
FACTSHEET

April 18, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range
Chilliwack Forest District

Elk Thurston Trail and Proposed Forestry Activities

The district office has become aware of concern expressed by hikers and trail users about the Elk Thurston Trail and how it may be affected by proposed harvesting.

Here are facts about this important trail and harvesting proposals.

1. The **trail is within** the provincial forest otherwise referred to as **working forest**.
2. The trail does not have any legal status or designation however **that does not mean its value will be ignored** in the harvest planning process.
3. The **mandate of the Ministry of Forests and Range** requires that **we manage the forest resource for integrated use** rather than exclusive use. The intent is to find the best mix of uses for the land.
4. The **area encompassing the lower elevations of the Elk Thurston Trail** is now **within the legal boundaries of woodlot licence 84** issued to eight First Nations under the company name Ch-ihl-kway-uhk Forest Limited.
5. The woodlot licence area is about 800 hectares and allows for 6,400 cubic metres (m³) of allowable annual cut, which may equate to 7 or 8 hectares. The licence was issued pursuant to an agreement signed by the Minister of Forests with the Chi-ihl-kway-uhk Tribe to provide an opportunity to participate in the forest sector to create new economic and employment opportunities.
6. The **woodlot is a long term** “area based tenure” that is managed as a separate sustainable forest unit from the Fraser Timber Supply Area.
7. Woodlot **harvest operations are small** and the infrastructure (roads and bridges) is established to manage them long term. In other words, roads are strategically placed to manage the woodlot in perpetuity. As a consequence, they must be well designed and expertly located.
8. The **woodlot location was selected because it is on the interface between rural development and wild lands**. Due to their nature, woodlots provide for a gentler, smaller scale approach to harvesting. In addition, they also provide some security on forest lands that are frequented by both good and bad-intentioned users.

9. The forest in the woodlot is second growth. Other **portions of the trail have been harvested as recently as 2004** where helicopters were used to selectively remove trees adjacent to the trail. Most trail users are unaware of this activity.
10. The Ch-ihl-kway-uhk are currently carrying out the required steps to provide for **public input into their woodlot licence plan proposal**. That input may or may not influence their final plan submission to the Ministry of Forests and Range's designated decision maker. **We encourage those who have a concern or suggestion to make their issues known to the licensee**. The contact person for Ch-ihl-kway-uhk Forest Limited is **Matt Wealick, Registered Professional Forester**.
11. Due to the public concern raised, the Chilliwack Forest District has had discussions with Matt Wealick, Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts and the Ministry of Environment. **All three agencies and the company are committed to finding the best solution to meet both the objectives for trail use and harvesting** over the long term.
12. **While forest recreation trails are not intended to be lineal parks**, neither does the Ministry want trails to be focused on logging slash.
13. The **current plan before the Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) is referred to as a Woodlot Licence Plan**. **In this case the plan before the MFR is a DRAFT for information purposes only. The licensee will collect public and stakeholder input and then may modify the plan before it is submitted as a final product to the MFR for decision. A Woodlot Licence Plan does not require that blocks and roads be shown.** The Woodlot Licence Plan outlines the licensee's commitments and objectives related to recreational use, among other uses and values. **The draft SITE PLAN is a licensee tool which has been shared with the Ministry of Forests and Range as a courtesy**. The draft site plan suggests that a 200-metre portion of the lower trail may become an access road. It also proposes that parts of the trail will fall inside cut blocks. The type of harvesting system has not been determined.
14. The **Chilliwack Forest District is home to many trails**, some that are historical for both First Nations and European settlement. Many are new and have become tourist destinations and provide wonderful opportunities for the public to experience our vast and dynamic forest ecosystems.
15. **For decades, the Chilliwack Forest District has worked constructively with the forest industry and trail users to find compromises that best reflect the interests of all parties**. For example, compromises may involve moving short sections of the trail, managing the forest cover differently near the trail, and providing buffers.
16. **The location of this woodlot presents some opportunity for win/win solutions**. Similar to Spoon Valley (Mount Cheam trailhead), it is possible to manage a staging area with facilities for parking, picnics and sanitary facilities. The woodlot licensee will provide regular monitoring of the area in terms of untoward use, including

dumping of garbage and vehicles, rowdy parties and misuse of the trail by motorized equipment.

17. Woodlot 84 encompasses three species at risk reserves including Tall Bugbane plant, Pacific Water Shrew and Pacific Giant Salamander.

The question most often asked about the proposed harvesting is: “Why must harvesting happen here? Surely the Chilliwack Forest District is large enough at 1.4 million hectares that we can set aside this one small area?”

Although the district is large, forestry activities are constrained by a number of factors:

- i) 50% of the forest district is non- merchantable forest types, rock, ice and water
- ii) 21% of the forest district is parks
- iii) 4% is private or developed lands, such as highways, towns, or hydro lines
- iv) 25% is working forest
- v) The allowable annual cut for the forest district is based on all of the available working forest being available at some point in time.
- vi) The working forest is further constrained by reserves and set-asides such as riparian management areas, adjacency rules where logging cannot occur next to fresh openings, wildlife set-asides, species at risk requirements, visual management restrictions, blow down management requirements, First Nations values, and old growth set-asides. As a consequence, it is an imperative that the full land base is utilized.
- vii) The area where harvesting is proposed has been harvested before. It is exceptional growing site and significant funds have been invested to manage the forest resource.

In summary, the forest district understands and appreciates the concerns expressed by hikers and trail users and hopes the information provided here will improve understanding.

Thank you for taking the time to read these facts.

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Ministry of Forests and Range**