Incomappleux FSR Proposed Deactivation: Timeline, Impacts, and Historical Significance

Prepared by: Stakeholders of Camborne, BC

A double-rainbow over the Incomappleux River, approximately 2km past Camborne, BC townsite.

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Introduction to the Document:

This document provides an in-depth look at the planned deactivation of the Incomappleux Forest Service Road (FSR), detailing its timeline, environmental impacts, and historical significance. It outlines the concerns of Camborne, BC stakeholders, who are (and will continue to be) directly affected by the current closure and planned deactivation works. The document aims to inform the public, government bodies, and organizations about the potential consequences of the proposed actions and to gather support for addressing these concerns.

Situation Summary:

The Ministry of Forests (MoF) plans to deactivate the Incomappleux FSR in the summer of 2025, removing the only access route for property owners, recreational groups, community members, and visitors. This closure targets routes that lead to private properties, while the rest of the valley's FSR will remain unchanged. The deactivation works are to begin at 0.0 km and end after Branch 01 (located on this map), approximately 3 km past the final private property on the west side of the Incomappleux River. As well as being the **sole access route** to private properties, this road also leads to historically significant sites and ecologically valuable areas. The proposed deactivation **threatens** both **public** and **private** access, environmental integrity, and safety, with little regard for the long-term impact on the area.

Importance & How You Can Help:

Public participation is crucial in influencing the Ministry of Forests to halt or rethink their deactivation plans. By **contacting your local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)** for the area (Scott McInnis at 250-432-2300 or scott.mcinnis.mla@leg.bc.ca), the **Ministry of Forests**, and **raising awareness within your community**, you can help ensure that the voices of affected residents and stakeholders are heard and that the necessary steps are taken to protect access to this valuable area. **Important contact information** is provided in **section 06** of this document.

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1. The Impact on Property Owners

The Camborne area contains **more than 150 privately owned parcels of land** at the southern end of the valley. Over **30 residents, both part-time and full-time**, actively access their properties, many of which have permanent structures (cabins, homesteads). These properties are officially mapped by the **Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD)** and, of course, owners pay annual **property taxes**.

When most of these properties were purchased (in 2021 or earlier), vehicular access was still possible. However, access has been inconsistent due to **shifting tenures** held by mining and forestry groups,

making road use unpredictable and challenging at best.

An excavator reinforces a heavy-duty gate, backed by concrete blocks and large boulders—purposefully placed to block all access, including foot traffic.

The Current Situation: An Overview

In recent years (2021-2025), property owners have faced increasing restrictions from the **Ministry of Forests (MoF)** regarding access to their properties:

- **First, vehicular access was officially removed on October 5, 2021** (the FSR was closed under Section 22.2(3) of the *Forest and Range Properties Act* due to "public safety concerns"), and a heavy-duty gate and signage were installed, without prior public or stakeholder **consultation**. A letter to stakeholders was sent shortly before the gate went in.
- **Next,** new signage was installed. This time, it warned of penalties of **up to $5,000 in fines for "trespassers" and/or six months in jail** for anyone using the road—even on foot. The aforementioned sign was later removed.
- **In the past year,** two **additional rows of concrete blocks** were installed—one blocking access to the parking area beside the gate and another just before the main Incomappleux River Canyon Bridge at 0.3km (also known as Crevice Bridge). Large boulders have also been placed along the outskirts to prevent on-foot access.
- **Dated December 6, 2024**, stakeholders of the valley received formal communication via letter and email that deactivation of the Incomappleux FSR will begin in the 2025 field season. At the time of writing, **no public consultation**

session has been scheduled.

Connection to the Valley

Property owners in the Incomappleux Valley have a deep connection to the land, its history, the Incomappleux River (also known as the Fish River), and the area's distinctive natural beauty. Despite some misconceptions, local stakeholders were in **support** of the creation of the Incomappleux Conservancy, a designation that protects 58,000 hectares of the upper reaches of the valley from further resource extraction. However, it is important to note that most private residences are located south of the conservancy boundary.

