

## ROCKIES — THE SOURCE: Forests —

*Editor's note: This study was undertaken in 1974 by residents of the Slokan Valley in British Columbia, Canada. It was intended for distribution to inhabitants of the valley and to managers of the B.C. Forest Service. Due to the breadth and depth of its focus and its attention to detail, the report emerges as a jewel of reinhabitory self-management. Planet Drum is reprinting the Slokan Valley Community Report here in slightly abridged form for the use of other peoples in other valleys.*

### INTRODUCTION

There are very few subjects that arouse people's emotions as much as logging. Some people like to tell us that logging is all good... others say it is all bad. People in a rural community know better. They know that logging can be both beneficial and destructive. In this valley, we have had both kinds.

The land around us is our watershed, our game habitat, our home. It is also our bread and butter, our jobs. This report is based on the idea that the Slokan Valley belongs to the people, and that how and where to log ought to be their decision.

Logging companies do not "manage" the land. They cut and mill trees. The Provincial Government manages the land and its resources, its fish, its soil, its water, its trees. In the past the Government has often made decisions that consider only the trees, and the profits to be made from those trees, while forgetting our other resources.

It is the idea of "total resource management" that we consider in this report... leaving slogans like "All logging is good," or "All logging is bad," to others.

### BACKGROUND

The Slokan Valley was once called simply the Slokan Forest by the B.C. Forest Service—later the name was changed to the "Slokan Public Working Circle," and finally it became the "Slokan Public Sustained Yield Unit," or Slokan P.S.Y.U.

A public sustained yield unit is usually a forest surrounding a populated area and supposedly involves the "public." "Sustained Yield" simply means that trees aren't logged at a faster rate than new trees grow to replace them. "Unit" suggests that the many resources within a P.S.Y.U. (water, trees, wildlife, people, soil, etc.) are being managed in relationship to each other as a whole unit.

In order to understand present forest resource management, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the economic history of the Slokan P.S.Y.U. Therefore, let us consider it as a large farm with an annual cash crop of trees.

**We, the public, are the owners or shareholders of this farm. Through our elective process we hire a farm manager (the Provincial Government) who receives the profits (revenues) from the crop, and returns a dividend (schools, roads, power plants, etc.) to us, the shareholders.**

In 1952, a new manager, the Social Credit Government, was elected, and assumed control of our harvests and profits. At that time our annual crop of trees was being logged by local independent loggers and milled in small local sawmills.

Our manager (who continued to control our "farm" for the next 20 years) followed a policy of high profits at low cost and little re-investment in the land. Although the local caretakers of our crop land (the Forest Service) pointed out the long-term effects of this policy, the Government believed the way to gather votes was through immediate high dividends, not in managing for the future.

The local loggers weren't logging all of the annual crop of trees, so the Government encouraged large outside operators who could log more at less cost to the Government. This increased profits and dividends, but also forced the local independent loggers out of business for themselves and shut down the small mills. Of the 34 quota holders in 1952, three remain, and from 19 sawmills, we are down to one.

Because of the lack of a long-range management plan and due to intensified harvesting, our farm has gradually fallen into disrepair. Hillsides erode, logging roads wash out, creeks silt, fish and wildlife are ignored and suffer.

In 1968, the Government, in search of even higher profits, recalculated the "Allowable Annual Cut." (The allowable annual cut is simply the number of trees that may be cut in any one area in a year. It is supposed to be based on that area's ability to grow new trees to replace those harvested.)

Early in 1972 the new calculations came into effect, increasing the amount of timber available for harvest in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. almost four times. In other words, we have gone in an upward spiral, from cutting only a portion of our allowable annual cut (prior to 1952), to cutting it all and raising it (1955), to cutting it all again (1966 to 1972), to raising it again nearly four times and paving the way for quadrupling our actual cut.

### EXISTING SITUATION

As a result of these policies the

#### Slokan Public Sustained Yield Unit

#### Is Not PUBLIC

We are just now becoming aware that our watershed, our recreational lands, in fact all the public forest surrounding our homes has been committed to three companies to harvest on an 88-year rotation cycle.

"Please note that because all of the annual allowable cut in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. is already committed to established licensees (64% to one company), or is kept as a Forest Service reserve for special contingencies, such as fire or beetle salvage, applications for woodlots (by the public) in this P.S.Y.U. are not being accepted." Nelson Forest District, April 26, 1974

## A Community of Trees and People in the Slokan Valley



This is single resource management...

#### Is Not SUSTAINED

Productive forest land is divided into "good, medium, poor, and low" growing sites by the B.C. Forest Service. Poor and low growing sites include areas with steep slopes, shallow soils, and those in the high country with short growing seasons. Once logged by conventional methods they cannot be guaranteed to grow another crop of trees within the reasonable future. We base this statement on "The widely held view that sound forest management would utilize good and medium sites only."

A. Chambers, Purcell Range Study, 1973

Since almost a third of the productive forests in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. are growing on poor or low sites, and, since these sites are included in the present allowable annual cut, we will be logging well over the sustained yield of the P.S.Y.U.

