really have the final say.

The Reporter, April 27, 1998

Region readies for watershed vote

Corry Anderson-Fennell

Sunshine Coast residents will decide this Saturday whether a management plan for the Chapman and Gray Creeks watershed is all wet.

That's the day the Sunshine Coast Regional District has set aside for a referendum on the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP).

The IWMP is the result of eight years of work by local, provincial and federal government agencies, forest companies and First Nations stakeholders. It outlines an "integrated land and resource management strategy for the Chapman and Gray community watersheds."

In general, the purpose of the IWMP is to protect the primary source of drinking water for most residents of the Sunshine Coast while minimizing the impact of historic and planned resource development.

A "yes" vote in the May 2 referendum means the SCRD will endorse the plan.

"The whole purpose is to increase water protection for the community," explains Valerie Cameron, head of Lower Mainland watershed management for the Ministry of Environment.

The SCRD has been holding public information meetings on the IWMP throughout April. One of the biggest concerns to come out has been the idea of other resource-based activities taking place in the watershed, particularly logging.

"It's an activity people don't like happening in their watershed," said Cameron.

So does the plan go far enough to protect the region's main water supply? Cameron and colleague Ferd Hamre, the Ministry of Forests operations manager for the Sunshine Coast, think so. While they admit the IWMP will never completely satisfy each and every stakeholder, it's a "consensus-based" living document that can be refined by the planning team as additional information becomes available.

"Not everyone has loved everything in the plan," said Cameron. "But it certainly wasn't our expectation that we'd get up to this stage ... where there are now people who don't want to sign into the plan, especially when there's so many concessions."

And if forestry activities continue to be a main concern, Hamre assures "any harvesting that's going to take place up there, it's going to be under a microscope."

Once approved, some portions of the IWMP governing more strategic components like forestry harvest rates and zones will be taken to cabinet and declared "higher level," meaning subject to requirements beyond those of the Forest Practices Code.

The provision for FPC-plus forestry management- is one of the reasons Interior won't be endorsing the IWMP. "We do not support the requirements in the IWMP that go beyond the FPC," said Dennis Lozinsky, environmental forester for Interior.

Lozinsky says Interfor respects the efforts put into developing the plan and will still co-operate once the IWMP is in place.

However, “we’re not prepared to set the precedent of going code-plus.”

Lozinsky says Interfor’s refusal to endorse the IWMP does not imply the company doesn’t consider water quality a high priority.

The seven community associations of Sechelt are sponsoring an information meeting on the IWMP at the Sechelt seniors’ centre tomorrow at 7:30 p.m.

The Reporter, April 27, 1998

Watershed Plan won’t protect most vital resource

Mary Kay Wyman

Our Sunshine Coast Regional District takes on the giant, our government, on May 2.

That is if we vote no to the referendum question asking us to endorse the provincial government’s Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for the Chapman and Gray Creeks community watersheds.

According to the Water First briefing document, if we vote yes, the SCR D will be legally and financially responsible for meeting water quality standards, but will have no authority over activities which affect water quality, quantity and timing of flows

at the source. However, the Ministry of Forests and Mines will have authority over industrial activities but will have no obligation to water-users or water licence holders. In addition, the Ministry of Health, which formerly had the mandate to protect domestic water quality but now defers to the MOF on watershed management issues, retains the power to enforce the SCR D’s compliance with the Canadian Safe Drinking Water Guidelines.

The government promised through a representative to one of the public hearings that “this is the best deal we will get: the government is not going to hand over watershed control to a local gov-ernment.” Glen Clark’s words, “we log watersheds” echo this sentiment.

The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP), is the authority over the watershed reserve.

Community watershed reserve policy with MELP prohibits cutting licences and clearing activities and are active until July 22, 1999. This is an indication of how important they were considered. This may be one reason the MOF would like us to pass this referendum question; they want to be rid of the embarrassing MELP involvement in their clear cutting spree. Not that there has been even a YELP from MELP over the sustained and severe damage to our watersheds.

Greater Vancouver Regional District had the equivalent of 45 kilometers of logging trucks taking old growth out of their watershed in 1990. Old growth ecosystems are known to provide the purest, cheapest water. “The older the forest the higher the water quality,” said J. Franklin, chief ecologist, US Forest Service. Headlines on the front page of the Vancouver Sun, Thursday, April 16, 1998, reported that the government-appointed watchdog of the Forest Practices Code has condemned the province’s revision of the code.

