

# Headwater Headlines

CONSERVATION NEWS FROM THE FRASER HEADWATERS BIOREGION

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## ► BREAKING NEWS:

*The Goat River is one of the five most endangered rivers in British Columbia, according to a list released March 18 by the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC. "We are drawing attention to those rivers where the need for action and an appropriate response from government is deemed most urgent," states Mark Angelo, Chair of the group's Endangered Rivers Committee. Read the Council's background on threats to the Goat river at [www.orcbc.ca](http://www.orcbc.ca).*

**Fraser Headwaters Alliance**  
6005 Brown Rd, Dunster BC V0J 1J0  
p: (250) 968-4490; f: (250) 968-4410  
e: [roy@fraserheadwaters.org](mailto:roy@fraserheadwaters.org)

Michael Bouris photo

SPRING 2002

## Goat River logging heats up the Headwaters

by Taylor Bachrach

Until November of last year, the road into the upper Goat River watershed crossed a bridge over the Milk River and ended abruptly in a pile of dirt pushed up against the edge of the forest. Beyond the pile lay 35,000 hectares of pristine wilderness—one of the largest uncut, unprotected watersheds remaining in the Fraser Headwaters region.

Today it is a different place. In late November, McBride Forest Industries (MFI), the McBride-based veneer mill with rights to the Goat's timber, began pushing a logging road into the heart of the upper Goat. The first cutblock has now been logged and by the time you read this, the wood has been through the mill or sold as raw logs to buyers outside the Headwaters region.

Protecting the upper Goat has been a major focus for the Fraser Headwaters Alliance ever since the beginning of the Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) process in 1994. The upper Goat boasts tremendous ecological values: habitat for Chinook salmon, grizzly and black bears, and endangered mountain caribou. As well, an 1886 historic trail traverses its length. The watershed is optimally situated between Bowron Lake Provincial Park and the upper Fraser portion of the Rocky Mountain Trench,

making it an important corridor for wildlife movement.

With news that MFI had gone ahead with logging plans, the Fraser Headwaters Alliance stepped up their protection campaign. Volunteers hung massive banners along Highway 16 and the organization launched a new website to distribute information on the campaign (see page 4).

The upper Goat is a key part of the protected area network laid out in the *Fraser Headwaters Proposed Conservation Plan*, an ecosystem-based plan released last October

by the Silva Forest Foundation. The plan recommends protection of the upper Goat as part of a linkage between the contiguous parks of the Cariboo Mountains to the west, and those of the Rockies to the east. Herb Hammond, renowned forest ecologist and co-author of the Conservation Plan, says that the upper Goat needs to be accorded full protection. "It provides a natural bridge between all of the parks and protected areas in the vicinity," say the report's authors.

Since MFI only has permits in place for the first kilometre of road (now constructed), no further development is expected in the watershed for a few months. The

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Karsten Heuer photo



Taylor Bachrach photo



# FHA in a new era

Welcome to the second edition of *Headwater Headlines!* Our first edition garnered an encouraging response, so we now plan to put together an issue every three or four months.

Last year saw the Fraser Headwaters Alliance continue to grow as an organization, with new projects such as our riparian restoration project along the upper Fraser River. A major landmark for us was the release last October of the Silva Forest Foundation's *Fraser Headwaters Proposed Conservation Plan*, a document that will serve as a roadmap for many of our future projects. Sadly, we also received news that McBride Forest Industries had commenced logging in the upper Goat—a disappointing turn of events to which a good part of this issue is dedicated.

The New Year brings considerable changes to FHA, some quite encouraging and others less so. At our Annual General Meeting in February, we elected a new Board of Directors with some new faces joining the more familiar ones in steering our course into the future. There is also a

new desk in the FHA office and a new computer to boot (pardon the pun). However, in many ways our work is becoming more difficult, with the impending



Liliana Dragowska photo

loss of our region's conservation officer and news that the Ministry of Forests is soon to close their district office in McBride. The provincial government has made it clear that conservation is far from their highest priority and this considerably changes the political landscape in which we work.

In this new context, the role of

grassroots organizations in providing a voice for threatened ecosystems and species has never been greater. And our members are truly the roots in 'grassroots': the strands that bring the movement together and help translate our goals into realities. We hope that you will find the time this year to continue with your commitment to the environment. If you haven't done so already, take the time to get involved. From sending a quick email to helping with trail maintenance, it's all part of the same picture.

