

## Attention Landowners: This Farmer's Perspective ( Written December/ 2020)

There is a movement to control tree cutting here on Salt Spring Island. Although I believe that the Trust, along with what appears to be a well organized and well-funded group of residents who are backing them, believe they are doing the right thing, the other perspective needs to be considered. The movement that is currently being proposed fails to acknowledge the landowners of Salt Spring who, over the years, have worked hard to balance their tree cutting rights while respecting the unique environment of the island. Also keep in mind that properties on the island are owned by a diverse group of individuals ranging from one that won't cut a tree to one that will clear his view to one that may open a field to farm. The island already has many protected areas when you consider parks, ecological reserves, crown land, and conservancy land in addition to all the existing developmental permit areas on the island.

While I can appreciate that no one likes to listen to the logging next door, nor do they enjoy the sounds of the house being built beside them, this is for a short duration and was endured by your neighbors as the place you call home was built too. In general, any trees that are being cut on an individual's land are doing so to improve their property and make it safe, rather than for profit. As was evident from our most recent major windstorm and the damage that it caused, Salt Spring has a lot of dying old trees with root rot which also puts us at risk if, heaven forbid, we get forest fires like the ones just south of us. Right now, there is little to no financial gain of doing large clearings once you have factored in the cost of hiring a logging crew, paying to transport the logs off island and then getting a machine in for clean-up.

There seems to be the idea that among islanders that this movement will not affect them. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Whether you are a farmer expanding a field, a gardener letting light in, or someone putting in a vineyard or building site, your right to use the land that you own will be compromised. It will be up to whoever is in power as to whether you can cut down a tree on your property, even if, like many of us long timers, it was a tree you planted yourself 40 years ago.

The people behind this movement are saying that they will be protecting the Coastal Douglas firs and surrounding ecosystems. But to what extent does this cover. Will it result in a development permit of the whole island? Will the person you get farm products or firewood from to keep your family warm in the winter still be able to provide that? Or will you be paying for that to come off island like so many of our other services?

Is this really the time to be making decisions like this that will impact a large portion of the island when we are experiencing a pandemic that prevents people from coming together and properly having this discussion?

I ask that you consider these questions and ask yourself if you are ready to give up your property rights

Dan Fraser Salt Spring Island..