#### Is Not Managed For Its YIELD

Yield wasted before logging:

As a general rule, the Forest Service restricts logging to timber stands with an average age of 120 years or older. However, 25% of the trees in a stand die and rot before the stand is 30 years old. By the time the average stand in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. is 120 years old, only about 21% of the original trees are living. Much of the wood that dies in the stand prior to maturity can be removed as pre-commercial thinnings and used for a variety of products.

Yield wasted during milling:

Of the 70% wood fibre leaving the woods, only half of this, or 35%, becomes lumber, while the remainder becomes chips or is burned in the beehive burner.

At Triangle Pacific, a portion of the wood that is chipped is decadent or shell cedar (hollow centred). If the milling facility were available, 3,000,000 board feet per year of this wood could be made into specialty products and sold at a higher price than is received for chips. Another large quantity of wood that could be spliced and glued together (finger jointing) to produce additional marketable lumber, is presently burned.

Yield wasted in the marketplace:

Due to marketing problems at the present time, of the 35% of the wood volume which becomes lumber, most is sold for remanufacture on the international market. As a result, high-quality finished lumber is often unavailable to the local community at any price.

This also means that the jobs and profits involved in remanufacturing that lumber are lost to the community.

We've wasted wood, jobs, and profits before we logged, while we logged, when we milled, and when we marketed.

#### The Slokan P.S.Y.U. Is Not A UNIT

It is not managed as a geographic unit. It is administered from such diverse communities as New Denver, Nelson, Trail, Creston, and Victoria. Neither are the manpower or monies available to manage the Slokan P.S.Y.U. as a unit for all its resources.

It is not managed as an economic unit. Approximately \$545,000 left the Slokan P.S.Y.U. in 1973 as stumpage payments to the Province. (Stumpage is money charged by the Government to individuals or companies for the right to harvest trees on Crown land.) Only about \$235,000 of that came back to all agencies charged with "managing" the P.S.Y.U.'s resources (B.C. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife, Water Rights, Department of Agriculture, primarily).

The Nelson Forest District recognized the need for more manpower for management. They cite the example of an adjacent forest district in Bonner's Ferry, Idaho, which employs 49 people to manage an area smaller than the Slokan P.S.Y.U., as compared with Slokan P.S.Y.U. Forest Service personnel of five.

Forest management is geared for timber extraction at the expense of our other resources. Short-sighted policy drains the community of its natural bounty. We see waste, environmental damage, and a limited return of management funds for resource agencies in Nelson and New Denver.

Now let us return to our view of the Slokan P.S.Y.U. as a farm. The old farm manager lost his job. The new manager (the NDP Government) inherited a mess. Despite the amount of logging going on, the farm is classified as "economically depressed."

The new government has commissioned a lot of studies to straighten out the mess, but they were all written by experts who live somewhere else, so they range from one by an ecologist (the **Purcell Range Study**) who said harvest less and manage more, to one done by an economist (the **Reed Report**) who said manage less and harvest more, to one on recreation (the **Pearse Bowden Report**) that said Slokan Lake is too cold for swimming.

Meanwhile some of the people who live and work in this P.S.Y.U. thought it might be time to look for answers on their own. As residents who depend on the health of their forests and creeks, as well as the stability of their economy, they have an interest in sound solutions to the problems of forest management. As residents, they might be expected to have a more complete understanding of all the problems of the area, rather than focusing on a single aspect as an outside expert is apt to do. As shareholders in this piece of public land, they are concerned about their long-term investment, not simply immediate gains—they want to know what will be left of this valley—their home—for themselves and their children.

So these people formed a committee and hired local people to do their study. File cabinets were filled, maps drawn, notes taken, experts consulted, public meetings held, and a questionnaire was sent out.

All of the facts and research and maps point to two questions:

1. SHOULD THIS RURAL COMMUNITY LEAVE THE DECISIONS AND PROFIT TO THE EXPERTS, OR SHARE IN THEIR RESOURCES AND HELP TO MANAGE THEM?
2. SHOULD OUR RESOURCES BE MANAGED WITH A CUT-AND-GET-OUT ATTITUDE OR FOR A PERPETUAL CROP YIELD?

The following recommendations are our answer to these questions. We believe they are logical conclusions to our research and will maintain and eventually increase the present level of employment in the Valley as well as increasing the local public's access to their resources.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

We have learned that we must consider all resources to properly manage the Slokan P.S.Y.U., and a basic resource is the people who live here.

**Therefore, we recommend that a resource committee be formed comprised of at least six elected, unpaid, representatives of the local community. These people will be Canadian citizens with at least three years' residency in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. They will serve on the committee together with individuals from each of the provincial resource management agencies, (Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife, Water Rights, Department of Agriculture, etc.). The committee will have jurisdiction over the resources of the Slokan P.S.Y.U.**

Each of our resources interacts with each other, and so should be managed, not separately, but as a complex system. We need a person working in the Valley who understands the nature of this system, and who works for the benefit of all resources rather than for one agency.

**Therefore, we recommend that the local resource committee hire a resource manager qualified to coordinate the services of the provincial government agencies. His office will be in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. and he will answer to the local resource committee.**

We found that single-purpose management policies will not result in sustained yield.

**Therefore, we recommend that the existing allowable annual cut be lowered in the Slokan P.S.Y.U. to exclude the poor and low growing sites until the A.A.C. can be recalculated based on consideration of all resources.**

While the mature poor and low growing sites are presently being logged, immature good and medium sites are being ignored. Very little wood is available to local residents for use as firewood, fenceposts, building posts, or as a supplemental income source.

**Therefore, we recommend that the government institute a system of "rural woodlots," within the Slokan P.S.Y.U. These will be available to Canadian citizens with three years' residency in the Slokan Valley, and range in size from 10 to 1,5000 acres. Preference will be given to the valley walls adjoining inhabited lands. These woodlots would fit the needs of marginal agricultural communities, protect many of the resources of the valley bottom, enhance deer habitat, end some of the waste in immature sites, and provide the highest quality and volume of timber possible from these growing sites.**

Much of what we propose has been said before by trained personnel working within the Provincial agency framework, and has been ignored. We can no longer disregard environmental damage and waste in the interest of maximizing short-term economic benefits.

**Therefore, we recommend that this government implement the major recommendations in the 1955 forest service report "A Management Plan for the Proposed Slokan Public Working Circle," by Ray Gill; i.e., build and maintain roads, set up a Forest Service marking crew, and bring back "marked" (selective) sales on immature and sensitive sites in the P.S.Y.U. not taken up by woodlots.**

The foregoing recommendations will cost money. Over \$545,000 left the Slokan P.S.Y.U. last year as stumpage payments. This is money which comes from the use of our trees.

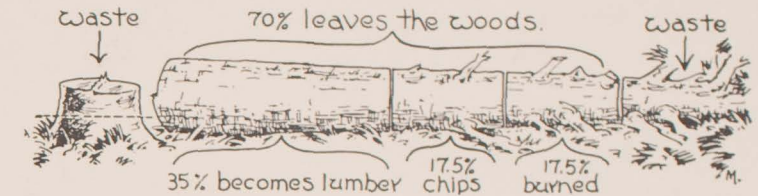
**Therefore, we recommend that all stumpage from the Slokan P.S.Y.U. be reinvested into the Slokan P.S.Y.U. for at least five years. This time period should be used for the implementation stage of integrated resource management. The money will be allocated by the local resource committee to pay the resource manager and to fund all provincial agencies concerned.**

So, we have taken measures to protect our trees, soil, and water. In doing this we have put some of the logs previously allocated to industry back on the open market. But there is still only one log buyer in the P.S.Y.U., and so there is no competitive market for locally produced wood.

**Therefore, we recommend that in order to utilize the decadent cedar, private logs, woodlot logs, and thinnings, a small "product mill" be set up in the valley. It should produce end products only, from boards to moulding, and serve the local community first.**

With a free market, competitive bidding will force the price of logs up. No company can then afford to waste wood, sell it unmanufactured, or sell to a monopoly buyer. Further basic steps in waste utilization include:

- A. Requiring mills to burn waste as fuel
- B. Establishing a plant to "finger-joint" cull lumber
- C. Renegotiation of the government's chip price in the West Kootenays.



Recommendations based on long-term considerations of all our resources have been implemented. Forest management proceeds on a true "sustained yield" basis, while the needs of the local community and its surrounding environment are met in an ecologically sound way.

### CONCLUSION

We have recommended a new approach to forest management which considers the nature of our valley and all of its resources. It is a complex plan in that it is based on a complex interrelationship of living things—people, trees, soil, water, and wildlife. Yet only with our understanding of and support for these recommendations will they be implemented.

In order to make that possible, let's ask some questions and see just how these recommendations fit together and how they affect our lives, our environment, and our jobs.

*Isn't setting up a local resource committee simply going to increase the bureaucracy we already have?*

No. It would decentralize it and put decisions into the Valley that previously were made elsewhere. Valley representatives would not be paid, and would be elected "town meeting" style each year.

*Does lowering the allowable annual cut mean putting people out of work in the short run to get "sustained yield" in the long run?*

No. Not if the other recommendations are implemented. Industry is not yet cutting all of the A.A.C. In fact, jobs would be created, full-time and seasonal, within the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Branch, and other agencies by increasing their budgets; the "product mill" would employ approximately 30 persons; woodlots and marked logging sales would create labour-intensive work situations; and maintaining and developing good roads for decentralized logging would also create jobs.

*Won't adding at least one more mill in the Valley cause more smoke, population, and logging?*

No. Less smoke is created by a mill that burns waste as fuel than occurs with a beehive system. The jobs created would simply be a shift in existing employment and employees. The logs to run the mill, or mills, would be those either wasted or poorly utilized today, or those that become available from the woodlot system and thinnings.



This is integrated resource management...