Finally, we want to stress that we appreciate your feedback on the direction FHA is headed. Give us a call anytime at (250) 968-4490 to let us know how we're doing.

Here's hoping your spring brings a navigable driveway and a bit of wood remaining in your shed.

Warm regards,

Roy Howard, Coordinator  
Taylor Bachrach, Outreach



McBride Forest Industries Planner Mike Jackman (far left), Fraser Headwaters Alliance Coordinator Roy Howard (far right), and members of the public at an information session held at the Goat River in January. Andru McCracken photo





Left: FHA's banner, 60 feet above the ground near the Highway 16 bridge over the Goat River (the tree on the right was later felled by vandals). Above: logging machinery and debris pile at the site of recent logging near the confluence of the Milk and Goat Rivers. Taylor Bachrach photos.

## BC Forest Practices Board releases final report on Goat River plans

*From an FHA press release, December 21, 2001*

After an 18-month investigation into logging plans in 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, sought a review by the Board of logging plans of McBride Forest Industries Ltd. that included plans to build 150 metres of road in the Goat River itself, and lay cut blocks over the historic Goat River Trail.

"This is one of the last pristine watersheds in interior British Columbia," says Roy Howard, Coordinator of the Fraser Headwaters Alliance (FHA), a grassroots conservation group in the Robson Valley that has been campaigning for years to protect the upper Goat River watershed. "We believe that building a road

12 metres wide for 150 metres of the river will cause irreparable harm to the river and the wildlife it supports," said Howard.

Howard 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. "Perhaps the Board's reluctance to absolutely condemn the planned development lies in the weakness of the Forest Practices Code, which allows the district manager to override protective provisions in the Code," said Howard.

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 Fraser Headwaters Alliance will be ready whatever the outcome, "We question how road building or logging in this area 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 develop the upper Goat River for logging 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.

► The Forest Practices Board's report on the Goat River can be downloaded from the Goat River Action Centre website ([www.savethegoat.ca](http://www.savethegoat.ca)) under the 'Government Process' link, or from the Board's website at [www.fpb.gov.bc.ca](http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca)

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company is now awaiting approval for the next stretch of road, part of which they propose to build in the channel of the salmon-bearing Goat River itself, a waterway noted for its high water quality. Because salmon are under federal jurisdiction, before approval the plan must undergo the scrutiny of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (see right).

On January 14, MFI held a public information session at the site of the new logging in the upper Goat to explain their rationale to anyone interested. Despite the cold weather, a heated discussion ensued between FHA members, MFI and Ministry of Forests staff, with FHA taking MFI to task for their destruction of the Historic Goat River Trail and the company's short-sighted motives. "We are against preservation," said MFI planner Mike Jackman, "there is nothing sustainable about a preserved wilderness."

Thus far marked by peaceful dissent and respectful dialogue, the conflict over the upper Goat took a turn for the worse on January 22, when vandals took a chainsaw to one of the trees holding up FHA's campaign banner. The banner, reading "Save the Goat," was stretched 60 feet above the ground between two old growth cedars at the Goat River highway rest area—something that apparently angered someone enough that they felled the 650-year-old tree in an effort to destroy the banner. In response to the destruction of the tree, then FHA President Lelani Arris re-stated that the Fraser Headwaters Alliance remains committed to their policy of non-violence, which includes the destruction of property. FHA has since purchased the tree from the Ministry of Forests and plans to utilize the wood in a demonstration of value-added manufacturing.

The campaign to gain protection for the upper Goat is at a critical point. Now is the time to make your voice heard. Visit [www.savethegoat.ca](http://www.savethegoat.ca) to find out how you can get involved or call us at (250) 968-4490.



## *New Goat River website launched!*

Some of you may have already seen FHA's decals promoting our new Goat River Action Centre website: [www.savethegoat.ca](http://www.savethegoat.ca). The site was launched in early December, shortly after receiving news that logging in the upper Goat had started up. We hope that it will provide us with one more outreach tool to help us spread the word about the plight of the Goat River wilderness.

