

Vaughn Palmer wrote a column in the Vancouver Sun “chastising” our SCRD for wasting taxpayers money in the recent LBH process. See Hans Penner letter to the Vancouver Sun Editor setting the record straight.

Hans Penner letter to editor

-
Editor,
Vancouver Sun,
Issues and Ideas
Suite 1-200 Granville Street ,
Vancouver, B.C., V6C 3N3

October 16, 2007

I am writing in response to Vaughn Palmer’s column of Thursday October 11, 2007 “District’s anti-logging tactic earns a judicial spanking”.

Relying strictly on quotes from Justice Bruce Butler’s decision Vaughn Palmer is very condescending as he admonishes the Sunshine Coast Regional District for constituting itself as a Local Board of Health and issuing an order to Western Forrest Products (WFP) regarding road building and logging in the Chapman Creek Watershed Reserve, our source of drinking water.

The basis of the Judge’s and Palmer’s critical remarks is that the Local Board of Health listened to concerned citizens instead of uncritically accepting reports and assurances from consulting firms and professionals working for the logging company (WFP). How dare anybody act on the basis of actual facts when you have a report signed by a PHD which says otherwise?

I am one of the non-experts noted by the Judge and in the column – the one “involved in the attempted blockade”. My evidence to the Board of Health concerned the Triton report by Dr. Watson and the EBA Engineering report of 2006.

In Dr. Watson’ own words “Logging in the Chapman Creek Watershed if done to sub-standard practices poses a general high hazard to drinking water quality”. Incredibly, without any field reconnaissance or inspection of WFP’s actual work in the cut-blocks, the Doctor was satisfied by the commitment of the company to implement “good practices”.

My own field inspection indicated that five culverts shown on the approved Road Construction Map had not been installed, two crushed culverts and no erosion or silt abatement measures taken when the incomplete road, in the watershed, was left over the winter – these are good practices? The Triton report also notes that cut block WC-021 “has gentle slopes (less then 10%) with no terrain stability or erosion concerns”. I measured the slopes in cut block WC-021 and found most of the terrain is well over 10% grade, with many areas of steeper slopes of 18% to over 30%.

I also reported to the Board my measurements of slopes in helicopter cut block WC-043. In the EBA report of 2006, used by WFP to justify approval of the cutting permit, it notes specifically that “Final block layout will only include benches where slopes are 60% and less”. I measured slopes of 80% to 100% in cut block WC-043 – none were less than 60%. Incidentally, my slope measurements were confirmed in a later report by Forsite Consultants, a fact not mentioned by the Judge – in whose opinion “with dry understatement” according to Palmer, I had no relevant technical expertise or training. (While I do not have a PHD, I do have a Diploma of Survey Technology from BCIT, ASCT, and am a certified Planner MCIP)

Now that the good Judge has delivered this “well earned spanking” and rescinded the Board of Health order what have we the non-expert citizens learned?

We have learned that by using the “law” and the threat of arrest a community can be forced to allow a faceless corporation to enter into its source of drinking water to destroy a thousand year old forest, regardless of what the facts are – as long as hired professionals say it’s ok. We have also learned that appeals to emasculated public agencies do not result in protection of our public health and environment. And finally we have learned that peaceful, determined civil disobedience, in this case the logging road blockade (June 11th to July 19th) can stop the destruction if all else fails.

Spanking or no spanking you can rest assured that if corporations with the collusion of governments and the law continue to trample in our drinking water, the peaceful action of concerned residents on the Sunshine Coast this summer, will happen again – here and elsewhere.

Hans Penner
686 Conrad Road
Roberts Creek BC
V0N 2W6 Ph. 604 886 5730