“The changes are unlikely to achieve the desired objective of streamlining and cost reduction and are more likely to create new problems ... information about potential landslides or impact on cultural heritage sites can be held back from the public before

cutting plans are approved, increasing the risk that logging might go ahead where it shouldn’t. This narrowing of the opportunities for public input in forestry cutting plans will reduce environmental standards and result in a loss of public confidence,” said Keith Moore, head of the board.

Who is to profit from ruined watersheds/drinking water? Like municipal solid waste and sewage management, suitable drinking water is readily accepted as a world health and environmental crises. Great corporations with the support of beleaguered governments are buying up water rights, and selling water purification and waste management systems to communities and cities.

I have been in both watersheds numerous times since 1993. My video from the summer of 1995 records Mount Steele, Narrows Inlet, and the straight, heavenly mountains and water views with thundering, screaming winds scouring the vast foreground of hellish clearcuts and resulting blowdowns. Gray Creek, past its picturesque waterfalls, looks barren with slide areas frequent. Hikes along the Chapman Creek trail prove exciting as I marvel at the engineering that allows the gravel mine crater to be two metres from the chlorine pool and metres away from the Chapman Creek town water intake. I scrambled up the lip of this crater, causing landslides, and my dog fell into the crater on the other side. I didn’t see her for over 15 minutes.

With my bike group, we ride three hours up to the old Chapman Creek Bridge looking across to the very expensively repaired logging road and its slide-ridden scars coming right down to the creek.

In 1992, the SCR D took legal action against MOF and Interior for an injunction to halt logging while the IWMP was in process. In 1994, in response to the first IWMP draft, a 2000-signature petition was collected over four days which called for no further industrial development. That petition from 2,000 of our people rated two lines in the subsequent IWMP draft and no discussion of the citizens' concerns. We were relegated to the role as a minor stakeholder with Sheane Reid our only representative.

Linda Williams has been monitoring water quality and lobbying for our water through numerous commit-tees over the years. I counted 62 different processes involving committees formed and disbanded, legal actions, and stalls in the Water First briefing document. I personally know of numerous people who have devoted years to meetings and official forums to fight for water quality for us. They feel their energy was purposely used up. Linda continues the fight.

April 28 is the next public meeting at senior's centre at 7:30 p.m. Please vote no on Saturday, May 2.

Mary Kay Wyman lives in Halfnoon Bay.

The Slant, April 27, 1998

Integrated Watershed Management Plan

by Tracey Indra

On May 2, 1998 there will be a referendum concerning the future of drinking water on the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast Regional District bought water licenses for Chapman and Gray Creek in 1968 and currently holds eight Waterworks and Storage Water licenses.

This has been an ongoing process since the SCR D acquired the licenses, according to Sheane Reid, an SCR D Planner and signatory to this agreement. The most recent lawsuit between the SCR D and the Ministry of Forests was settled out of court based on the completion of this planning process. The IWMP has been ongoing for eight years. This is the third draft. The IWMP is a living plan which allows for changing factors. Information from the new Auditor General report on the protection of water sources in B.C., watering down the Forest Practices Code, and possibly legislated recommendations and Sechelt Indian Band land claims will have an effect on the IWMP.

Bob Weston of the Coast Garibaldi Health Unit and a signatory says "The Planning Team didn't come to consensus on a number of issues and it was a consensus building process. The Forest Practices Code came into effect part way through the process and became a negotiating tool, in some respects a negative one. They created the lowest common denominator as the First Nations. Found a petition from mining was particularly frustrating. One compromise. That in a proposal, the findings for public consultation, they lowered that by 100. I don't know you feel about mining is watersheds. It's kind of frustrating, that type of compromise."

Previous to the IWMP, there was no mining in the area. Under this plan, there is a No-Staking-Reserve zone which is 200 metres wide either side of Chapman Creek and 100 metre buffer along Gray Creek which precludes mineral exploration and development.

The area in the IWMP is split into four zones: Tetrahedron Park" Watershed conservation zone Terrain Constraint Zone -Forest Ecosystem Network (FEN) This is established first growth, mostly in bedrock and clay. Slide sensitive. There is a 600-metre biodiversity corridor along Chapman Creek and a 200 metre corridor along Gray Creek. Parts of these areas have been recently harvested and according to Bany Miller from Ministry of Forests, Co-Chair and signatory, it is anticipated to take hundreds of years to replace. He also says that "the FEN zone is not accommodating of any significant amount of industrial activity. Any industrial activity in this zone would require onsite inspection by an appropriate specialist.

