

Failing Our Forests



Al Harvey/Slidefarm

April 2001

Canada is home to one of the most rare and endangered types of ancient forest in the world--coastal temperate rainforest. These forests only exist in their natural state in temperate zones, stretching along the west coast of Canada and much of the United States. These forests only ever covered 0.2 percent of the earth's land surface, and are more rare than tropical rainforests.

Current logging rates in the southern Great Bear Rainforest are far beyond sustainable, and even 50% above the B.C. government's long term harvest level.

Approximately 80% of the large rainforest valleys in B.C. have already been degraded or destroyed.

How the Liberal Government Measures Up on the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement

One year ago, British Columbia moved from global pariah to the environmental hero of the day with the announcement of the historic Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, which established the framework for what could become the largest conservation initiative in North America.

The April 4, 2001 agreement ended years of environmental conflict and an international markets campaign that saw high-profile customers like Home Depot and Ikea question why they should buy B.C. forest products if unsustainable forest practices continued in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Since then, what has the province's new Liberal government done to ensure this unprecedented "peace in the woods" accord remains intact? ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network and the Sierra Club of British Columbia--four major environmental groups centrally involved in forging long-term solutions for the region--have evaluated the government's progress in this first annual Great Bear Rainforest Report Card.

The B.C. Liberals are failing to act on many major components of the agreement while attempting to fast-track land-use planning on the coast and province-wide. At the same time, the provincial government is failing to implement the vitally

important government-to-government protocol with coastal First Nations announced in conjunction with the agreement. The Liberals' combination of haste on one front and inaction on others is cause for serious concern to all parties to the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, and demonstrates a lack of respect for the rights of coastal First Nations.

Failing to act on the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement means failing to foster a healthy future for much of B.C.'s globally celebrated coastal rainforest--and the communities that live there. Failure to act also has implications in the international marketplace, which increasingly demands ecologically responsible products. The lack of tangible progress projects an image of instability and uncertainty to potential investors, who could further diversify B.C.'s slowing economy. It's time for the Liberal government to seize the extraordinary opportunity the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement offers them and make British Columbia into a true leader of environmental stewardship and sustainability. The world is watching. And waiting.

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Major elements of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement

- 20 large, pristine rainforest valleys in the Great Bear Rainforest, totalling 600,000 hectares in area, were slated for protection from logging and development. These Protected Areas will not be designated as provincial parkland, so they will not exclude First Nations rights and title.
- An additional 68 valleys, totalling 880,000 hectares, were placed under moratoria from logging for 12 to 24 months, or until informed decisions are made on how to best manage the land. The official government term for these moratoria is "Option Areas".
- A new framework, ecosystem-based management, will guide ongoing land-use planning and forest-management activities in the Great Bear Rainforest--which is divided into two districts, the Central Coast and the North Coast--as well as Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands).
- An independent team of international respected scientists, community economic development practitioners, investment specialists, and First Nations and community representatives (the Coast Information Team) will develop recommendations on ecosystem management and economic alternatives.
- Government will establish financial mechanisms for economic diversification and managing economic change in the region--the Community Economic Development Fund and the Mitigation for Workers Fund; \$25 million was allocated in the provincial budget for mitigation, with an additional \$10 million to be secured through private investment.
- Logging companies that operate in the region agreed to change their logging practices and their levels of logging to reflect the outcome of conservation and ecosystem-based planning. This would set them on the road to gaining Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) eco-certification--the ultimate guarantee of acceptance in the global marketplace.
- Logging companies acknowledged that the rates of logging on the coast would be reduced to more sustainable levels.
- The environmental groups involved in the agreement--ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network and the Sierra Club of British Columbia--called off their international markets campaigns around the Great Bear Rainforest to focus on implementing the agreement and building long-term solutions for the region.



Great Bear Rainforest Report Card

Last year, ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network and the Sierra Club of British Columbia developed the following 12 benchmarks to measure the provincial government's progress in implementing the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement of April 4, 2001.

PROTECTED AREAS: F

1. Have the Protected Areas agreed to in the provincial government's April 4, 2001 announcement been formalized through Orders in Council (OICs)?

In November 2001, the government acknowledged its duty to consult with First Nations on the Protected Areas and set January 2002 as the target date for enacting OICs. None materialized. By mid-February, the province announced it had held a mere two meetings with only one nation and estimated a further two months would be required for consultation alone.

2. Have the moratoria (Option Areas) agreed to in the provincial government's April 4, 2001 announcement been formalized through Orders in Council (OICs)?

OICs on the moratoria (Option Areas) would trigger a designation under the Forest Act that would allow these areas to be removed from the overall calculation of the Annual Allowable Cut. This would relieve pressure on the forests, the companies and the contractors. To date, the government has not passed the OICs.

3. Are logging deferrals continuing in all moratoria (Option Areas) until the independent science and economic team has completed regional analysis to adequately inform land-use planning?

