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**WEYERHAEUSER CLOSES MILLS YET STILL WANTS TO STAY
AND RETAIN WOOD RIGHTS**

- **Weyerhaeuser pressures Union and the Province for concessions**
- **Weyerhaeuser threatens the Province with lawsuits**
- **Local people ask: what are the benefits for Saskatchewan?**

**IS OUR NORTHERN FOREST OWNED BY WEYERHAEUSER OR
THE PEOPLE OF SASKATCHEWAN?**

Weyerhaeuser has shut down all its mills in the Prince Albert Forest Management Area (PAFMA) and hundreds of mill workers and forest workers have been left high and dry. In the wake of this crisis, forest communities find little consolation in their surrounding forests and lakes, which have recently been decimated by Weyerhaeuser 'creaming the cheap wood close to the mills'. Already some people have uprooted and moved to work in the Alberta oil patch. And while this crisis is playing out, Weyerhaeuser is threatening to file lawsuits against the Province of Saskatchewan unless government officials give them concessions, the main one being continued control of the public forest in this area. The other option they are suggesting is that the Province 'buy back' the PAFMA – which they received *gratis* in the sweet deal cut with the Devine government in 1986. People are somewhat shocked to hear that they may not yet be finished with Weyerhaeuser.

So the question that arises: **Is our Northern Forest owned by Weyerhaeuser or by the people of Saskatchewan?** This is the big question the province has to answer; not who will buy the mill, but how will people benefit from, protect and sustain their forest. In an ongoing Interview Project, a wide variety of local people who live and work in these forest communities put forward many ideas and visions for new ways to work with and take positive advantage of the big changes that are occurring in the forest

industry. They want to see an end to the monopoly of forest management by big business interests. Instead, they see local people playing a primary role in land use decision-making, and major sustainable job creation through value-added businesses and caring for the forests they know and live in. The side benefits would be the strengthening of rural cultures and economies in the area, and effective protection of the land and the resources for future generations.

In terms of industrial forestry, there needs to be a move towards working with local companies who operate in a more responsible and responsive way to the needs and sensitivities of local communities and our forest eco-systems. We could look to Mistik Management and L&M Wood Products as the direction we need to be embarking on.

For more detailed information on this Interview Project see the Written Presentation given to the Premier, the Premier's Task Force on Forestry Development, and the Forestry Secretariat on the **Saskatchewan EcoNetwork Website** at <http://www.econet.sk.ca/issues/forest/envorg.html> and look for the presentation under the Saskatchewan Treeplanters Association; OR contact Joys Dancer at joysdancer@sasktel.net

CONTACTS

Joys Dancer – (306)342-4689 Manager of the Interview Project; made presentations to government bodies;

Jonothan Fonos – (306)832-4450 Trapper, commercial fisherman and entrepreneur, Dore/Smoothstone/Sled Lakes Forest Management Board member. Jonothan has also been an equipment operator for a logging contractor in the area;

Colin Leason – (306)865-3704 Former Weyerhaeuser logging contractor in the Hudson Bay area ; has strong concerns for Weyerhaeuser's primary targeting of recreation areas on the FMAs; and the lack of opportunity for local people to be informed and have input into these type of decisions;

Gordon Moffat – (306)832-2176 Trapper; former Weyerhaeuser forest manager; concerned with Weyerhaeuser's treatment of employees and contractors, and traditional land users;

Ric Richardson – (306)832-2009 Traditional land user and entrepreneur, interested in value-added and non-timber forest product business development in northern communities;

Cindy McLean – (306)469-4953 Former mill worker at the Big River sawmill; Union rep on local stakeholder advisory council;

Rob Warriner – (306)469-4427 Has worked in the bush; currently does town maintenance for the town of Big River; concerned about riparian harvesting issues;

Carla Braidek – (306)469-4470 Co-operator of a greenhouse near Big River – was ‘right-sized’ out of work with Weyerhaeuser;

Colleen Rickard – (306)955-6197 Program Director of CPAWS Saskatchewan; member of the North Central Land Use Planning process; sees the need for conservation science, linked with local knowledge in determining protected areas; and concerned about the Land Use Planning process in the province;

Allyson Brady – (306)665-1915 Director of Sask. Environmental Society; concerned with.....

Brant Olson – (415)398-4404ext.310 Rain Forest Action Network, director of Old Growth Campaign; has been working extensively on Weyerhaeuser’s activities globally.

Background

A recent Interview Project has been conducted, focusing on current forestry policies and practices, and the impacts and opportunities created by the Weyerhaeuser mill closures in Prince Albert and Big River in mid-April. A wide range of people from several communities in the affected area were asked about their involvement in forestry decision-making, the impacts of these decisions on their lives, their communities and the lands surrounding them; and their visions for truly sustainable economic development, including forestry, in their areas.

Mill workers, large-scale forest contractors, equipment operators, highway workers, local farmers, tourism operators, traditional land users, town councillors and administrators, First Nations, small business operators, and other concerned citizens were heard from.

There was a striking similarity of themes emerging from all these divergent interests regarding the problems in current forestry practices:

- All fear a loss of mature trees in the provincial forests if forestry policy and practices continue as they are now;
- All experienced a lack of meaningful input into decisions that affect their lives;
- All expressed strong concern for the very destructive impacts on the land from current forestry practices, especially riparian harvesting, spring and summer harvesting, and all season roads;
- Everyone spoke of the lack of monitoring and control of big industry;
- Most felt that truly sustainable economic development can only happen with strong local involvement in primary decision-making on land use;
- They felt that the main role of government should be to enforce laws and regulations, particularly with big industry; and
- Everyone said that there is an unacceptable amount of wastage.

The visions people hold also formed clear themes:

- There needs to be a more respectful, open and inclusive attitude from government officials, both politicians and civil servants;
- The Annual Allowable/Required Cut needs to be revisited and **REDUCED**, based on inventories that are agreed upon by all who are concerned;
- There is a need for comprehensive Community Economic Development planning in their communities, and comprehensive Cost/Benefit Analyses on all projects and developments;
- There needs to be authentic and meaningful involvement of local people in ALL levels and types of primary planning and monitoring of activities in the forest;
- Selective logging would be used wherever possible to minimize waste and impact on riparian areas;
- There is a need for stricter environmental guidelines and monitoring, particularly on summer logging and the impacts of roads on the land and wildlife;
- There needs to be a shift of focus to value-added and non-timber forest products and businesses;

- The selection process for protected areas needs to be grounded in local knowledge and conservation science – rather than primarily on economic interests – to ensure the preservation of biological diversity;
- There needs to be a well-funded arm's length Environmental Commissioners Office established to ensure accountability of resource use in the province.

Local people who have active connection with the land and their communities have crucial contributions to make in land use planning and practices. Their voices need to be heard and listened to. And they need to be at the table working out the terms of any new Forest Management Agreements and be signatories to any agreements affecting their communities.