

## SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT STAFF REPORT

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**TO:** Electoral Services Committee – October 19, 2023

**AUTHOR:** Sierra Rempel, Strategic Planning Coordinator  
Julie Clark, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** FORESTRY REFERRALS: BC TIMBER SALES (BCTS) OPERATING PLAN (CRN00155) 2023-2027

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) THAT the report titled Forestry Referrals: BC Timber Sales (BCTS) Operating Plan (CRN00155) 2023-2027 be received;
  - (2) AND THAT the following comments be provided to BC Timber Sales by October 27, 2023:
    - (i) SCRD does not support the logging and construction of McNR005 due to it being located within a Community Watershed, as well as the potential impact to downstream SCRD assets of the Dakota Creek berm and Hillside Industrial Park;
    - (ii) SCRD recommends that in advance of proposing/ engineering cutblocks on Mount Elphinstone near Roberts Creek, that a review of the cumulative impact to ground water resources of Aquifer 555 by qualified experts selected by Local Government water service providers be completed. Historical and any proposed forestry activities for the next 5 years, and climate change considerations should be considered as part of such assessment.
    - (iii) SCRD is concerned about the cumulative impacts of resource activity, including deforesting, that is proposed on or near Aquifer 555, which supports private wells who are not within the SCRD Regional Water Service Area and thus do not have access to other sources of water.
    - (iv) SCRD requests BCTS complete a Watershed Assessment for the Roberts Creek watershed and implement assessment findings prior to further design or auctioning of the proposed cutblocks within this area.
    - (v) SCRD emphasises the need for BCTS follow the recommendations of the Mt Elphinstone South Watershed Assessment Phase 1 and 2 for all currently proposed or auctioned blocks in order to avoid increasing current Peak Flow Hazards.
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### BACKGROUND

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) is a Provincial Corporation that is responsible for harvesting approximately 20% of British Columbia's Annual Allowable Cut and operates under the legislative and regulatory frameworks of the *Forest Act*, the *Forest Range and Practices Act*, the *Wildfire Act*, *BCTS Regulation* and the *Wildfire Regulation*.

SCRD receives an annual referral for [BC Timber Sales' \(BCTS\) 5-year Operating Plan](#). BCTS shares proposed harvesting and road building activities in order to receive comment on and understand stakeholder interests in advance of anticipated harvesting.

The 2023-2027 Operating Plan was received by the SCRD on June 21, 2023. SCRD and BCTS have a Communications Protocol which prescribes SCRD response within 90 days; an extension has been provided until October 27, 2023.

This report provides background on BCTS, analysis of the Operating Plan, and recommendations for response. BCTS is only seeking feedback on and only has a mandate to consider or act on feedback related to the 2023-2027 Operating Plan.

Please see SCRD webpage link <https://www.scrd.ca/bcts-logging> for background information about BCTS and SCRD role in responding to annual Operating Plan referrals. Past SCRD referral-responses to BCTS Operating Plans, including the Communications Protocol is also available.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the 2023-2027 Operating Plan BCTS proposes 5 new blocks, totalling a gross area of 100.63 hectares, to be harvested between 2024 and 2027. This report provides review of new blocks only, with the exception of comments on one previously referred block.

Maps of the 2023 Operating Plan blocks are available [here](#). SCRD has provided comment on the previously referred blocks.

New cutblocks are concentrated in three main areas:

- high elevations on Mount Elphinstone
- low elevations near McNab Creek, Dakota Creek, and Hillside Industrial Park
- Hotham Sound, north of Earls Cove

The summary tables below provide a list of proposed cutblocks:

Block ID	Proposed Auction Year	Net area in Hectares (ha)	Summary Details
McNR005	2024	15.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 14.21 ha in high elevation near McNair / Mt Elphinstone</li><li>• New method of capturing timber felled during road construction</li><li>• Road to provide “direct route” to Port Mellon</li><li>• Within Dakota Community Watershed</li><li>• Crosses Dakota Creek, and approximately 6 other tributaries to Dakota Creek</li><li>• Outside the Mt Elphinstone South Watershed Assessment Phase 1, 2 and 3 area</li></ul>