Visitors to the site can find up-to-date news on the Goat River campaign, photos, press releases, and background information on the watershed's ecological, recreational and historical values. You can also use the site to voice your opinion on the fate of the watershed using our 'Take Action' page with its email links and snail mail addresses for decision-makers in the BC government.

The site is very much a work in progress and we welcome any suggestions as to how we can make it more effective as a campaign tool. Give Taylor a call with your feedback at (250) 968-4490 or email [taylorb@mcbridebc.net](mailto:taylorb@mcbridebc.net).

[www.savethegoat.ca](http://www.savethegoat.ca)

## **What's next for the Goat River: *The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act***

While logging is currently at a standstill in the threatened upper Goat, McBride Forest Industries is taking steps to secure approval from Fisheries and Oceans Canada to push their controversial logging road further upstream into the watershed. Part of their road plan involves building a portion of the road in the Goat River itself, a move that will involve a federal assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA).

The CEAA, passed by Parliament in 1995, is meant to ensure that the environmental effects of projects involving

the federal government are carefully considered early in the project's planning stages. Federal agencies are required to undertake an assessment prior to either carrying out or authorizing such a project to proceed. Because MFI's road building plans involve two federal jurisdictions (the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Act) a Canadian Environmental Assessment is required before the development is given the go-ahead. The assessment process is triggered when the proponent, MFI, submits their final

*Continued on page 6*



# In defence of old growth forest ecosystems

by Jocelyn Campbell

## Myth

*"After the point of being mature [forests] become known as over-mature or decadent. They are no longer vibrant or flourishing. They no longer give off oxygen into the atmosphere at the rate they did as actively growing forests. Instead, they are giving off higher rates of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Rather than using high levels of carbon dioxide to grow, they are now using oxygen from the atmosphere. The over-mature and decadent forest is a slowly dying forest."*

*-Valley Sentinel, Letters to the Editor, January 16, 2002*

Old growth forests have been given both a bad reputation with respect to their role in the world's carbon budget, and a poor bill of health in the eyes of the general public.

The idea that old forests are sources of carbon is incorrect. When an old growth forest is logged, the land is known to be a source (releases carbon from organic matter to the atmosphere). This is because, although new seedlings are taking in carbon dioxide, there is more carbon lost while the remnants of the harvested forest and carbon stored in its soils slowly decay. It takes almost 200 years to recapture the carbon lost, which is approximately the same amount of time that it took to develop the ecosystem in the first place.

Furthermore, research indicates that even forests that are centuries old are still actively sequestering atmospheric carbon away in organic tissues and soils. Thus old growth forest represent an increasingly massive pool of carbon. Up to 80% of this is thought to be below ground where it stays locked up for an extraordinarily long time. The same magnitude of permanent carbon storage is not possible in younger forests, grown on short rotation. Simply put, the older the forest, the larger the pool of stored carbon.

Most scientific research shows that logging puts this carbon back into the atmosphere. According to scientists at the University of Victoria, 40% of the carbon sequestered by forests is released into the atmosphere following harvesting. In other words, the carbon that was formerly in a branch or a root system, or in the soil, ends up in the



Taylor Bachrach photo

atmosphere (especially with the production of pulp and paper where the life span is no more than two years on average but even in cases where the carbon from tree trunks is converted to more long lived products such as lumber). Therefore old growth forests represent the maximum amount of carbon storage possible on a given area of land.

Some argue that these same old growth forests are decadent (in the process of decay) or over-mature. This implies an unhealthy forest. However, the concept of "forest health" is inherently fuzzy, particularly when societal values and preconceptions are involved. So while individual trees in a forest fall over and decay, the forest itself remains vital and functioning as new trees grow and



*Ahtiana sphaerospora*

fill the gaps left by the previous generation.

Public perception also describes older trees as past their physiological prime. This is a debatable concept and they are certainly not past their ecological usefulness. For a myriad of organisms, some with the fur or feathers that seem to be necessary to capture the collective attention of the general public and policy makers, and others that are as inconspicuous as lichens, old growth is the be all and end all. And so it may be useful to take a close up view of the biological processes occurring in old growth forests before we pass judgement on them as "slowly dying."

*Jocelyn Campbell is a lichenologist currently teaching in the forestry department at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George*

# [New Faces]

**1 Leanne Allison** has been assisting the Fraser Headwaters Alliance with their fundraising program, writing grant proposals and helping with the group's fundraising strategy. Her experience in non-profit conservation includes working with the Raincoast Conservation Society and Mountain Equipment Co-op.

