

Complaint Resolution Report:

**Forest Practices in Hazardous Terrain
and Domestic Water Use**

Complaint Investigation: 070800



FPB/IRC/133
December 2007

Resolution of Complaint 070800/Griffin Lake

This is the Forest Practices Board's report on the resolution of the Griffin Lake complaint.

A resident of Salmon Arm wrote to the Board on November 16, 2007, concerned about current and planned timber harvesting by Federated Co-Operatives Limited (the licensee). The complainant was unsure of the licensee's plans for the area and wondered if the licensee had adequately considered the potential for landslides and impacts to a formally un-named creek known as "Chester Creek." Chester Creek supplies domestic water and generates power for five cottages on Griffin Lake. The complainant, representing the five cabin owners, asked the Board to clarify and help resolve these concerns.

The participants had previously discussed the licensee's plans for a cutblock that was harvested in 2007. However, the complainants did not know what the future road or harvesting plans were. Board staff, two of the cabin owners, and the licensee visited the site and discussed the issues. At the end of the site visit, the complainants and licensee agreed that they have a better understanding of each other's concerns and activities. They now consider the complaint resolved.

Background

The licensee had planned to log several cutblocks near Griffin Lake, west of Three Valley Gap. Cutting permit 797, block #3 (CP797-3) was adjacent to the watershed from which the five cabins draw their domestic water. Before logging commenced, the licensee discussed the cutblock with the complainants. The licensee also had two terrain stability assessments done for the area to ensure that terrain issues and hydrology considerations were taken into account. As a result of the discussions and the assessments, changes were made to the original cutblock layout; the licensee removed a portion of the block near the creek. Logging on CP 797-3 started in mid-September and was completed in late November of 2007.



The licensee is now building a new road through the watershed to access several blocks it plans to log. The road will cross the unnamed creek that supplies water and power to the five cottages on Griffin Lake. The complainant refers to the unnamed creek as Chester Creek and the licensee refers to it as "U" Creek. For this report, the creek will be referred to as Chester Creek.

In January 2007, the licensee was logging the right-of-way for the road. As the licensee constructed a small pilot road on the right-of-way, the cut-slope failed. The licensee notified the Ministry of Forests and Range about the slide and the licensee attended the site.

The licensee had a professional geoscientist make recommendations to rehabilitate the slide area. The geoscientist also recommended that the planned road should be resurveyed and redesigned to account for conditions encountered during construction. The licensee re-contoured the pilot road to minimize the chance of any further problems while it completed the new design.

This slide event alarmed the complainants. They did not know the location of other planned cutblocks and were concerned about the effect of future road construction on Chester Creek.

Resolution Efforts

The Board contacted the participants who agreed to meet on-site and discuss the issues. The complainants emphasized their concerns about the hydrology of the area. Chester Creek is not fed by other streams; snow melt and rain-water slowly percolate into and feed the creek. Chester Creek is also very shallow — only 15 centimetres deep and somewhat more than a metre across at the water intake. The creek is vulnerable if the natural drainage pattern is not maintained. The complainant wanted to know what would happen if logging or road construction interrupted or changed the hydrology of the area, thereby reducing their access to, and quality of, water. Furthermore, they were very concerned with instability in the area, especially during the rainy season.

The licensee explained its plans for the additional blocks (cutting permit 974). The four blocks are located to the northwest and are outside the Chester Creek watershed. That fact resolved the complainant's concern about additional harvesting.

To address concerns with the preliminary road location, the licensee explained that the previous cut-slope landslide had made them aware of the importance of minimizing any road cuts and that the planned road crossing of Chester Creek is being examined by specialists who will do a terrain stability assessment for the crossing. The licensee will use that assessment, due in March 2008, to examine the options for the crossing. The licensee will also consider how to maintain stability of the terrain by minimizing cut-slopes and disturbance to the creek.

The licensee stated that it will not use a standard culvert to cross the creek. It is considering a double-width bridge that would reduce cut-slopes and provide greater stability. However, the licensee has not finalized its plans. Regardless, the licensee promised not to construct the crossing without discussing the final plans with the complainant.

Conclusion

Both the licensee and complainant agreed that they have a better understanding of the site conditions surrounding Chester Creek. The main concern of each is the crossing of Chester Creek. The licensee is exploring options and will discuss the final plan with the complainant prior to construction. The licensee also offered to let the complainant examine the road construction and bridge installation. Lastly, the licensee asked that the complainant notify them directly if they have further concerns. As a result of their renewed working relationship, both the licensee and complainant have agreed that the complaint is resolved.