

Report raps logging practice

'We are stripping the value out of the forests,' watchdog says

Gordon Hamilton, Vancouver Sun

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An investigation by the watchdog Forest Practice Board has revealed that logging companies are high-grading cedar and spruce on B.C.'s north and central coast.

Valuable trees are being selectively logged by helicopter at the expense of future harvest opportunities and with no plan for regenerating the forest, the investigation found.

The study has been presented to both government and industry, said Forest Practices Board chairman Bruce Fraser and at least one workshop has been held in an effort to address the problem.

Fraser said the forests are being managed for wildlife, visual and other values. But by taking the most valuable timber, the future of timber harvesting is threatened as only low-valued trees are left behind.

"In effect, we are stripping the value out of the forests," he said.

However, a representative of the coastal industry said Wednesday that the investigation was mostly in areas that are classified as not operational, meaning they are too inaccessible or the overall quality of the timber is too low to warrant full-scale logging.

Rick Jeffery, president of the Coast Forest Products Association, said the areas investigated are being managed primarily for wildlife.

"There is management there for other values. It's managing land that wouldn't otherwise be in the industrial forest," he said, noting that the total volume being harvested accounts for only three per cent of the annual harvest.

The investigation covered 54 cutblocks.

The board has recommended the province develop clear directions for logging in areas where most of the forest will remain standing.

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