There have been approximately 250 logging slides in the past 30 years. This area allows for environmentally sensitive forest harvesting.

There have been numerous studies but no environmental assessment has been done. 65% of the watershed has already been logged and a total of 2.2 million was spent on the Watershed Restoration Program through the Provincial Government and Forest Renewal. If the IWMP passes, replanting will happen at low level elevation and reseed from old growth at higher levels will regenerate the forest.

At the heart of this matter is not the mining or logging, it is the water. Barry Miller says "water characteristics were our first priority and there is potentially no risk, but nothing is absolute. The watershed is extremely sensitive". The SCR D now supplies water to 22,000 users and this system has the potential of 200,000. It is the obligation of the SCR D to supply regulated water, and a filtration system will be required in the future. At this

time, there are a number of factors which affect the water supply.

Bob Miller says “the organics in the water are commonly referred to as THM’s (trihalomethanes). When they react to chlorine its by-product is chloroform. It has approached 50 to 50 billion parts per billion locally. It was 350, but the interim standard is 100. It will probably drop further but is still under review as is the standard for aluminum.” In the IWMP, it states, much more is to be learned about the characteristics of how aluminum is entering Chapman and Gray creeks. It also says that river water is influenced by winter rainstorms from the southeast which maybe more acidic because of the S04 (emissions) from Port Mellon. The most important thing to remember is that the intake valves are near the bottom of the mountain and what happens above it is out of the hands of the SCRCD. If something does get into the closed system, it is not circulating and there is no way of flushing it out.

The IWMP is the blueprint for watersheds in British Columbia. In 1975 the Minister of Crown Lands put the Chapman drainage under the Watershed Reserve, under section 12 of the Land Act. In 1987, the same was done with Gray Creek. This is an administrative instrument for protecting water resources as this is a community watershed. Applications are not accepted for use under section 12 of the Land Act according to Watershed Reserve Policy Applications. There is however “Withdrawal from disposition: Section 12 now 16. The minister may, for any reason he/she considers advisable in the public interest temporarily withdraw Crown Land from disposition under this act. And he/ she may amend or cancel the withdrawal. This is enforced until 9999.

There are 10 signatures for the IWMP. This is how the vote is looking so far. According to Dennis Lozinsky representing Interior, the forest industry is not endorsing this because it has gone far beyond what is necessary for logging in the area. They will comply if it is passed.

The signatory for the SCRCD is Sheane Reid, however, director Bruce Milne of the SCRCD, “would like to have control over what I’m being held accountable for.” Under the IWMP, the SCRCD will be legally and financially responsible for meeting water quality standards, but have no authority over activities which affect water quality, quantity and timing of flows at the source.

The Sechelt Indian Band does not have a vote and according to Chief Gary Feschuk, a referendum will not be held in their district. The land in question is part of their traditional territory and is under discussion in land claims.

Who has the final say? According to Barry Miller, “the regional Director of Environment and the Director from the Ministry of Forests can sign it off.

On May 2nd cast your ballot.

Coast Independent, April 27, 1998

Impact of watershed vote looms large

by Jane Seyd

What’s at stake in next weekend’s vote on the Chapman and Gray creek watershed plan depends on who you talk to. But two concerns have always dominated the debate about the local watershed: logging and drinking water.

It’s a debate that’s pitted health concerns and the infrastructure costs of ensuring clean water at the taps against the social and economic importance of logging.

Around the province, logging takes place in many other community watersheds. Last year, controversy over many of the same issues facing the Sunshine Coast resulted in protests against logging and court action in the Slovan valley.

Many community activists on the Sunshine Coast are opposed to further logging in the watershed, pointing to the extent of past clearcuts and landslide damage as reason to leave well enough alone.

A number of people in the public seem to agree. Several years ago, over 2,000 signatures were collected on a petition against logging in the watershed.

Most of the concern about logging in the watershed centres on how industrial activity has — and could — affect water quality in Chapman Creek before it gets to the regional district’s water supply intake.

Health officer Bob Weston is candid that Sunshine Coast water does not always meet Canadian drinking water standards.

Some of the problems include occasionally high levels of cloudiness and organic matter in the water and high fecal coliform counts. High acidity of local water is another problem.