Both government and industry have indicated a willingness to maintain moratoria until March 2003 on the Central Coast and December 2003 on the North Coast. Although not formally entrenched, the moratoria are holding. There are mounting

REPORT CARD SUMMARY:

PROTECTED AREAS: F

INTERNATIONALLY

CREDIBLE SCIENCE: C+

ECOSYSTEM-BASED

MANAGEMENT: D

MANAGING ECONOMIC

CHANGE: D

FIRST NATIONS RIGHTS

AND TITLE: F

concerns that the science, economic and planning work will not be able to be completed within the March 2003 timeframe.

4. Are the three land-use planning tables for the region credible among First Nations' governments and regional stakeholders, including the environmental organizations?

• Central Coast

The second phase of this planning process began in December 2001, but government has set a new, fast-tracked deadline of March 2003, which could inhibit the careful review needed for this ecologically significant region, as well as prevent the full incorporation of information generated by the independent science and economic experts team. There are additional problems with the process Terms of Reference and structure, and First Nations are carefully evaluating the current structure.

• North Coast

The North Coast planning table began in January 2002, and is set to adjourn in December 2003. Several issues are causing profound concerns among environmentalists and other stakeholders, including: the tight timeline for the planning process, the lack of capacity for First Nations to engage effectively in this process, the government's approval of raw log exports from this district, and the proposed expansion of aquaculture on the coast.

• Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands)

The Haida Nation has begun work on a Land Use Vision to inform the planning process. The provincial government has agreed that the Haida will co-chair the process and the Haida Land Use Vision will form the basis for discussions at the table.

INTERNATIONALLY CREDIBLE SCIENCE: C+

5. Has a team of ecological and economic experts been established to develop credible scientific and socio-economic options for the region?

The work of the independent Coast Information Team (CIT) is seriously behind schedule, largely due to delays in implementation by the provincial government. These delays, coupled with the Liberals' very tight schedule for the planning processes, may not allow enough time for adequate scientific and socio-economic assessment and the incorporation of the CIT's recommendations into planning.

However, the CIT is beginning to take shape. A management committee has been appointed to oversee the development of the team, which is co-chaired by representatives of provincial and First Nations governments. The five-person committee has hired an executive director, who is working with the management committee to build

science and economic teams with an arms-length standing from all stakeholders. This team will undertake the hands-on work.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT: D

6. Has the government reduced the rate of logging in the immediate term to take into account new Protected Areas and moratoria (Option Areas), ensuring logging pressure is not transferred to other sensitive areas while planning continues?

Because the government has not formally passed the OICs for the new Protected Areas and moratoria (Option Areas), the rate of cut cannot be reduced. This critical step must be taken soon.

7. Has the amount of logging been reduced to more sustainable levels?

While actual logging has declined due to a combination of moratoria, market conditions and the softwood lumber dispute with the United States, the government's required Annual Allowable Cut for the region has not been reduced. Under the terms of their licenses, forest companies are obliged to meet the cut target set by the government over a five-year period, with only minimal deviation allowed. If the cut is not formally reduced, the pressure to log the areas in moratoria will increase over time.

8. Does land-use planning continue to allow clear-cut logging of old growth forests, or does it propose alternative logging methods, such as those currently employed on Vancouver Island's Clayoquot Sound?

Current regulatory regimes, as well as the Annual Allowable Cut, are based on status quo, volume-driven rates of logging. Clear-cut logging continues in the Central and North Coast while ecosystem-based management is being defined through the CIT. As plans for ecosystem-based management are refined, government must be willing to review and adjust regulatory requirements to assist in the development of truly sustainable cut levels.

MANAGING ECONOMIC CHANGE: D

9. Are transition funds and plans available to coastal communities, forest-industry workers and logging contractors to adapt to economic change?

The Liberal government pledged that \$25 million for mitigation and transition will be placed in a "Sustainability Trust" by March 31, 2002 [UPDATE APRIL 1]. To date, the government has failed to establish a procedure to apply for funds and has not released any of the money to forestry workers, contractors or communities. The government also slashed existing Community Economic Development programmes on the coast and failed to replace them with new economic diversification initiatives.

10. Is financing available to develop new regional strategies for economic development?

While the Joint Solutions Project (see "From Conflict to Joint Solutions") and the environmental groups are funding pilot projects to develop options for economic in coastal communities, such as non-timber forest products, the province has failed to invest in any initiatives that would help diversify coastal economies.

11. Is the provincial government willing to explore new options for conservation which meet First Nations' and others' needs?

The province has expressed interest in exploring new mechanisms for conservation. To date, these talks are slow and have minimal progress to report.

FIRST NATIONS RIGHTS AND TITLE: F

12. Has the provincial government implemented the government-to-govern-

ment protocol, signed with coastal First Nations on April 4, 2001?

The provincial government has totally failed in its commitment to implement the elements of the April 4, 2001 protocol.

