

# Logging near Pearl Lake leads to concern

Scott Stanfield

Record Staff

Father Charles Brandt worries that logging activity is going to spoil the Pearl Lake watershed, a popular recreation area that contains a rare stand of Douglas fir.

The Black Creek resident is a member of the Oyster River Watershed Management Committee and Friends of Strathcona Park. These and other groups have attempted to include the area in Strathcona Provincial Park.

Brandt is concerned about logging on the south shore of Pearl Lake, but Island Timberlands says it hasn't touched the area since harvesting a block on one side of the lake in 2010.

"Oyster River Management Committee has worked with various logging companies," Brandt said. "We've tried to get some land, trade it. That didn't seem to work out ever."

"Right now I think the consensus is we'd like to get part of Strathcona Park. Originally it was slated to become part of the

park, but because of the value of timber on it, they couldn't afford MacBlo's (MacMillan Bloedel) price. It wasn't possible to make a swap."

In 2008, the regional district board passed a resolution that the province preserve the Pearl Lake watershed and include it in Strathcona Park. The preamble notes the area is one of the few remaining old-growth watersheds on the Island and a major source of the Oyster River.

The resolution was endorsed by the Association of Vancouver Island Municipalities but not considered by the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

Brandt claims Weyerhaeuser had planned to leave about 80 per cent of the timber around Pearl Lake. Island Timberlands stepped into the picture in 2005 when the Nanaimo-based company was created out of a divestiture of Weyerhaeuser, which sold its BC coastal assets. It owns about 250,000 hectares of property on Vancouver Island.

"It's (Pearl Lake) one

of many areas across the province — I'm talking around 100 — of different places that people would like to see put into the provincial park system," said Island Timberlands spokesperson Morgan Kennah, noting the company communicates regularly with the Oyster River Watershed Management Committee.

"The area of concern is privately held land by Island Timberlands, and it's managed for forestry. It's in the upper reaches of the Oyster River area.

"Father Brandt has been involved in our planning process for years and he's welcome to work with us. This happened two summers ago. He was part of a group that was toured into the area after it was complete to show that we followed through with the plan that we showed them."

To her understanding, those on the tour were satisfied.

"They would prefer no logging but given that there was harvesting they were reasonably happy with how it was completed," Kennah said.

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