Disinfecting the water with chlorine to deal with problems like coliforms can also create new problems. Chlorine can combine with organic matter in the water and form chemical compounds which have been linked to cancer. These compounds have been measured in local water and are already a concern for health officials. Chlorination also makes water more acidic, to the point where it can dissolve minerals like copper and lead out of pipes and joints in the distribution system and into drinking water. But the more material that's in the raw water coming into the system, the more chlorine must be used to disinfect it.

If these problems become too serious, health officials have warned the local government filtration for the water supply will have to be considered. That system would remove much of the material in the raw water and lower the level of disinfection necessary. It would also come with a hefty price tag for local taxpayers — over \$5 million.

Already, the regional district has about \$30 million invested in the water supply system.

Community activists argue it doesn't make sense to allow more logging and risk worsening the water quality in Chapman Creek when many problems could be solved if there was cleaner, clearer raw water.



Sheanne Reid from the regional district puts the SCRD perspective on the plan at a public forum this month. Jane Seyd photo

Just what the relationship is between logging activity and water quality in Chapman Creek has been a source of long debate and study.

Most people agree any surface water supply does carry risks, with or without nearby logging.

Activists like Dan Bouman of the Water First Committee argue that in the Chapman “the magnitude of expense and the magnitude of risk has been greatly exaggerated by logging.... We have five or six logging-related landslides for every one that was natural.”

Scientist Brian Carson, who has been monitoring the water quality of Chapman Creek as part of a Forest Renewal watershed restoration project, is more ambivalent about that relationship.

No one was monitoring the water of Chapman Creek before logging in the watershed took place, Carson points out, so scientifically it's impossible to tell how much of the cloudiness or “turbidity” and organic matter in the water was caused by logging.

Logging has been halted in the watershed for over five years now, and while overall cloudiness of the water has improved, there are still occasions when turbidity in the creek is high. Carson says those “turbidity events” have as much to do with weather and rainfall as they do with logging.

Since the early 1980s, when water quality in the creek was at its worst, the regional district has also improved its system so the water intake valve can be

shut down for up to two days when the water exceeds standards for turbidity. Most turbidity problems wash through the creek in six to eight hours, says Carson.

In some areas, changes in the ground cover caused by logging have contributed to other changes in the water. Leaf decomposition from alders, for instance - generally found after an area's been logged - add more organic matter to the water than coniferous trees do.

Compared to other watersheds, water from the Chapman is better than some and worse than others, says Carson. Generally, local water quality is on a par with that of Vancouver, although Vancouver water also has fewer turbidity problems.

Water flows are another concern. Regional district officials have argued the old growth cover in the upper watershed plays an important role in moderating flows on the Chapman and have voiced concerns about logging there for this reason. Not coincidentally, that area also has the highest old-growth timber values in the Chapman and is included in the five-year logging plan of International Forest Products.

Officials from the logging companies, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Forests all believe further logging can now be carried out in the watershed without harming water quality under restrictive conditions.

The value of timber in the watershed is estimated at \$70 million by Ferd Hamre, operations manager with the forests ministry.

Hamre puts the volume at about 600,000 cubic metres of wood. Much of the watershed falls into the chart area of Interfor.

Dennis Lozinsky of Interior estimates under the restrictions set out in the Integrated Watershed Management

Plan, about 60,000 cubic metres per year could be harvested in the watershed, which would result in some 12 to 20 direct logging jobs.

“I would expect that a lot of the logging operations would be labour intensive,” says Lozinsky.

Under the watershed plan, logging would be limited to one per cent of the watershed annually. It also limits the total land area which can be in a clearcut state to 25 per cent of the Chapman watershed and 30 per cent of the Gray. Logging would also be prohibited for steep unstable slopes and a buffer on either side of Chapman and Gray creeks.

“In the short period I would say there’s 15 years (of work in the watershed),” says Lozinsky. After that, work would move on to commercial thinning.

Lozinsky believes the watershed has now recovered sufficiently to permit responsible logging.

“We’ve had a healing process in there – already,” he says, pointing to photographs which show the recovery of a stream channel between its ravaged 1973 condition and the green fringe of trees on its banks last year. Formally, however, neither Interfor nor Canfor is endorsing the watershed management plan.

Lozinsky says that’s because logging companies believe the plan sets “an unreasonable standard” for forest practices in watersheds throughout the province above the Forest Practices Code. Already, many of the requirements of the watershed plan are set out in the Code and other regulations governing logging in community watersheds.