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ELPH010	2024	1.59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1.59 ha in Elphinstone</li><li>• Slopes along Roberts Creek</li><li>• Within Roberts Creek Official Community Plan Area</li><li>• Outside the recently completed Mt Elphinstone South Watershed Assessment Phase 1, 2 and 3 area</li></ul>
GRAN011	2025	6.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6.7 ha in Granville (Hotham Sound)</li></ul>
ELPH008	2026	33.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 33.5 ha in Elphinstone</li><li>• Above Roberts Creek and associated tributaries</li><li>• Outside the Mt Elphinstone South Watershed Assessment Phase 1, 2 and 3 area</li></ul>
MCNA002	2027	44.63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 44.63 in McNab</li><li>• Lower elevations along McNab Creek</li></ul>

Previously referred block:

Block ID	Proposed Auction Year	Net area in Hectares (ha)	Summary Details
McNR002	2026	19.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Located on slope above Hillside Industrial Park</li></ul>

***SCRD Service Area Impacts: Drinking Water Protection***

The (Provincial) definition of Community Watersheds includes watersheds where surface water licences are present for the purpose of human consumption by a licensed waterworks and does not include groundwater drinking water supply or aquifer recharge zones.

Deforesting leads to long-term ground cover changes such as loss of mature tree canopy, increased bare land, compaction of soil and road cuts across streams and along slopes. This can result in on and off-site effects of erosion, downslope sedimentation (the increase of sediment supply to a stream network), land movement, changes to drainage, increased magnitude of peak flows, which impact water infiltration processes that can result in a change to surface and groundwater quality and quantity. Industrial activities in recharge zones pose the risk of spills or other vectors of both surface and groundwater contamination. Logging near source water areas and tributaries can result in changes to the hydrological regimes of the area

and in some cases result in the loss of source water flows, which are critical in providing base flows to larger surface water streams or for groundwater infiltration. Changes to water infiltration as a result of logging are complex and differ depending on specific locations, time of year, and sometimes require years before impacts are actualized.

Protecting groundwater recharge areas is of critical importance to protecting community drinking water supply. The SCRD is increasing its reliance on groundwater resources for the provision of drinking water in the Region, as it looks to diversify water sources for the Chapman Water System.

### ***SCRD Service Area Impacts: Stormwater Management***

The Mount Elphinstone area contains many headwaters and creeks. While SCRD does not have a stormwater management service, changes to stormwater and hydrological regimes can impact services and assets downstream, both public and private. The SCRD is the lead agency for emergency management on the Sunshine Coast, and coordinates responses to hazard events that may occur. SCRD Official Community Plans (OCPs) identify many of the creeks in this area as at risk for debris flows, ravine instability and slope hazards.

Logging on steep slopes, in headwaters areas, and above developed communities adds to the existing identified risk of slope instability, flooding, debris flows and ravine instability. This risk increases again when it is coupled with the new normal of summer drought conditions drying out soils and vegetation, increased frequency of winter storms and increased intensity of rain events. SCRD provided comments about these risks on Elphinstone in the 2020-2025 referral response.

Recent years have seen increased heavy rainfalls where increased creek discharge has led to washouts. Washouts in the region in 2021 resulted in an Emergency Operations Centre, and State of Local Emergency as they impacted SCRD services and assets such as drinking water supply mains, transit services, and park infrastructure. In the Elphinstone area, damages to park trails in Cliff Gilker, watermain washouts resulting in Boil Water Advisories, and disruptions to transit services occurred during high flows on creek in the area.

### ***SCRD Service Area Impacts: Roberts Creek Official Community Plan (OCP) Impacts***

The Roberts Creek OCP includes the following policy related to 13) Water Service Areas and Watersheds:

13.8 Deforestation is a significant concern and any forestry activity should take into account possible impacts on water quality and supply.

The Roberts Creek OCP includes the following objective related to 13) Stormwater Management and Drainage Plans:

14a To maintain the existing natural watersheds' flow characteristics to the greatest extent possible by taking into account the cumulative impacts of each development on watersheds.

***SCRD Service Area Impacts: Hillside-Port Mellon Officially Community Plan (OCP)***

The Hillside-Port Mellon OCP includes the following objective related to land use:

2.1. To protect development from hazardous conditions in the form of land slip, erosion, flooding and debris torrents.

2.2 To protect valuable fish and wildlife habitat areas associated with McNair and Dakota Creeks, Mohawk Creek, the Rainy River and the ocean foreshore.

2.3 To satisfy the requirements of the provincial Fish Protection Act, in particular the Riparian Areas [Protection] Regulation, with respect to protecting fish habitat.