The government-to-government protocol, signed by six coastal First Nations and the province, establishes mechanisms for land-use planning and commits the two parties to both a framework for environmentally responsible development and implementing agreements that would provide economic opportunities for First Nations.

The province agreed to identify opportunities and to facilitate First Nations involvement in economic development. These measures could include training and capacity building, joint ventures with existing forest licensees and contractors, forest tenure including Community Forest licenses, the development of local silviculture crews, First Nations involvement in the forest management workforce and other opportunities. The protocol also commits the signatories to other economic development opportunities such as tourism and fisheries, guided by the principles of ecologically responsible management.

"These campaigns have had an effect in terms of the market pressures that exist. If this [agreement] brings an end to those controversies, it will be a positive development."

**Ric Slaco, Chief Forester,
International Forest Products.**

"Greenpeace has won its case about the need to apply conservation biology and ecosystem management on the central and north coast. We agree with that and we think most people in B.C. agree with that."

**Linda Coady, Vice President,
Weyerhaeuser**

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It's not too late

Although the Liberal government is behind in its commitments, environmental groups and all stakeholders remain dedicated to making this unprecedented made-in-B.C. solution work. Here's what the government needs to do--and soon:

- Formalize, through Orders-In-Council, the Protected Areas designated last year.
- Reduce logging rates immediately to take into account new Protected Areas and moratoria (Option Areas) as planning continues, not push logging into other sensitive areas.
- Make sure that the Coast Information Team has enough time to provide advice to land-use planning tables currently working on tight timelines.
- Allocate new transition funds for communities in the region to develop sustainable local economies.
- Start engaging with First Nations to seek new opportunities for sustainable economic development.

These challenges are important but very achievable goals for the province to meet in the near future. It is critical for not only international customers, but also all the parties to the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement to see progress and commitment from the B.C. government. It's time to get to work!

"The environmental awareness of European consumers makes it impossible to market a new product containing fibers from British Columbia's ancient rainforests."

Lenzing AG (Austria), pulp buyer

O'Neill/Greenpeace

The Great Bear Rainforest

This wild and rugged country stretches along a thin band of Canada's west coast for nearly 500 kilometres--from Knight Inlet to the Alaskan Panhandle. An area the size of Switzerland, the Great Bear Rainforest covers almost 7 million hectares. It is called the Great Bear Rainforest

because it is one of the last great grizzly strongholds in the world. Perhaps the most unique and elusive inhabitant of all is the Kermode, a creamy white variety of black bear known to First Nations as the "Spirit Bear" for its shy, spectre-like appearance. Numbering less than 400, Spirit Bears are found only in this region.

Scientific studies have found that bears and other large mammals need large tracts of roadless wilderness like British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest to maintain healthy populations, and old-growth forests provide the best habitat. What's more, a strong population of large predators indicates a truly healthy ecosystem. For this reason, the Great Bear is internationally celebrated as a natural treasure, a storehouse of biological richness.



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Who We Are

We're environmental groups working together to promote conservation and economic alternatives to industrial logging in British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). We advocate a new approach to the land based in ecosystem-based management, which would safeguard areas of biological refuge, maintain the ecological integrity of the forest, respect traditional knowledge, and provide for the long-term sustainability of local communities.

In the mid-1990s, we launched an intense global campaign targeting the trade and

investment of the logging companies that were linked to the destruction of the Great Bear Rainforest. As a result, British and Canadian fund managers divested shares in logging companies, and dozens of companies voiced strong concerns over logging the Great Bear Rainforest. These include Home Depot--the world's largest "Do-it-yourself" store--and powerful pulp buyers such as the German paper and magazine association. This market pressure drove logging companies sit down with us to broker a peace in the "War in the Woods".

We are now working to make the 2001 Great Bear Rainforest Agreement a reality by fully engaging in the government-sanctioned land-use planning process, helping lead scientific and economic analysis for regional options, and working with local communities, First Nations, and logging companies participating in the Joint Solutions Project to create long-term solutions for B.C.'s coast. Together, we have a rare opportunity to do it right, before it's done wrong.

From Conflict to Joint Solutions

The Joint Solutions Project is a cooperative initiative between environmental organizations involved in implementing the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (ForestEthics, Greenpeace Canada, Rainforest Action Network, Sierra Club of British Columbia), the Coast Forest Conservation Initiative--major forest companies with interests in the B.C. coast (Canadian Forest Products, International Forest Products, NorskeCanada, Western Forest Products, Weyerhaeuser)--and other interested parties.

Through this project, forest companies and environmental groups are collaboratively developing on-the-ground models for conservation and management that integrate social, economic and ecological needs. For more information, visit www.savethegreatbear.org.

Joe Foy/WCWC

"As part of Lowe's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility, it is our full intention to eliminate sales of wood from environmentally threatened forests, including old growth."

Lowe's, the second largest lumber retailer in the United States

Ron Smid/WCWC