Request for Viable Access

At this stage, property owners are **not demanding full vehicular access**. It is understood that the Ministry of Forests, as the most recent tenure holder of the road, is liable for accidents due to poor maintenance. Specifically:

- The Ministry has **identified the overhead rockfall hazard at the bridge as a major safety concern.** The remaining stabilization work to make the bridge safe to use has been reported (including financial estimations for stabilization work) in this report from 2021.

At this time, the cost of mitigating this hazard is **not financially feasible** for the **small group of property owners** in the valley. Instead, we are **requesting, at minimum, a viable access trail** to our properties. We firmly oppose the prohibiting of ATVs and dirt bike use in the valley outside of the conservancy.

The proposed **full road deactivation** would **eliminate safe access altogether**, forcing road users to navigate, on foot, **steep canyon terrain above Class V river rapids**. Without a dedicated trail, **access becomes significantly more dangerous than using the existing road in its current state**.

Supporting Documents

- **CSRD list of private land parcels**
- **Images of the gate and signage installed**
- **Map(s) of the official Camborne townsite & signing**
- **Map of the Incomappleux Conservancy Boundary**
- **2021 Incomappleux Rock Slope Assessment**
- **Deactivation Plan - Stakeholder Letter(s) from MoF**

2. The History of the Valley, Cultural Significance of Camborne, and Public Access

The **Incomappleux Forest Service Road (FSR)** is **not a regular logging road slated for deactivation**—it is a passage through an area with **deep historical roots, cultural significance, and ongoing public interest**.

