

Excerpts from Valley Voice article

September 14, 2005 New Denver, B.C.

For the first eight days of September, a small group of people stopped Pope & Talbot from getting into the Boyd Creek area of the Incomappleux to do road building work. They set up what they called an information camp about 12 km up the Incomappleux River Valley road at the junction of the Boyd Creek Road and the road leading into the upper valley.

...When an interim injunction was served on September 9 at about 3:30 pm, the protesters peacefully cleared the road and set up their information camp off to the side. Some P&T trucks and equipment went through that afternoon and into the next day.

Then, on September 10 around noon, a rock slide came down and did some damage to a bridge just 7.5 km up the Incomappleux River Valley Road from Beaton.

...Some of the company's equipment [was] trapped on the other side of the slide, as [were] vehicles belonging to three people at the information camp and apparently some hunters as well. People [were] able to scramble over the rocks and get out on foot.

Eloise Charet, one of the protesters, reported that as the road building crew was driving out after the slide, one said, "I guess those trees don't want to be logged."

The injunction [was] challenged in Nelson court on September 19. Joanna Cowen [was] legal counsel for the two people named on the injunction and who stayed at the camp throughout the protest. These are well known area resident Eloise Charet, who calls herself a passive resister, and Henry Hutter of Winlaw.

The Incomappleux River Valley is part of P&T's Tree Farm Licence (TFL #23), and was acquired in 1992. There has been logging activity in the valley by various forestry companies since at least the 1970's.

Recently, the valley has caught the attention of environmental groups and scientists because of the rare values of the area. These include old-growth cedar and hemlock trees, some that have been estimated to be between 1000 and 2000 years old; rare plant species and lichens; and habitat for the red-listed mountain caribou, blue-listed wolverine, grizzly bear and bull trout. The valley, which is in the Interior wetbelt or Inland Rainforest of BC, was described as "a generally rare forest type of global significance" in a brief prepared for the Arrow-Boundary Forest District by Andre Arsenault, Silviculture Systems Researcher, in 2003.

Environmental groups are calling for the upper valley to be added onto Glacier National Park, where the headwaters of the river are found.

...A press release issued by the protesters says they are "questioning the reality of destroying prime habitat for the endangered mountain caribou and grizzly bear."

...the area has been identified as core caribou habitat on maps created by the southern Recovery Implementation Group (RIG) set up by the federal government under the Species at Risk Act.

Craig Pettitt of Valhalla Wilderness Watch explained that the federal government charged the RIG's to come up with a Recovery Action Plan for the mountain caribou, but that there was no guarantee that the plan will be implemented as is. The RIG's came up with the plan about two years ago and "it doesn't look like anything will be finalized for at least six months yet," said Pettitt. *"So there is a scramble to log the old growth terrain before restrictions come in."* [italics added]

...Gary Diers, a silviculturalist from Argenta who wrote a report in 2003 calling for Goal 2 protection for the upper Incommapleux River Valley, pointed out in an interview that the Mountain Caribou Project report "Staring at Extinction" states that P&T is the largest destroyer of habitat for the Central Selkirk herd and the sixth largest logger in the province in mountain caribou habitat.

"The fact is, with all of P&T's fancy caribou planning, the mountain caribou are vanishing from the Central Selkirks. Along with the mountain caribou, the very ancient forests are vanishing as well," he said.

A Valhalla Wilderness Watch press release states that mountain caribou, which live only in the Interior Wetbelt of BC except for a small herd that crosses into Idaho, are completely dependent upon old-growth forest. The release states that they have declined from 2,450 animals in 1998 to an estimated 1,670 in 2004; and of the 13 remaining sub-populations, most are declining rapidly, none are expanding, six of the 13 have fewer than 50 animals.

The release also refers to BC's Forest Practices Board 2004 report entitled "BC's Mountain Caribou: Last Chance for Conservation?" which said: "There appears little time left to act before options for mountain caribou conservation are ultimately forfeited. Current science suggest that if older forest continue to be fragmented and mountain caribou continue to be lost to predators, the final opportunity to restore mountain caribou in the province will soon be lost."