

Great hope remains for lake at the headwaters of the Oyster River

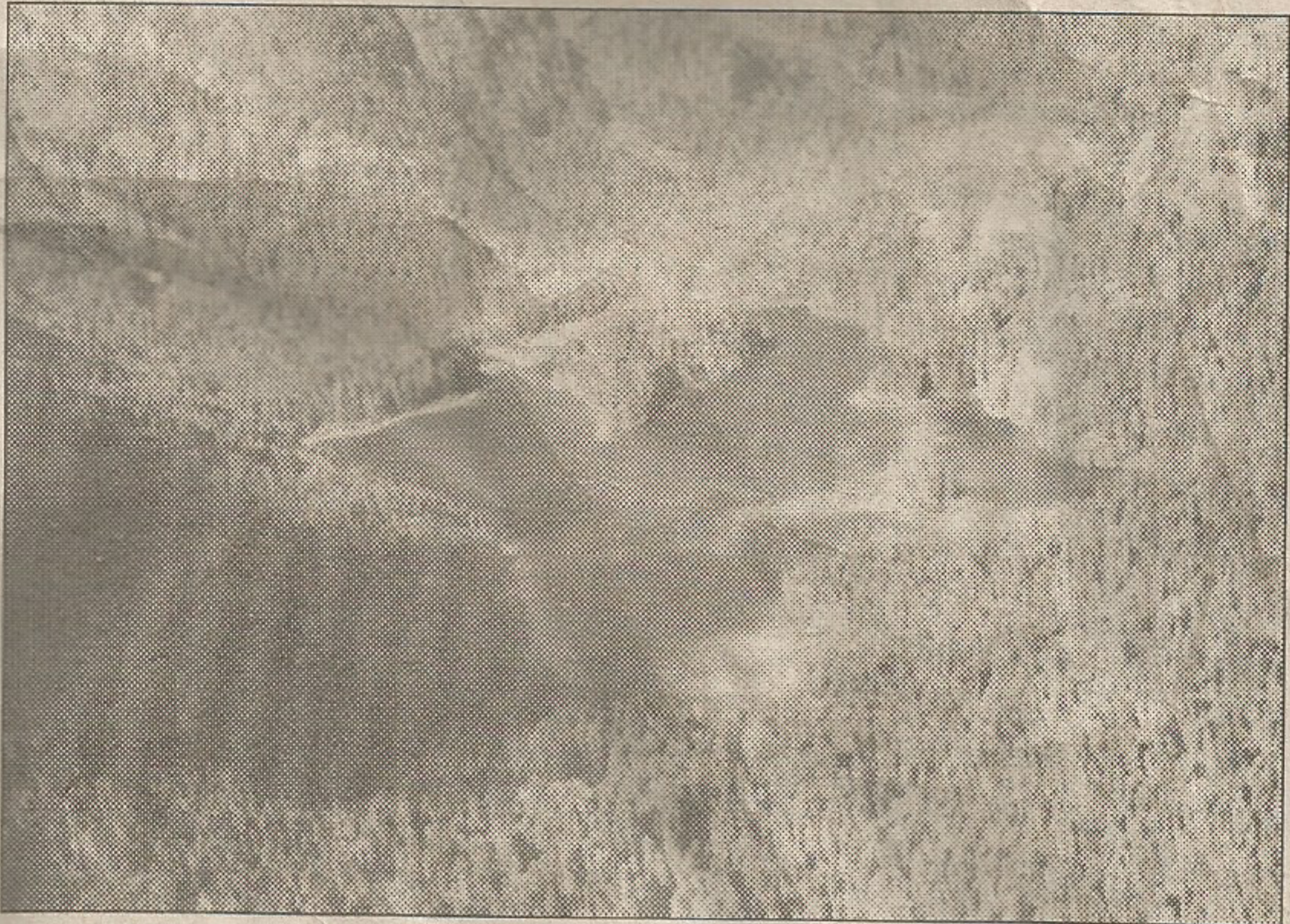
In his novel *A River Runs Through It*, McLean writes in the final chapter "...and in the end all things merge into one, and a river runs through it."

The Oyster River Watershed comprises 476 square kilometers of land. And through it, approximately 42 km in length from its headwaters in Pearl Lake to the Estuary which opens into the Strait of Georgia runs the Oyster River. The watershed, although diverse, is an entity. Alter any portion of it and the whole is impacted.

ORES, ORWMC, Friends of Strathcona, and other groups have always held Pearl Lake in the highest esteem, a pristine wilderness of rare beauty likened by some to Yosemite National Park which the great naturalist, John Muir, so passionately sought to preserve.

It now appears that Pearl Lake will not be swapped for other forestry tenures and so remain absolutely intact. But there remains great hope for this lake at the headwaters of the Oyster River.

Recently, in a series of meetings with Rob Harder, Operations Forester for Weyerhaeuser, Mr. Harder has given us indications of how Weyerhaeuser will operate in the Pearl Lake area. Rob tells us that Weyerhaeuser is committed to working with all stake holders to maintain an appropriate balance between society's ever growing demands for various forest products and the need to conserve forest ecosystems. Pearl Lake is located in TFL 39 and is guided by these important Forest Stewardship principles. A Zoning Review Team has been established consisting of MoF and Ministry of Water, Lands



An aerial view of Pearl Lake

and Air Protection and members of Weyerhaeuser staff. They have indicated that in the Oyster River Watershed there are three distinct Zones: Old-Growth Zone, Habitat Zone, and Timber Zone. Pearl Lake has been designated Old-Growth Zone, the only such zone in the watershed. Old-Growth Zone includes areas of high biodiversity and/or environmental sensitivity. High cultural and recreational values are also priority criteria. The primary management objective is the conservation of old-growth values. About two-thirds of the forest in Pearl Lake area will be retained. Harvesting on the remaining third will include apply uneven aged management including group selection and irregular shelterwood systems. Minimum stand-level, long-term retention is 20%. Rob Harder tells me that 2/3 of the Pearl Lake old-growth zone will

remain untouched, with only a "light touch" on the balance. And that no additional logging will take place before 80 years.

Although the Pearl Lake timber was cruised a number of years ago, Bob Harder has not had the time to study it. Last summer some work was done at the edge of the old-growth area to facilitate eventual work in the area. The plans are to construct no roads into the area. It will be entirely heli-logged. Gordon, their engineer, will do some studies in the area this coming summer.

Much of Weyerhaeuser's holdings, such as the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Alberni Valley are being contracted out to private contractors, but with the planning being done by Weyerhaeuser.

Father Charles Brandt
Chair, Watershed Protection,
ORES