



File: 10497-01

Reference: 279045

August 15, 2024

**VIA EMAIL: Getbach6@gmail.com; GLForsythe54@yahoo.com;
openthegatesVI@yahoo.com**

Dear Graham Lindenbach, Greg Forsythe and Eric Bentley:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with Deputy Minister, Lori Halls and Assistant Deputy Minister, Colin Ward from the Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship, on May 4th, 2024, and your subsequent emails regarding access to private land on Vancouver Island. I have been asked to respond.

I recognize that the “E&N” lands are a unique area of private land in our province, as a product of their history and the extensive area that they occupy on Vancouver Island. I also recognize that the landowners have chosen to exercise their rights to restrict access to these lands to some extent.

I appreciate your frustration of not being able to freely access certain backcountry areas on Vancouver Island and the associated issues you feel it causes. I also understand that encountering locked gates while on industrial forest roads feels obstructive.

Southern Vancouver Island, extending from Sooke to Campbell River, has a substantial amount of privately owned forest land, including the “E&N” lands. Most of this land is voluntarily managed under the regulations of the *Private Managed Forest Land Act*.

As one of the largest managers of this private land, Mosaic Forest Management (Mosaic) has developed an extensive program to facilitate public access to the properties they manage (<https://www.mosaicforests.com/access>). In areas where the roads you wish to use are under their management, I encourage you to contact Mosaic regarding requesting access. I also recommend reviewing the information about public access to private forested areas developed by the Private Forest Landowners Association (<https://pfla.bc.ca/resources/fact-sheets/screenshot-2020-11-13-at-12-02-31-pm/>).

The provincial government has no legislated authority to direct private landowners to provide public access to their land. Many large landowners have taken voluntary steps to allow respectful recreational use of their properties and to accommodate community groups in their outdoor pursuits. It is my understanding that Mosaic routinely provides daytime access to the

public for as much of their private land as possible. Mosaic also provides several open areas for general hunting opportunities, particularly during deer hunting season. Additionally, Mosaic offers access opportunities to hunters who have won Limited Entry Hunt (LEH) tags that involve management units within their managed forest lands. Information on general public openings for hunting on Mosaic lands can be found using Mosaic's interactive [Recreational Access map](#), and if you have an LEH tag, you can email Mosaic directly at hunting@mosaicforests.com for access details and permission.

Although many private forest landowners support recreational access opportunities on their lands, they must also balance providing these opportunities with ensuring that citizens are not exposed to unsafe areas, and that they are reminded to practice safe and responsible use of these lands. Landowners engaged in harvesting operations must also protect the safety of forestry workers and their equipment and must reduce the risk of wildfire ignition during times of high fire hazard. Landowners in the Private Managed Forest Land Program are also obligated to protect ecosystems and wildlife habitat from impactful use (such as from four-wheel drive and all-terrain vehicles, vandalism, tree theft, and the dumping of garbage). These are concerns that impact our provincial forests as well, but private landowners are more acutely affected by these risks as they do not receive public assistance to rehabilitate forested areas, monitor public safety, or mitigate impacts to water sources.

I want to assure you that our ministry will continue to work with private forest landowners and local governments to resolve issues related to public values on private forest lands. Again, thank you for meeting with Lori Halls and Colin Ward and sharing your concerns.

Yours truly,



Doug Kelly
Director
Forest Tenures Branch

pc: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship
Colin Ward, Assistant Deputy Minister, Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource
Policy Division, Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship