

Multi-Faith Resolution on Old-Growth Forest Protection and Sustainable Forestry

Whereas:

British Columbia's old-growth forests are a unique and beautiful part of creation. Home to trees that can live to almost 2,000 years of age and tower over 300 feet (95 metres) tall, BC's ancient forests are some of the grandest forests on Earth.

Old-growth forests are home to much flora and fauna, including unique and endangered species that require old-growth forests to flourish. Old-growth forests are also important for sustaining tourism, recreation, clean water, wild salmon, climate stability, and quality of life for British Columbians.

Old-growth forests provide and support unparalleled opportunities for connection with the natural environment. Some of the recreation opportunities old-growth forests support include hiking and camping in areas such as the Carmanah and Walbran Valleys, Meares Island, and Pacific Rim National Park; kayaking and paddling in Clayoquot Sound and the Broken Group Islands; hiking and rafting in the Elaho Valley and the Capilano River; and other recreational opportunities such as recreational fishing, wildlife viewing, bird-watching, forest bathing, photography, caving, geocaching, and more.

Many First Nations cultures in the province depend upon old-growth forests for their food, medicines, building materials and spiritual needs. Monumental old-growth redcedar trees are of particular importance for building canoes, longhouses, totems, and masks. While the protection of old-growth forests in First Nations' territories would support their cultures and help lay the foundation for sustainable economies, many of these communities lack the financial capacity and support needed to diversify their economies so that old-growth forests can be protected rather than logged.

Old-growth forests are scarce in much of BC today. For example, on BC's southern coast, over 79% of original, productive, old-growth has been logged, including well over 90% of the highest productivity, valley-bottom forests where the largest trees grow. Old-growth forests now make up a minority fraction of the productive, forested land base, meaning second-growth forests now dominate most of the productive forest lands in BC.

In 2020, the BC government committed to fully implement the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review Panel. These recommendations include working with First Nations to immediately defer (temporarily halt logging) in all at-risk old-growth forests and enact a paradigm shift in the way BC's forests are managed, putting ecosystem integrity ahead of timber values.

In 2022, the BC government committed to protecting 30% of lands in the province by 2030, including through the creation of new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), which would double the area currently protected in legislated areas in BC.

In 2023, the BC government adjusted forestry regulations, including removing the "unduly restrict" clause; invested funding in value-added manufacturing; and committed to establishing a new conservation financing mechanism to support First Nations' capacity, sustainable economic development, and land stewardship, as well as the creation of new IPCAs.

These are exciting new steps, but without significant provincial funding to support conservation financing linked to new protected areas and the prioritization of immediate deferral of the most

biodiverse and at-risk forest ecosystems, many of BC's most ecologically, economically, and culturally important old-growth forests may still be lost.

We therefore recommend the Provincial Government:

1. Support First Nations communities to immediately defer logging in identified at-risk old-growth forests by providing compensation for lost logging revenues.
2. Provide significant funding for the sustainable economic development and diversification of First Nations communities through the recently promised conservation financing mechanisms that assist new Indigenous enterprises to develop. This will allow these communities to grow and diversify economically in sectors such as cultural and eco-tourism, clean energy, sustainable seafood, and value-added, second-growth forestry while permanently protecting old-growth forests in their territories.
3. Expedite the creation of a science-based, legislated plan to permanently protect endangered old-growth forests in BC to help reach your 30% goal while sustaining the economy and the ecology of the province.
4. Continue to support policies that facilitate a sustainable, value-added, second-growth forest industry in BC, as second-growth forests now constitute the majority of its productive forest lands.

The Ancient Forest Alliance occasionally creates press releases and holds events that showcase the broad-based support of old-growth forest protection involving various groups spanning far beyond the environmental movement. Please check the following boxes if you are interested in participating and sharing your voice!

- Willing to be named publicly in media releases, public presentations, etc.
 - Willing to speak to news media about your organization's support for old-growth forest protection
 - Would like to be informed via email about events and other opportunities to show support for old-growth forests
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Name: _____

Faith: _____

Organization: _____

Position: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____