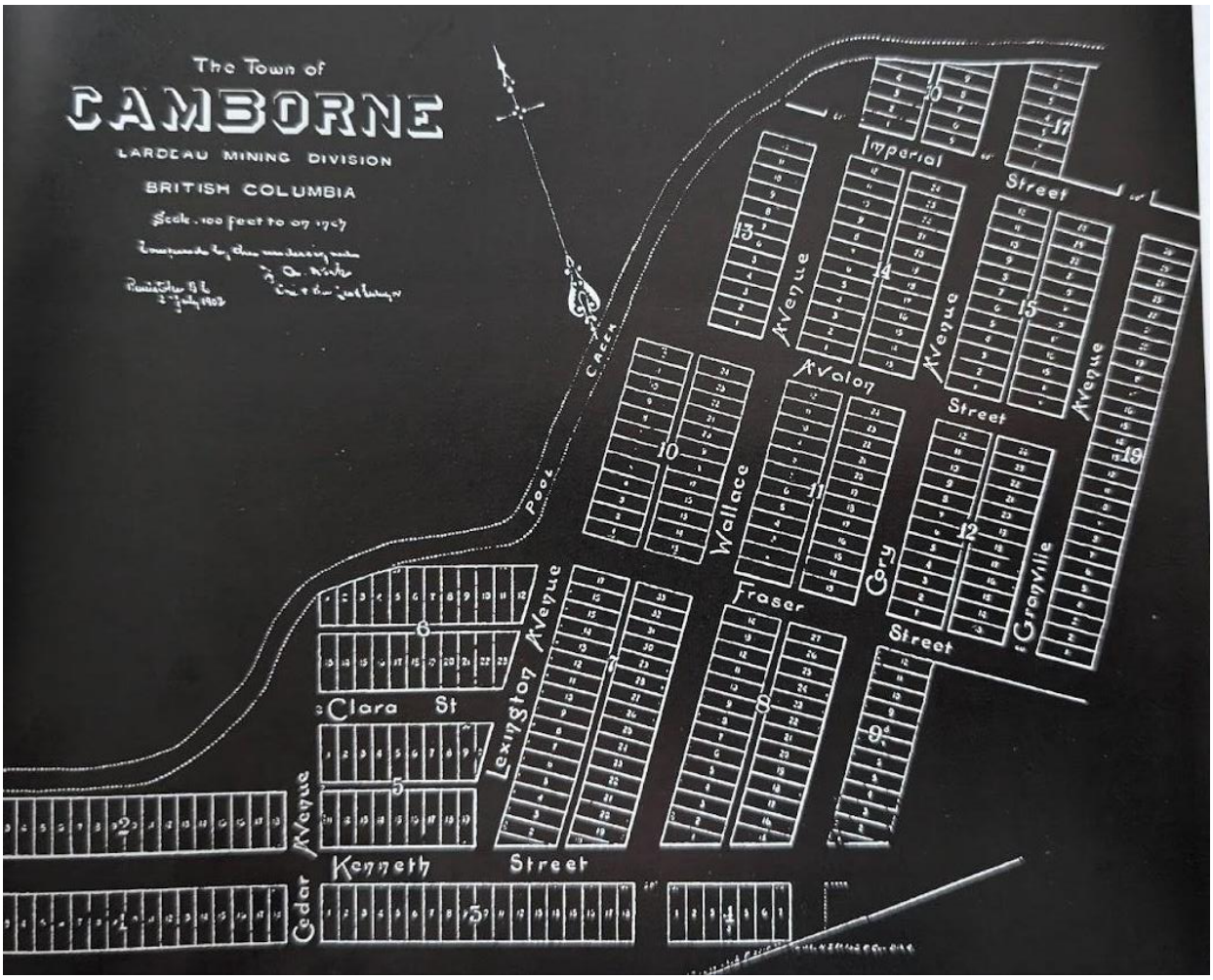
The History of Camborne

Now considered a **historic ghost town**, Camborne and area was once a **thriving mining community**, formally **established in 1899** by owner **Cory Menhinick**. At its peak, Camborne had:

- **Over 3,000 residents**
- **Four hotels** (Camborne Hotel, Reception Hotel, Coronation Hotel, Eva Hotel)
- **A general store, restaurant, post office, and school**
- **9+ active mine sites** operated in and around Camborne, including the Eva, Irene, Gold Finch, Oyster, Silver Cup, Empress, Triune, True Fissure, and Beatrice mines—among others.

Unlike typical resource roads built **exclusively for logging**, the Incomappleux FSR was originally a wagon road in the early 1900s, constructed by contractors in the area to support the region's economic activity, namely mining. This **historical significance makes Camborne a recognized landmark in British Columbia**, and any decisions about road access should reflect this unique status.

An original map of the townsite of Camborne, BC – home to over 3,000 residents at its peak. // Photo: Circle of Silver, Vol. 4, Centennial Series.



Public and Recreational Significance

The **Incomappleux Valley is more than a historic site**—it remains a cherished and **actively used recreational area**. Many outdoor adventure groups have a history of recreating in the valley. Examples of valley users include hunters, ATV and dirt bike riders, environmentalists, paddlers, hikers, and others.

Additionally, the valley provides **one of the last remaining public access points to one of the** world's oldest intact temperate rainforests. The **ancient cedars of the Incomappleux** are a globally significant natural wonder, drawing visitors from around the world. **Ensuring continued access—whether for cultural, historical, or ecological appreciation—should be a priority**.

Left: A whitewater paddler portages through an old-growth forest in the Incomappleux Valley, BC—an area prized for its remote and rugged adventure opportunities, 2022. Right: A dirt biker walks toward their parked bikes on an overgrown trail in the Incomappleux Valley, BC, 2019.

Supporting Documents

- **Historical photographs of Camborne**
- **Records of the Camborne Post Office**
- **Interactive map of Camborne and area mine sites**

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3. Public and Worker Access Safety Concerns

Current Road Access and Safety Measures

A key irony in this situation is that the proposed deactivation is being justified by "**public safety concerns**," as stated in the latest communication from the Ministry of Forests (MoF) on December 6, 2024. However, the **gate and accompanying blockade**

already installed by MoF have effectively eliminated vehicular access—whether by snowmobile, dirt bike, ATV, or other vehicles—making concerns about motorized access irrelevant. The road, in its current state, is still navigable on foot and, with some effort, via bicycle or skis. The dangers of an unmaintained road for **vehicular access** have **already been addressed** by the implementation of the aforementioned **blockades**.

