

Group asks M&B to defer logging at Pearl Lake

An open letter to MacMillan Bloedel, filed with the Courier-Islander for publication:

The Oyster River Enhancement Society (ORES), working in the same Oyster River Watershed in which MacMillan Bloedel is currently logging, is requesting that Pearl Lake and its surrounding area be deferred from logging while you enter into negotiations with the Provincial Government to swap this magnificent habitat for forestry lands elsewhere in the Province. Over the years similar requests have been made by several concerned environmental groups. But now as active logging approaches the Pearl Lake area which is adjacent to Strathcona Park, we encourage you to take the necessary steps to make this swap an actuality.

Congratulations on MacMillan Bloedel being named "the company of the year" by TOMORROW, the Swedish publication, in its January-February issue, 1999, especially as TOMORROW is a global business-environment magazine with a circulation of about 20,000, mostly to corporate chiefs, environmental organizations and "government agencies with a stake in current environmental trends." The article explains why you chose to abandon "the tried-and-true" clear-cut logging of old growth forests for variable-retention logging, the new method of coastal rain-forest logging which your company is phasing in over a five year period. I believe that in the article you are quoted as saying: "You can clear-cut all you want but it won't mean a thing if nobody buys your wood." "We are pleased to be singled out," your manager of forest policy relations Dennis Fitzgerald said. "It's a significant recognition for us on a global scale." We welcome your new harvesting strategies which apply as well to privately owned lands.

ORES is also a member of a sister organization concerned with the Oyster River Watershed, The Oyster River Watershed Management Committee (ORWMC) whose mandate is maintaining the quality and quantity of Oyster River flows. At the latter bi-monthly meetings we discuss together harvesting strategies with members of your company who also sit as members of ORWMC. Ken Mackenzie, Division Forester of the Menzies Bay Division and Gord Easton, engineer of the same Division, have taken us through your dramatic new forest management program which phases out conventional clearcutting of old growth forests which as you say "...will give employees a renewed sense of pride and our customers and investors renewed confidence in our company."

What would give ORES, the Friends of Strathcona, and other local groups renewed confidence in your company would be for you to initiate a swap of Pearl Lake and timber that lies between it and

Strathcona Park for lands elsewhere in the Province. This is not a new request. The Friends have made previous submissions to ORWMC, to M&B and the government and have had previous discussions regarding suitable land trades with M&B and with BC Parks. BC Parks and M&B have also discussed possible land trades for the area. In the Larkin Report such a land exchange was proposed. In 1991, The Steelhead Society sponsored an impact study of the Oyster River watershed. One of the proposals of this study was to have Pearl Lake deferred from logging. Another proposal was to establish a Management Committed for the watershed. Members of this Committee would include M&B.

We would encourage you to have a personal look at the Pearl Lake region with its unique flora and fauna and natural beauty, an area which remains a source of pride and pleasure to those who recreate there. ORES through its hatchery and voluntary help has taken great strides in recovering stocks of coho, chum, pink and chinook salmon, as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout primarily through habitat improvement. These runs are intimately connected with the type of forestry that occurs in the watershed, and we believe, the type of forestry that occurs in the headwaters.

Will you work with us, using your current tremendous influence, in bringing about a suitable land trade that would result in protecting in perpetuity the Pearl cutthroat trout primarily through habitat improvement. These runs are intimately connected with the type of forestry that occurs in the watershed, and we believe, the type of forestry that occurs in the headwaters.

Will you work with us, using your current tremendous influence, in bringing about a suitable land trade that would result in protecting in perpetuity the Pearl Lake Region?

Father Charles A.E. Brandt
Chair, Watershed
Protection Committee
Oyster River Enhancement Society



Pearl Lake, above.