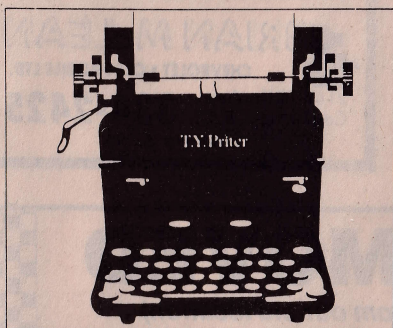


Concerns about Oyster watershed

A letter addressed to Mr. Ian Donald, President, Chief Executive Officer, Fletcher Challenge Canada Limited and Mr. R.B. Findlay, President, Chief Executive Officer, MacMillan Bloedel Limited and filed with this newspaper for publication.

The Bioregion of the Oyster River Watershed is of very deep concern to the members of the Steelhead Society of British Columbia. Those of us who live within this important watershed, who have hiked it, fished it, and worked within it are deeply concerned about the devastation that has occurred there in living memory. We have experienced and observed the effects of logging (along with other causes) on this watershed: the decline of salmonid stocks, the series of floodings in the fall-winter months, dangerously low flows in late summer, scouring of spawning beds with movements of gravel out into the estuary, loss of property and streamback erosion, the cutting of new channels and heavy silting of existing spawning gravel.

As presidents of the two major logging companies, companies that have harvested this watershed and continue to do so, and companies that own outright 78 per cent of the complete watershed consisting of 368 square kilometres, we are writing to you of our concern



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and to share with you the study recently completed on the Oyster River Watershed, a study financed by the Steelhead Society of B.C. The purpose of the study is to assess the cumulative effects of timber harvesting (past, present and future) on the Oyster River Drainage hydrology/streamflow/fisheries resource and thence to develop a series of recommendations for future forest management/site mitigation measures. To that end we have hired a Registered Professional Forester known to your staffs. In completing this study our consultant has had an extremely strong level of cooperation from members of your respective staffs in the Courtenay and Menzies Bay areas. We are proud of his work and of your cooperation.

Based on this study which has not yet been released to the press or to any other agency, a number of key areas requiring mitigation have been

identified. These areas which are identified focus mainly on road construction and maintenance, slope stability concerns usually related to past road construction practices, rate of cut by watershed, regeneration delays and planning. Some of these areas are of deep concern to the Steelhead Society, especially some of the continuous clear-cut logging that is occurring at higher elevations where there is a slower greenup time with consequent loss of snowholding power which contributes to peak flows as well as to low flows. The report, as you will see, is site-specific.

We are writing to you to invite you to sit down with members of the Steelhead Society and our consultant to discuss in detail this important study, to examine with us some of the key areas that have been identified, and especially to look at our recommendations based on the study.

We feel sure that you will agree that the time has come to think in terms of bioregionalism, that every user of such a region and watershed should be involved in the decision making for that region, whether he or she be an engineer or forester, fisherman or birdwatcher, resident or whatever user person or group. The Oyster River watershed is a "Community Watershed" and as such the

river is a function of all the activities within its drainage and we must realize that many user groups including residents living within the watershed are dependent upon the watershed. In reality, it is a far deeper question: how should humans live upon the earth in a mutually enhancing relationship with all other members of the biosphere (plants, animals, etc.)? How can there be progress shared by all the components of the planet?

To this end we would like to see an Oyster River Drainage Watershed Management Committee established. The watershed would be managed for an 'optimum' level of benefits from the watershed as a whole and at the same time maintaining required levels of water quality and quantity.

We close with two questions:

1) Will you sit down with us and examine in depth this study of the Oyster River drainage sponsored by the Steelhead Society of British Columbia?

2) Will you consider becoming a member of the proposed Oyster River Drainage Watershed Management Committee?
FATHER CHARLES A.E. BRANDT

Chairman, Oyster River Watershed Study Committee
The Steelhead Society of British Columbia
Comox Valley Chapter