New Measures and Increased Safety Risks

The real safety issue arises from the **new measures** being put in place—specifically, the deactivation which will include **re-sloping of the road, removal of bridges,** and additional **blockades** that force foot traffic to traverse **steep, rugged terrain**.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that one of the valley's full-time residents is **permanently disabled** (one amputated leg, and limited mobility in the other leg). When the latest barricades were installed and the footpath destroyed and re-sloped (without prior notice to stakeholders), the resident was at their property, expressing concerns about their ability to safely leave the valley.

Impact of Proposed Deactivation

If the deactivation plan proceeds, with plans to remove all bridges in the Camborne area, access to private properties and the conservancy to the north would be cut off. Property owners who depend on this road to access their properties would be forced to navigate **rugged terrain**, requiring **mountaineering-level skills** just to enter the southern reaches of the valley.

Emergency Access Concerns: BC Wildfire Services

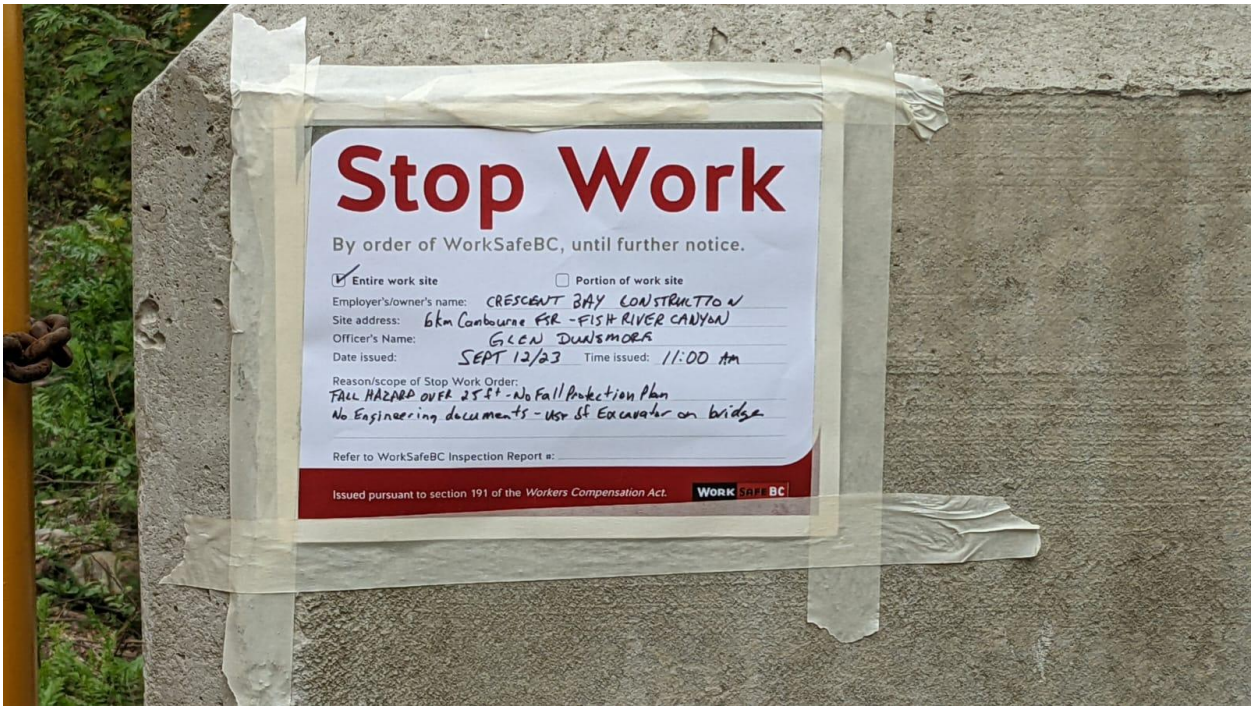
In addition to the risks faced by residents and visitors, these roads provide a **critical means of access** in the event of an **environmental emergency**. In the summer of 2024, a large wildfire threatened over **850 hectares of the valley (#N51130)**. The unmaintained roads and bridges provided the **only access** for BC Wildfire Services workers, who were monitoring the fire daily and even deployed a ground crew to set up fire break via water sprinkler lines. Without these access routes, the risk of further wildfire damage would be significantly increased, and the ability to respond to emergencies would be severely limited, if not eradicated. **Deactivating these roads** could prove disastrous for the preservation of **biodiversity** and **infrastructure** in the area.