**2 Liliana Dragowska and Sabine Nouvet** live in Prince George, where they both attend UNBC. Liliana is studying environmental planning and Sabine is finishing her second year of Wildlife Management. Liliana is also working on the Goat River campaign as part of an internship with the Prince George Public Interest Research Group.

**3 Hermann Barthel** is a new addition to our Board. A retired arborist now living in Tete Jaune, Hermann has been actively involved in the debate over logging threats to slope stability in a residential area near his home.

**4 Virginia Karr** is a longtime FHA supporter who lives in Crescent Spur at the easternmost terminus of the Historic Goat River Trail. Virginia is another new addition to FHA's Board.

**5 Nancy Taylor** of Dunster isn't a new face to many, but did recently join FHA's board as a director. She works locally as a counselor and is interested in the relationship between environmental and social justice issues.



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development plans for approval, an event expected sometime this spring.

Most developments of a relatively routine nature are fast-tracked through the assessment process via a 'screening' type assessment that is largely self-directed by the proponent. However, the act also has the ability to subject development proposals to more detailed scrutiny. In the case of developments involving significant environmental impacts, or in instances where there is significant public concern, the assessment may include a public review component or even be subjected to a comprehensive study.

The Fraser Headwaters Alliance is calling on people to send a clear message to the Canadian Environmental Ass-

essment Agency that the proposed development in the upper Goat is an issue of wide public concern, and to call for a full comprehensive review of the environmental impacts of road building and clearcut logging in the watershed. Without your voice, we may see the road into the upper Goat approved as early as this summer, and the destruction of the watershed's Chinook salmon, mountain caribou, old growth forest and historic hiking trail. See the panel at right for more information on how you can help.

To obtain more information on the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, visit [www.ceaa.gc.ca](http://www.ceaa.gc.ca).

Letters calling for a comprehensive study and public review on the upper Goat can be addressed to:

**Mr. Gord Kosakoski**  
Area Chief, Habitat and Enforcement  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
1278 Dalhousie Dr.,  
Kamloops, BC V2C 6G3  
Phone: (250) 851-4959  
email: [KosakoskiG@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:KosakoskiG@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

**Mr. Paul Scott**  
Director, Regional Environmental  
Assessment Agency Office  
Suite 320 Sinclair Centre  
757 W. Hastings St.  
Vancouver, BC V6C 1A1  
Phone: (604) 666-2434  
Fax: (604) 666-6990  
email: [ceaa.pacific@ceaa.gc.ca](mailto:ceaa.pacific@ceaa.gc.ca)





1946 aerial photographs of the upper Fraser River near Dunster, BC

# River of Riches

by Leanne Allison

**I recently took the train from McBride to Prince George. It was a blustery snowy day. Only occasional breaks in the cloud gave glimpses of high white peaks. The train tracks bent and curved like a shadow of the Fraser River. Outside lazy bends in the river were open while straight sections were a frozen thoroughfare. From high up in the dome car I could hover over every detail in the river.**

My eyes fell into the deep green pools and seductive curves. I imagined all the mysteries hidden below the surface. I thought of Chinook salmon arriving to this place from the Pacific, over one thousand kilometres away. I thought of how a massive hundred-year-old sturgeon could be resting at the river bottom below a snowy pillow.

A father and his son were travelling together at the front of the car. The father was trying to take a photo along the side of the train when he spotted a golden eagle. He yelled it out and a young couple behind him jumped to catch a glimpse. His son yelled, "Look—a Bald Eagle on this side." There were many ravens also. We soon discovered why there was so much activity—two coyotes on a kill in the middle of the river looked up anxiously at the passing train. The young couple smiled at each other as if it was a good omen for their trip. Their 'Canada' travel guide was leading them to Prince Rupert where they would take the ferry through the Inside Passage in search of more wildlife.

I was surprised how much cleared land and how many homesteads we passed. Many were abandoned broken dreams. At one cluster of houses there were signs of working life. Old trucks were parked beside

outbuildings and a skidoo track went out to hay bales in an open field. We passed the Penny Community Hall. It looked like a place with history and stories—people have made their home by the Fraser and the railway and they love it.

