

News

People want to be heard

In 1990 loggers were being paid \$90 per cubic metre for bush run logs; today the going rate is \$46. Such was an observation made at a recent Healthy Forests/Healthy Communities (HFHC) discussion in Midway community hall last month.

The meeting, facilitated by Kaslo forestry consultant John Cathro, was held to hear comments from local people about forest and resource management.

Cathro said HFHC started with Bill Bourgeois, a forestry consultant in Vancouver who felt that British Columbians needed to do better on the forestry file; that forestry and resource management have slipped down the agenda provincially. Bourgeois organized volunteers around the province and nine community sessions are scheduled for the spring with another 12 being planned for the fall.

It was reported that a lot of people in the area feel that they are not being heard in Victoria and the forestry offices.

"We need to put more control of our natural resources back into the hands of the local people."

Some commented that

things started going wrong locally when forest districts were centralized – first the Kettle Valley office moved to Grand Forks and then Grand Forks moved to Castlegar and then to Nelson. "The decision makers then moved farther and farther away" was one comment.

Changes in forest management to increase the value of the forest through increasing top sizes, managing the canopy and ground cover to help the forest retain moisture were suggested.

More small tenures through woodlots and community forests were suggested.

The log market should be revised – Cathro rephrased the comment to be, "The highest value tree should go to the highest value user – rather than the current system of no log coming here at any price."

The need for programs that will induce younger people to get into forestry was noted.

There was a call for more education of the general public about the planning processes used by the government and how the communities can have input into the decisions being made.

There was the suggestion that tenure need to be re-

viewed. Appurtenance is the requirement that used to be placed on tenure holders that fire would be processed in the area where it was logged. "Social contracts need to be put back into tenure."

There was a call to reinstate the cash award system that would allow a logger to go into an area sooner to harvest timber that may adversely affect overall forest health. Current procedure requires a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) to sign off on the plan which means that often small blocks must wait for problems to become large enough to support the financial cost of an RPF.

Those who missed the community meetings last month can still have their thoughts heard.

The HFHC website (<http://beforestconversations.com>) is open to for comments. Comments from each meeting will be posted online and social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter will allow people to be engaged on an ongoing basis.

This fall a report will be prepared that will be used to lobby government by Bourgeois and his partner groups.

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