Worker Safety

A contracted worker **fatality occurred** at the **Incomappleux Canyon Bridge** on **September 29, 2023**, at **10:30 AM**.

We believe an independent investigation by certified professionals is necessary to assess the geological hazards of the area. At the time of the event, the Ministry of Forests (MoF) had access to engineering reports identifying the rockfall risk, and yet it appears that not all proper safety measures were taken.

With work on the Incomappleux FSR scheduled to resume in summer 2025, there is a concern for worker safety if proper precautions are not taken. Investigation findings should be made public before any further work begins.



A public "stop work" safety notice was issued and displayed publicly at the entrance to the Crevice Bridge work site on September 12, 2023.

Supporting Documents:

- **Pictures of the bridge blockades implemented by order of MoF**
- **BC Wildfire map, Pool Creek fire 2024**
- **Pictures of BC Wildfire team, deployed in Camborne**
- **2021 Incomappleux Rock Slope Assessment**

4. Environmental Implications of Rushed Deactivation Plans

Neglect of Camborne Mine Site Cleanup

The proposed deactivation plan, communicated to stakeholders on **December 6, 2024**, makes no mention of addressing the **Pool Creek Mine Site** in **Camborne**, most recently operated by **Jazz Resources LTD**. The site remains in a state of disrepair, with a **chemical tailings pond**, three building structures, an outhouse, abandoned bags of **sodium metabisulfite**, a **Winnebago camper**, and scattered **heavy equipment**, including **tin sheets**, generators, and a **320 hydraulic excavator**.

Before any deactivation occurs, all mine sites must be inspected, and a **qualified professional** should conduct environmental assessments and a strategic clean-up plan. If road deactivation proceeds as planned in **summer 2025**, how will these hazardous materials and heavy machinery be removed, particularly when road access will no longer exist? Leaving these sites in their current state is **unacceptable**, posing severe risks to the environment, as well as human and animal health.

Both photos show just a small sample of mining equipment left behind at the Pool Creek mine site in Camborne, BC.

Environmental Disruption from Road Deactivation

As mentioned previously, **Camborne** has existed since **1899**—over 125 years—and the road network in and around the valley has become an integral part of the landscape, providing access not only to humans but also to wildlife corridors. Like many unmaintained roads, several areas of the road have naturally been **reclaimed by nature**, with **washouts**, **overgrown sections**, and **natural rock formations** emerging in the absence of regular grading. Bringing large crews with heavy machinery to remove the road would likely cause far more **environmental disruption** than leaving the road as is. **Uprooting trees**, **drilling rock**, and possibly **toppling boulders into the Incomappleux River** (given the road's proximity) would risk significant damage to **fish habitat** and the natural trajectory of the river.

Lack of Ecological Assessment

Has the **Ministry of Forests (MoF)** collaborated adequately with **ecologists** to assess the environmental impact of such an intrusive project in proximity to this important freshwater river? Without thorough ecological evaluation, the consequences could be significant, with the environmental costs potentially outweighing any intended benefits. If these assessments have been conducted, the relevant findings are not publicly accessible, nor are they referenced in the deactivation plan.

Potential Long-Term Costs

If the area is later **redeveloped**—such as becoming a **BC Recreation Site** or another **protected area** south of the conservancy—**taxpayer dollars** would be required to **undo the deactivation** and **rebuild infrastructure from scratch**. This would be both **costly** and **environmentally unsound**. While we do not have exact financial estimates, a **multi-year deactivation project** of this scale could cost anywhere from **$500,000 to over $5 million per year**, primarily **funded by taxpayers**.