We crossed the river on a black steel bridge. I imagined how Mountain Caribou must have crossed in large herds when they were once abundant in the trench—crossing from the Cariboo range to the Rockies and back.

We passed a house with Christmas lights on at three in the afternoon. A school bus was at the ready to pick up noisy children. A motor home sat heavy under two meters of snow. A black satellite dish pointed south eating TV culture.

As we approach Prince George the frequency of clear cuts, fresh plantations, new forests, and monocultures increased. Lights from a pulp mill pierced the fog and falling darkness. Incinerator smoke mixed with the night.

My eye caught the last red sliver of sun setting between a thick layer of clouds and the flat western horizon. I sat back, closed my eyes, and felt rich for having lived in the Robson Valley—the birth place of such a mighty River.

*Leanne Allison spent the winter living in McBride on the banks of the Fraser.*

## Fraser facts:

- ▶ The 1378km Fraser River is the largest river in BC and the fifth largest in Canada.
- ▶ The Fraser drainage covers 250,000 square kilometers—25% of the province of BC.
- ▶ The Fraser is the most productive salmon river in the world and approximately 10 million salmon return to the river each year.
- ▶ 80 species of fish inhabit the Fraser.
- ▶ The Fraser is home to the endangered white sturgeon, the largest (reaching over 6 metres in length) and longest living (over 150 years) fish in Canadian fresh water.
- ▶ Approximately 2 million people, two-thirds of the population of British Columbia, live within the Fraser basin.
- ▶ Economic activity within the Fraser accounts for 80% of the gross provincial product.
- ▶ 44% of British Columbia's farmland is found in the Fraser basin
- ▶ 60% of the province's metal mines are located in the Fraser basin

## Sources:

BC Heritage Rivers  
[www.bcheritagerrivers.ca](http://www.bcheritagerrivers.ca)

Canadian Heritage River System  
[www.chrs.ca](http://www.chrs.ca)

Riverworks (Vancouver Aquarium)  
[www.riverworks.org](http://www.riverworks.org)



Karsten Heuer photo

## Who is the Fraser Headwaters Alliance Anyway?

The Fraser Headwaters Alliance is a grassroots conservation organization based in the Robson Valley. Since 1988, we have been working to promote economic and ecological sustainability in the Fraser Headwaters Region. Our mission statement is to “*maintain and restore the ecosystem health and natural beauty of the Robson and Canoe Valleys and all the watersheds associated with them.*” The Fraser Headwaters Alliance is a registered non-profit society under the BC Societies Act. We are a member of the Forest Stewardship Council, Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, and Land Trust Alliance of BC and actively participate in the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.



## FHA's 2002 Board of Directors

**President:** Cary Glenn  
**Vice President:** Brian Janecke  
**Treasurer:** Lelani Arris  
**Secretary:** Jill Howard  
**Directors:** Hermann Barthel  
 Virginia Karr  
 Nancy Taylor  
 Larry Stamm

## Upcoming

**April 22:** Earth Day! Join us for a general members meeting at the McBride Public Library Annex at 6:00pm. Members of the public welcome!

**April 30:** Deadline for FHA post-secondary bursary applications. Call Jill at (250) 968-4410 for more information.

**May:** The Land Conservancy of BC will be visiting the region to talk to landowners about private land conservation opportunities. Call Nichola Walkden at (250) 385-9246 for dates.

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**Contributors:** Leanne Allison, Karsten Heuer, Jocelyn Campbell, Michael Bouris, Andru McCracken, Taylor B.  
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### You can help support conservation in the Fraser Headwaters:

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Fraser Headwaters Alliance. Enclosed is my individual/family membership fee of \$20\* (low-income rate available, please inquire)

\*Membership fee includes membership in the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept the following donation towards the activities of the Fraser Headwaters Alliance (check one):

\$50    \$100    \$150    \$250    \$500    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Unfortunately we are not able to issue tax receipts for donations at this time

We also have posters for sale featuring the threatened Goat and Rausch River watersheds. Cost is \$5 each. Please specify:

Goat River watershed                       Rausch River watershed

Cut this form out and mail to:

Fraser Headwaters Alliance, 6005 Brown Road, Dunster, BC, V0J 1J0