**ANALYSIS**

**McNR005**

*Drinking Water*

This road cutblock is proposed through a designated Community Watershed where the SCR D holds a water licence. This licence is not related to current SCR D water service. The potential future quality and quantity of this water source could be impacted by the logging of the crossing over multiple tributaries and Dakota Creek itself.

*Stormwater*

The tributaries and creeks this proposed road crosses has a history of high creek flows resulting in damages to Port Mellon Highway and scouring of the bridge crossing at Dakota Creek. The SCR D is the Diking Authority as defined pursuant to the *Dike Maintenance Act* for Dakota Creek Berm. The berm was designed and installed for the purpose of flood and erosion protection for highway and lands to the east, including SCR D-owned Hillside Industrial Park.

*Recommendations*

The SCR D does not support the logging of McNR0005 due to it being located within a Community Watershed, as well as the potential impact to downstream SCR D assets of the Dakota Creek berm and Hillside Industrial Park.

**ELPH010**

*Drinking Water*

The watershed of Roberts Creek is not designated Community Watershed, however, BC Well Database lists 164 private licenced groundwater wells pulling from Aquifer 555.

Changes in land cover on these slopes have the potential to impact private/commercial downstream drinking water licences on Roberts Creek.

*Stormwater*

ELPH010 located within DPA #3, Slope Hazards. This known hazardous area inherently adds risk and stormwater management responsibilities for downstream property owners, land managers and service providers. Impacts of logging exacerbate these risks through changing hydrological regimes such as decreasing of soil infiltration, the increase of snow cover and thus snow melt, and increase rainfall impacts on clear cut areas. The SCR D owns multiple assets along Roberts Creek, including Cliff Gilker Park and Roberts Creek Pier Park. Cliff Gilker was negatively impacted by high water flows in 2021, resulting in damages to park infrastructure.

*Recommendations*

SCR D recommends that in advance of proposing/engineering cutblocks on Mount Elphinstone near Roberts Creek, that a review of the cumulative impact to ground water resources of Aquifer 555 by qualified experts selected by Local Government water service providers be completed. Historical and any proposed forestry activities for the next 5 years, and climate change considerations should be considered as part of such assessment.

SCR D is concerned about the cumulative impacts of resource activity, including deforesting, that is proposed on or near Aquifer 555, which supports private wells who are not within the SCR D Regional Water Service Area and thus do not have access to other sources of water.

SCR D understands that BCTS is undertaking a Watershed Assessment for the Roberts Creek area and recommends the implementation of findings prior to the proposing, auctioning, and harvesting of lots within this area.

SCR D emphasises the need for BCTS follow the recommendations of the Mt Elphinstone South Watershed Assessment Phase 1 and 2 for all currently proposed or auctioned blocks in order to avoid increasing current Peak Flow Hazards.

**ELPH008**

Comments and draft recommendations related to ELPH008 are the same as ELPH010.

**GRAN011**

The SCR D does not have any services or assets that would be impacted by this proposed cutblock.

**MCNA002**

The SCR D does not have any services or assets that would be impacted by this proposed cutblock.

**MCNR002**

This cutblock was proposed in an earlier Operating Plan and was shown to be located within SCR D-owned property at Hillside Industrial Park. Staff received clarification from BCTS about the block location and have confirmed this is an error. The block will be removed from the

Operating Plan and further investigation into the current boundaries of the BCTS operating area is occurring.

*Advisory Planning Commissions Feedback*

Five Advisory Planning Commissions (APCs) reviewed the staff report in advance of this Electoral Services Committee meeting. Meeting minutes and recommendations are available in the October 19, 2023, Electoral Area Services Committee agenda package.

*Organization and Intergovernmental Implications*

The SCRD and BCTS signed a communication protocol on June 2, 2014. The protocol ensures that BCTS provides timely information about its operational plans and that the SCRD can provide comments back. Each successive year builds on previous years' plans as new field survey information is collected and stakeholder information is considered. Staff will continue to work cooperatively with BCTS to identify future opportunities for community consultation.

*Communications Strategy*

BCTS is responsible for consultation related to the Operations Plan. SCRD reviews and in turn refers to Advisory Commissions for comment in advance of responding to the BCTS referral.

Five Advisory Planning Commissions reviewed the staff report in advance of the Electoral Services Committee meeting.