Supporting Documents:

- **The Dangers of Sodium Metabisulfite**
- **Pool Creek Mine Site: current state**
- **BC Recreation Site: Details of how to apply**

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5. Moving Forward: Our Demands

1. **Public Consultation and Transparency**
   We demand **public consultation session(s)** and **improved transparency** from the Ministry of Forests (MoF) on the above points, to ensure that the voices of stakeholders and the public are heard. As highlighted in this document, several concerns have not been adequately addressed or planned for. These must be considered before proceeding with any further action. This consultation would also be an opportunity to explore how we can work together to **preserve access to this historically significant part of BC**.

2. **Mine Site Cleanup and Ecological Assessment**
   A **clear plan and timeline** must be established for the cleanup of all the mine sites including the Camborne/Pool Creek mine site, regardless of whether the deactivation plan proceeds. Additionally, an ecological assessment should be conducted to evaluate the potential damage caused to rivers, streams, and landscapes within the valley due to the intrusive and destructive deactivation practices. These actions threaten the well-being of a valley that has thrived with infrastructure for over 125 years.

3. **Safe Wilderness Trail Access to the Valley**
   We request wilderness trail access to the valley for the public. This would allow stakeholders to access their resource claims outside of the conservancy, property owners to visit their properties, and the public to explore Crown land. Access could be provided under a "use at your own risk" format—similar to how the public is allowed to climb mountains, paddle rivers, or walk or drive on steep forestry roads at their own assumed risk. We are keen and willing to work together to find a solution.

4. **A Halt to Deactivation Plans**
   Most importantly, we demand a "pause" or "halt" on the continuation of deactivation plans until the above concerns have been adequately addressed.

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6. Public Outreach: How You Can Help

Next Steps:

- **Write to Your Local MLA and MP:** Reach out to your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Members of Parliament (MP) to voice your concerns about the deactivation plans. MLA and MP support can play a crucial role in influencing governmental decisions and ensuring the issues are addressed at the provincial level. We have included the relevant local contact information below.

  Rob Morrison MP - Kootenay Columbia
  E: Rob.Morrison@parl.gc.ca
  T: (250) 417-2250

  Scott McInnis MLA - Columbia River-Revelstoke
  E: Scott.McInnis.MLA@leg.bc.ca
  T: (250 432-2300

- **Contact the Ministry of Forests (MoF):** Express your opposition to the deactivation plans. Use the information provided in this document or add your personal concerns and viewpoints to highlight the impact of these plans on the community, environment, and historical sites. **The deadline to submit feedback on the planned deactivation is February 28, 2025.**

  Contact:
  FOR.SelkirkDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca

- **Raise Awareness Within Your Community:** Share what's happening with those around you—friends, family, coworkers, and other community members. By increasing public awareness, you help rally more support for the cause and ensure that the importance of this issue is not overlooked.

Your involvement can make a significant difference in the fight to protect the valley and its access points. Every voice counts in preserving this historically and ecologically important region for future generations.

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7. Further Reading

7.a)

Timeline of Events: Proposed Closure of the Incomappleux Forest Service Road (FSR)

View deactivation notices and accompanying letters to stakeholders here »

October 5, 2021

- The Incomappleux FSR was closed under Section 22.2(3) of the Forest and Range Practices Act due to public safety concerns.
- Planning for deactivation work began.

2024 Field Season

- Fieldwork was conducted on Sections 01, 03, and 04 to gather data for deactivation prescriptions.
- Draft deactivation prescription maps were developed for stakeholder review and comment.
- The maps were made available online.

2025 Field Season (Planned Work)

- Section 02 will be assessed.
- Deactivation work will begin on Branch 01, starting where Branch 02 forks off on the east side of the river.
- Once Branch 02 is deactivated, the remainder of Branch 01 to the start of the FSR will be completed.

Final Stage: Bridge Removal (Date TBD)

- The Crevice Bridge (0.3 km mark) will be removed, **permanently closing vehicular access to the Incomappleux Valley.**
- The bridge removal will occur only after all other deactivation work in the valley is completed.

Next Steps

- Stakeholders are invited to provide comments on the draft deactivation prescriptions by February 28, 2025.

7.b)

Further Reading

- **Circle of Silver, Vol. 4, Centennial Series.**