

LETTER: Rights of logging companies and water users are unbalanced

From reader Al Walters Dec. 7, 2017 10:00 a.m.
LettersOpinion

Re: “Logging in watersheds — Nelson area logging companies weigh in” (Nov. 29)

This piece demonstrates the large gap between forest companies’ views and those of residents who depend on local watersheds for domestic water. With due respect, I think this piece does a disservice to area residents, and to the forest companies themselves — not least, because it helps perpetuate a lack of understanding of fundamental conflicts we all face.

The issue is not whether forest professionals are “passionate advocates” for healthy forests, and “live, work and play in the same forests” as we do. Indeed, all the forest professionals I’ve met have been well-meaning. That doesn’t remove the risk inequality, particularly under current provincial legislation that favours forest company interests over those of water users.

Check out the legislation, the “legal requirements,” and the “professional reliance” issue, and you will see how unbalanced the rights of companies and water users are. Forest companies need to make money — now even in domestic watersheds where people get their water but have no guarantee of water quality or quantity. Companies stand to profit, while water users bear all the risk — risk which exists regardless of how local and well-meaning forest professionals are. If you can’t acknowledge the basis for conflicts, meaningful discussion won’t happen.

In Laird creek near Balfour, a landslide and debris flow in 2011, caused by logging, seriously damaged domestic water supplies. After the slide, due to the instability of the terrain, BCTS Timber Sales deactivated and re-contoured the logging road. Now the new tenure holder, Cooper Creek Cedar, a division of Porcupine Wood Products, has told an unwilling community that they plan to re-open that road above the landslide.

Companies can sincerely promise to carefully rely on the best professional guidance, and still cause a landslide in unstable terrain. In Laird Creek, similar promises and assurances were given, and all risks were declared to be low, but a landslide still happened. This piece in the Nelson Star, and broad repetitive assurances echoing 1980s rhetoric, are not designed to address the reality of logging in today’s domestic watersheds.

Al Walters, Balfour

<https://www.nelsonstar.com/opinion/rights-of-logging-companies-and-water-users-are-unbalanced/>

Resp.Article.ILMA.Balfour.dec2017