

Bowen Island, July 20th, 2017

To the Honourable Doug Donaldson
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Victoria, BC

Re: Concerns about potential industrial logging on Bowen Island – draft FSP 643 – Salish FPU

Dear Minister Donaldson,

I want to extend my best wishes to you in your new role as Minister, realising that these are trying days for those who care about communities, forests and forestry in central BC.

With this letter, I want to ask you to intervene with BCTS to have Bowen Island removed from the draft FSP 643. You and your staff will likely have received other pertinent correspondence on this matter, covering several relevant points. Therefore, I will limit myself to some selected aspects that fall under Provincial jurisdiction and which may require specific attention.

1. Quality of the communication and consultation

I am professionally involved in communications and community consultations in BC and am saddened to see that the actions of BCTS in this regard have up to now been sub-standard, raising concerns and inflaming emotions on the island. Information provided to a community should be timely, clear and complete. Meaningful consultation can only take place after communities have been granted access to relevant information, and have been able to get a basic understanding about what is at stake.

However, Bowen Island has been taken by surprise. The island had not been included in the current FSP that is soon expiring, and there has not been industrial logging on the island for decades. Out-of-the-blue, BCTS placed one ad in the local newspaper announcing that the 60-day consultation period about the new draft FSP had started, in the middle of the summer holidays. The link in that ad to more information does not work, and those who persist and get hold of the draft FSP are confronted with a highly technical document, that makes no references to Bowen Island. Subsequent comments from BCTS have made clear that over 25% of the total land surface of the island can be earmarked for future logging based on this new FSP. The legitimate request of Bowen Mayor and Council to extend the consultation period to allow islanders to get better informed was ignored. The result is an anxious and angry community, distrustful of BCTS, and opposed to any logging. This will complicate a meaningful exchange of information and options.

I do not see any evidence in the plan that the Squamish First Nation (Bowen Island is located on traditional Squamish territories) has been consulted. Similarly, it seems that Mayors and Councils of nearby West Vancouver, Vancouver, Gibsons and Lions Bay have not been informed about the draft FSP and its potential impacts on the visual landscapes for residents and visitors in their communities (see below).

2. Content of the draft FSP 643

As mentioned earlier Bowen Island is not specifically mentioned in the draft FSP 643 and only appears on an attached map of the Salish FDU. BCTS has never logged on Bowen Island, and as far as I could determine the island is not included in the “old” FSP. While it is understood that the old FSP is up for renewal it is unclear why Bowen Island (Salish FDU) has now been added. Importantly, for the Salish FDU the draft plan does not address any of the values based on provincial government objectives regarding soils, water, fish, wildlife, recreation, visual quality etc. If these regulatory issues are not substantiated the Salish FDU cannot and should not be included in FSP 643. Let me highlight two aspects: Recreation & trails, and Visual Resource Management.

a) Recreation & trails

Many islanders and visitors alike are involved in enjoying and exploring the peace and quiet of the island’s natural environment. The island’s brand and reputation is dependent on our spectacular scenery and tourism is one of the key economic drivers on the island. The intrusive sights and sounds of industrial logging on the island would severely diminish the attraction of the island for visitors. The prospect of large logging trucks clogging up our small roads, driving straight through Snug Cove and taking up valuable ferry capacity for years to come is almost unthinkable.

When I go to the ferry terminal these summer days it is a pleasure to see many visiting hikers arriving each morning – planning to enjoy our trails through the forests and on to our mountains. I recommend having a look at <http://www.bowentrails.ca> for a map of most of our well-used trails. You may note that several trails – for example east of the summit of Mount Gardner - are in the area earmarked for potential logging. I live close to Mount Collins (the second large mountain on the island which is now under threat of complete deforestation by logging) and often use the unmapped trails in the area, as do other islanders and visitors. In the draft FSP several trails are designated for protection: “semi-primitive non-roaded, non-motorized, hiking experience...from which there are spectacular views”. We have plenty of those trails on the island and it is striking that in the draft FSP 643 none of the trails in the Salish FDU are earmarked for any level of protection.

b) Visual Resource Management

Bowen Island can be admired in all its majesty from large parts of the Sea-to-Sky Highway, used by hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Here is link to an article from the LA Times, describing the “panoramic views” of Bowen Island <http://www.latimes.com/travel/la-tr-d-canada-20141005-story.html> . This is just one example out of many. Bowen Island features prominently in the view from the popular Prospect Point in Vancouver’s Stanley Park, and can be viewed from many of Vancouver’s (and West Vancouver’s) beaches and waterfront locations. Our island is also highly visible for many residents at the more populated

mainland – in particular from Horseshoe Bay (West Vancouver). This visual landscape is at risk of deterioration. That is why I referred to the need to inform the Mayors and Councils of these potentially affected communities on the first page of my letter, and to consult the communities involved.

In its brochure “Keeping Track of Our Scenic Resources” FLNRO observes that “BC’s most sensitive landscapes are usually steep forested slopes to many views”, and rightfully states that “A burgeoning tourism industry requires a scenic backdrop to sell its products and continue to attract visitors”. This is relevant in the context of potential logging on Bowen Island. See http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/visual-resource-mgmt/vli_keeping_track_of_scenic_resources_brochure.pdf. The related FLNRO web page about the Visual Landscape Inventory (<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/managing-our-forest-resources/visual-resource-management/visual-landscape-inventory>) even displays the image of an island that looks remarkably similar to Bowen.

Still draft FSP 643 does not make any mention of the protection of visual quality of the Salish FDU scenery. Altering the views from any of the numerous viewpoints of Bowen is very likely to attract the viewers’ attention and therefore sensitive. It can hurt tourism to the island, and with that, an important part of our local economy. The damage may very well be extended to reputational damage to BCTS and FLNRO, and to the BC tourism sector, by creating a logging-based eyesore in well-visited spectacular scenery close to Vancouver. Therefore, these potential visual impacts in the Salish FDU need to be assessed and addressed before the damage is done, and must be included in the FSP.

It is highly unlikely that the issues mentioned, as well as the other concerns raised through various channels, can be adequately addressed before the deadlines of the new FSP. I therefore urge you to intervene to exclude the Salish FDU from the current FSP 643 process.

Yours sincerely,
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Cc: The Honourable George Heyman, Minister for Environment and Climate Change Strategy

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Mr. Neil Carley, General Manager, Parks, Planning and Environment, Metro Vancouver
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