“We don’t believe blanket Code-plus standards are necessary,” he says.

Valerie Cameron, who works for the water management branch of the environment ministry and wrote the watershed plan, knows “not everybody’s loved everything” in the document.



Valerie Cameron from the Ministry of Environment's water management branch was in charge of writing the plan.
Joel Johnstone photo

“Over the course of negotiation, there was an awful lot of give and take,” she says. The zoning system that’s now part of the plan was a result of that negotiation.

What didn’t change, however, was the structure of authority under the plan which gives ultimate say over logging in the watershed to the provincial ministries of forests and environment, while the regional district retains an advisory role.

That’s why Dan Bouman says the plan should be rejected.

“The Ministry of Forests is entirely in control and we have no control whatsoever.”

Bouman argues that regardless of how much or how little logging gets done in the local watershed, the local community which depends on the water should have final say over it.

He wants a rejection of the plan so the Sunshine Coast Regional District can fight for more control from the province.

“It should be the public’s right to make this decision, not the Ministry of Forests,” he says. “If we want to take the risks or we don’t want to take the risks, it should be our choice.”

Bouman points to a previous study of the watershed done in 1974 as one reason to be concerned about continued Forest Service management. That study recognized problems like instability in the watershed and recommended actions like no road building on steep slopes and no logging

right next to creeks.

Today, Bouman points to the logging damage which occurred in the watershed since the time of that report in the early 1970s as an example of why the ministry shouldn’t be trusted to oversee watershed activity.

“I don’t pay any attention to what they promise...They don’t have any credibility to promise anything,” he says.

“Various agencies in the government tried to stop the Ministry of Forests from doing the high risk activities in the watershed...They didn’t have any authority then and they don’t have any authority now.”

Bouman doesn’t even venture an opinion on whether the plan’s guidelines for logging in the watershed are reasonable or not.

“I don’t consider it a worthwhile question,” he says. “It’s not the question that’s before us.”

So far in B.C., only the Greater Vancouver Regional District and Victoria’s Capital Regional District have local control of their watersheds. Land owned by the governments — rather than Crown land — makes up much of both those watersheds. In the case of Vancouver, their regional district also has a Crown lease on part of the

watershed granted in the 1920s, which removed the land from the provincial forest.

If the province did agree to hand over control of the Chapman watershed to local government, it would be “precedent setting across the province,” says Cameron.

For that reason, Hamre says, it’s not about to happen without long and serious consideration. Any maybe not even then.

But there are challenges to that status quo position.

Among them is a claim on the watershed by the Sechelt Indian Band, which has included the Chapman and Gray creek area in its land claims lawsuit against province.

Chief Garry Feschuk says his band also opposes the plan, on the grounds the band should have authority within its traditional territory.

“Our band does not act in an advisory capacity in our territory,” he said at a recent public meeting in Sechelt.

“We’re not even going to hold the referendum in our district.”

Despite all the public debate over the watershed, it’s still not clear what either a yes or no vote from the public on the watershed question means on May 2.

If the public votes yes to the plan and the regional district politicians endorse it, forestry companies have committed to live within its guidelines. But as officials from the provincial ministries recently made clear to local politicians, the plan is not binding.

And there are specific provisions for changing it — to become either more or less restrictive — written directly into the document.

“A plan is a plan,” says Cameron. “It’s not written in stone.”

If the public comes up with a no vote, it’s even less clear what happens. One possibility is the provincial ministries will adopt the guidelines it contains regardless.

It’s also probable the regional district would take a no vote as a sign to renew its push for local control of the watershed from the province, possibly even in a joint effort involving the Sechelt Indian Band. But there are no guarantees of a successful action.

At recent public meetings, that’s been a worry for those contemplating the vote.

“There’s been a lot of thought and money gone into the thing,” said Mike Smyth of Sechelt at a forum April 14.

“If I was to vote no, what then?”

“It’s fine to say the SCRDC is going to jump in and do wonders. We don’t seem to have the resources or the expertise.”

Bouman rejects those arguments.

“People are elected to serve the social values we’ve established, not to be plumbers,” he says. “Technical expertise is not hard to find.

“I maintain we’ve got to stand up for our rights and not back down.

“Government functions with the consent of the governed. If there’s a consensus here they’re going to have to pay attention to it sooner or later.”