**STRATEGIC PLAN AND RELATED POLICIES**

Responding to BCTS's 2023-2027 Operating Plan calls on all of the focus areas of SCRD's 2019-2023 Strategic plan: climate resilience, advocacy, asset stewardship, engagement and communications and regional collaboration. A multidisciplinary approach is required to address the concerns described in this report.

**CONCLUSION**

SCRD received forestry referrals from BC Timber Sales regarding the 2023-2027 Operating Plan. SCRD analysis shows potential impact to drinking water services, and increased risk of flooding and sediment transfer which could impact downstream SCRD assets.

SCRD has and will continue to emphasize strong concern to BCTS regarding cumulative impacts to:

- Downstream private property owners' stormwater impact
- Downstream public assets, such as roads, parks, watermains, and creeks
- Regional and provincial emergency response requirements for stormwater impact such as recent events in Fall of 2021.

SCRD has and will continue to advocate for:

- A proactive, landscape-level, multidisciplinary, cumulative impact assessment framework;

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- Climate change informed, climate-resilient forest planning that recognizes and values local forests as local assets that protect against increasing climate impacts.

**ATTACHMENTS**

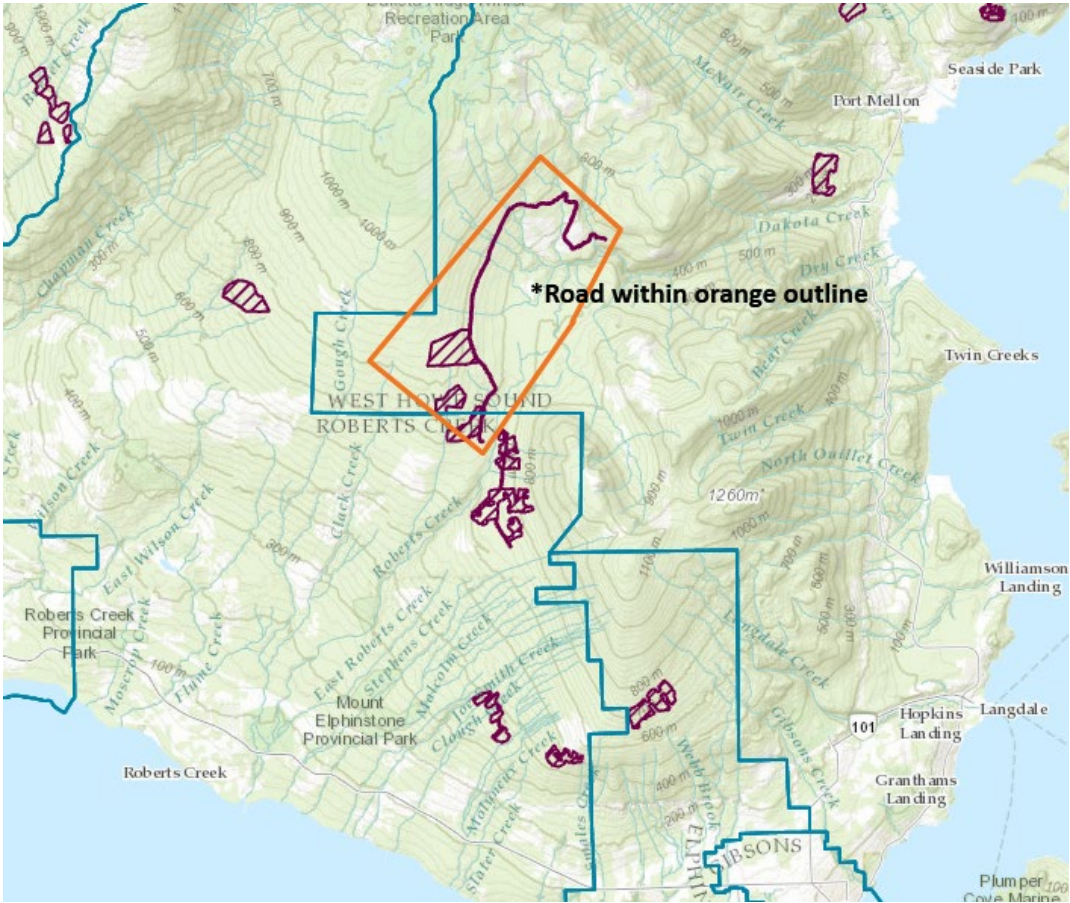
Attachment A – BCTS Proposed Block Maps 2023-2027

