



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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GOAT RIVER DESTRUCTION BEGINS

In one short week, McBride Forest Industries (MFI) destroyed a kilometre of century-old historic trail by building a logging road on top of it. How long will it take to complete the destruction?

MFI started road-building in the wilderness of the upper Goat River watershed last month, despite serious concerns over the impact development will have on the area's unique environmental and recreational values. Logging in the first block could begin any day now.

Located west of McBride, BC, the Goat River watershed has for many years been the target of a protection campaign led by the Fraser Headwaters Alliance, a conservation organization based in the Robson Valley. At 35,000 hectares, the upper Goat is the second largest undeveloped, unprotected watershed in the Fraser Headwaters region and provides critical habitat for grizzly bears, Chinook salmon and endangered mountain caribou. The waters of the upper Goat flow crystal clear year-round and majestic stands of old growth spruce forest stretch to the horizon.

MFI's development plan for this area is in flagrant violation of the Forest Practices Code, and is currently under investigation by the BC Forest Practices Board. If pushed further into the watershed, the road will be built directly on the bank of the river for 300 metres, seriously damaging Chinook salmon and bull trout rearing and spawning grounds. However, government staff from the BC Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Ministry of Forests, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are expected to approve the road in the interest of allowing logging access to this controversial area.

The road and subsequent logging will also obliterate much of what remains of the Historic Goat River Trail, established in 1886 between Barkerville and the Fraser River during the latter part of the Cariboo Gold Rush. Recently restored as a 95-kilometre hiking trail stretching from Crescent Spur to Bowron Lake Provincial Park, the stunning mountain vistas and pristine wilderness it traverses put the Goat River Trail on par with the West Coast Trail as one of BC's premier recreation destinations. The trail is also a link in the Sentier National Trail, which will link historic trails and wild spaces across Canada.

If development continues in the upper Goat, we will lose an irreplaceable piece of our province's natural and cultural heritage. The potential of the area for sensitive ecotourism and habitat for endangered wildlife will be gone—written off in favour of short-term economic gains. "We're spending our children's inheritance," says Fraser Headwaters Alliance Coordinator, Roy Howard, "and in my mind, that is a great mistake."

The Fraser Headwaters Alliance is calling for a moratorium on any further development in the upper Goat River to allow time for concerns over Forest Practices Code violations, fish and wildlife habitat, First Nations land claims, and preservation of the trail and its surroundings to be addressed and resolved. For more information on the fight to save the upper Goat River watershed, contact the Fraser Headwaters Alliance at (250) 968-4490 or by email at roy@fraserheadwaters.org.