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WEYERHAEUSER'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION LACKS CREDIBILITY

By Brian Bildson

In 2001 I became involved in a public advisory group that was formed to provide public input to Weyerhaeuser in their pursuit of CSA certification in their FMA. Never having been involved in a process of this type, I was hoping to have some meaningful input and help craft a sustainable forest management plan.

It didn't take long after the process began to discover that the whole CSA certification process had been carefully mapped out and was being driven by hired facilitators. We were carefully slotted into "special interest" categories to give the appearance of a wide spectrum of public consultation. For example, if I were to say that tourism was an important indicator to me, it would then be noted that tourism's interests had been brought forth and were considered.

I brought my concern up at one of our meetings, namely that we as private citizens did not have the knowledge or skills necessary to give Weyerhaeuser proper direction in many areas. I may be concerned about the mountain caribou but that does not make me an expert on formulating a caribou recovery plan. My impression was that by using public members Weyerhaeuser is able to say that they have consulted with the public which has great PR value as well as allowing them to duck contentious issues as the public members do not have the academic or scientific background to ask the right questions.

After a year and a half of attending every meeting and participating to the best of my abilities I came to the conclusion I was wasting my time. Weyerhaeuser was only prepared to change their practices where it suited them and dug in every time we asked for a real change. But then again why would they change when there is no pressure from our government agencies to do so? Hopefully public pressure and adverse publicity will some day put forestry on the right track.

