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FOREST PRACTICES BOARD FAULTS GOAT RIVER LOGGING PLANS

After an 18-month investigation into logging plans for the upper Goat River watershed, the Forest Practices Board has issued a report criticizing the district manager's decision to approve a logging road route on the bank of the upper Goat River without ensuring that specific environmental conditions were met.

The complaint, launched by Sierra Legal Defence Fund on behalf of the Fraser Headwaters Alliance (FHA), sought a review by the Board of a forest development plan by McBride Forest Industries Ltd. that included plans to build 150 metres of road in the Goat River, and lay cut blocks over the historic Goat River Trail.

"This is one of the last pristine watersheds in the upper Fraser River basin," says Roy Howard, FHA Coordinator. FHA, a grassroots conservation group in the Robson Valley, has been campaigning for years to protect the upper Goat River watershed. "We believe that building a road 12 metres wide right in the river will cause irreparable harm to the river and the wildlife it supports," said Howard.

Howard also endorsed the Board's conclusion that it was inappropriate for the district manager to approve logging plans in the vicinity of the historic Goat River Trail without knowing the exact location of the trail. He expressed regret, however, at the Board's failure to make a strong recommendation on the final location of the road. "The Board stopped short of stating that the road should not be built either in the river or on top of the historic Goat River Trail," Howard said "Perhaps the Board's reluctance to absolutely condemn the planned development lies in a major weakness of the Forest Practices Code that allows the district manager to override protective provisions in the Code."

In their report, the Board recommended that the district manager revisit the issue of road location and provide a detailed rationale to the public. Howard states that the FHA will be ready whatever the outcome. "We question how road building or logging in this watershed can ever be undertaken without significantly harming important resources, and have asked Sierra Legal Defence Fund to monitor the situation."

The Fraser Headwaters Alliance recommends that government abandon plans to log the upper Goat River and instead protect the watershed for its Chinook salmon run, its high concentrations of mountain caribou and grizzly bear, its historic trail, and its long-term eco-tourism potential.

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Sierra Legal Defence Fund

The Forest Practices Board news release and report on the Goat River investigation can be found at: <http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca/reports/complnt/summary/2001/IRC58s.htm>

More information on the Goat River can be found at: <http://www.savethegoat.ca>.