Reviewed by:			
Manager		Finance	
GM	X – I. Hall	Legislative	X - S. Reid
CAO	X – D. McKinley	Other	X - J. Clark



BC Timber Sales Operating Plan 2023-2027: 2023 Proposed Blocks Maps (for context only)

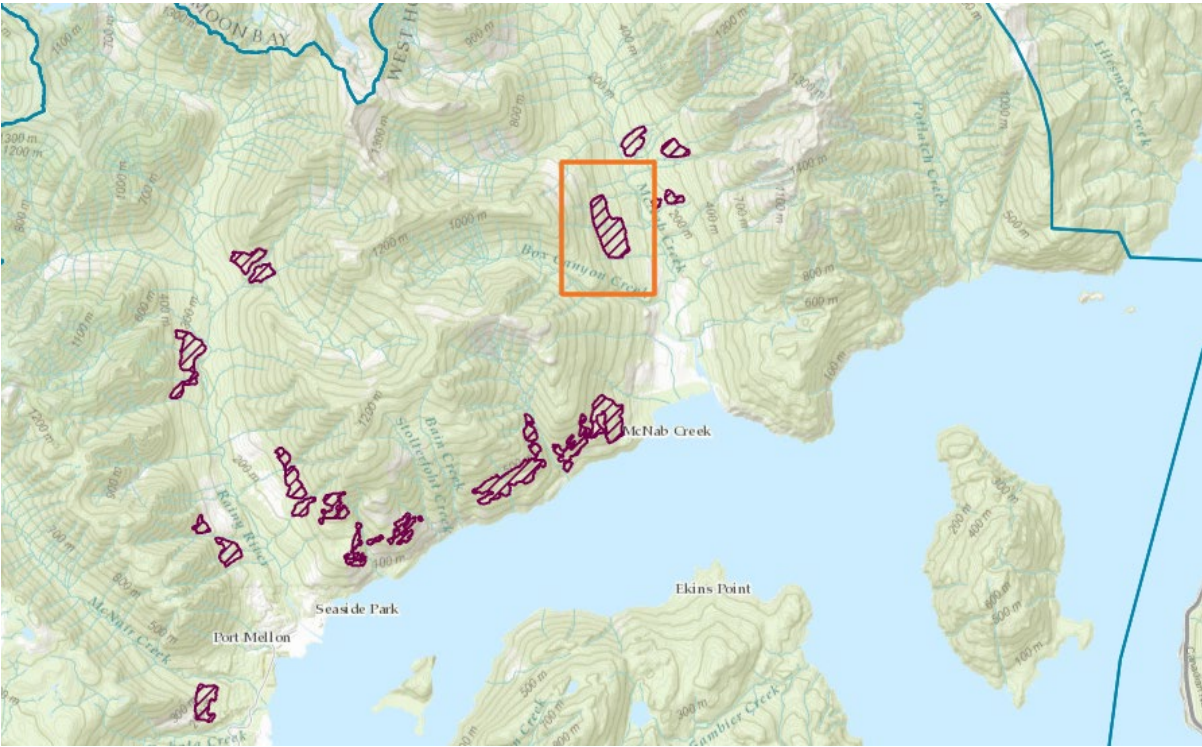
Block ID	Operating Plan Map	Planned Auction Date	Operating Plan Initial Year <sup>1</sup>	Block State <sup>2</sup>	Gross Area (ha)
McNR005	McNair_Rainy	2024	2023	Development Ongoing	14.21



Block ID	Operating Plan Map	Planned Auction Date	Operating Plan Initial Year <sup>1</sup>	Block State <sup>2</sup>	Gross Area (ha)
GRAN011	Granville	2025	2023	Planned	6.7



Block ID	Operating Plan Map	Planned Auction Date	Operating Plan Initial Year <sup>1</sup>	Block State <sup>2</sup>	Gross Area (ha)
MCNA002	McNab_Potlatch	2027	2023	Planned	44.63





Block ID	Operating Plan Map	Planned Auction Date	Operating Plan Initial Year <sup>1</sup>	Block State <sup>2</sup>	Gross Area (ha)
ELPH010	Elphinstone	2024	2023	Development Ongoing	1.59



Block ID	Operating Plan Map	Planned Auction Date	Operating Plan Initial Year1	Block State2	Gross Area (ha)
ELPH008	Elphinstone	2026	2023	Planned	33.5

