



Protecting the ecosystem of the District of Peachland's watershed including its quality, quantity and timing of flow both at the source and through our taps.

August 2, 2020

Joanne Layh Editor
Peachland View

Dear Editor,

Once upon a time, there was a forest

As a community organization dedicated to protecting our watershed – the source of the district's water - the Peachland Watershed Protection Alliance is compelled to respond to the recent letter from JT (Jim) Witiw about our use of the word "deforestation."

As a retired forester and industry insider, Mr Witiw explained that he and his colleagues use a different vocabulary than most other non-forestry people. We note that most non-technical folks do not share this same terminology. The average person understands that deforestation describes a harmful permanent loss of forests and forest ecosystems, which is the result of industrial logging.

While foresters have been taught that a replanted clear-cut becomes a forest, science from other disciplines has shown that a true forest is not the result of "reforestation". Clear-cuts are usually replanted with quickly maturing, commercially viable species, such lodgepole pine, and as a monoculture, do not become diverse and fully functioning forest ecosystems. As native trees are removed by instituting these short rotations or unnatural cycles of cutting and growing replacement species, the animals, berries, grasses, microorganisms and birds that once inhabited these areas as natural places disappear too. The replanted clear-cuts lack natural forest species composition, structure, and function. Replanted clear-cuts are more akin to tree farms than forests. To describe this process as reforestation is like calling a wheat field the prairie.

In the 60 or so years that it takes for any replanted trees to mature, we are left with environmental hangovers from the clear-cut lands - from the release of excess carbon to loss of habitat; and increases in flooding and wildfires in our communities, and the forest is still gone.

It seems the logging industry has built a fairy-tale on its use of euphemistic terminology - from rebranding logging to "forestry", cutting down trees to "harvesting", and now replanting tree farms is "reforestation." We believe it's time to change the narrative.

Perhaps Mr. Witiw would like to share concrete independent data regarding ecosystem functions after replanting, and any industry data he has regarding the ecological success of his industry's replanting efforts. We'd love to continue the conversation, and with his forest knowledge perhaps together we can write a better story.

Peachland Watershed Protection Alliance