

## **Resolution on Old-Growth Forest Protection and Sustainable Forestry (Recreation Groups)**

### **Whereas:**

Old-growth forests provide many environmental services to BC. They filter water for fish-bearing waterways, stabilize riverbanks, and produce woody debris, which provides habitat for juvenile and adult salmon. This in turn supports wild salmon populations which are vital to BC's recreational and commercial fisheries and are a key food source of iconic species such as orcas and bears. They also store vast amounts of atmospheric carbon; provide non-timber forest products like wild mushrooms, medicinal herbs, and berries; provide clean drinking water for communities; help prevent landslides on steep slopes; and sustain unique and endangered wildlife such as the marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, and mountain caribou.

Old-growth forests provide and support unparalleled opportunities for outdoor recreation. They are an important part of BC's appeal as an outdoor recreation destination and are pillars of BC's multi-billion dollar outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism industry. Some of the recreation opportunities old-growth forests support include recreational fishing; 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 wildlife viewing, bird-watching, forest bathing, photography, caving, geocaching, and more.

Studies have shown that keeping old-growth forests standing provides greater net economic benefits than cutting them down when factoring in their value in supporting tourism, recreation, carbon offsets, water conservation and filtration, recreational and commercial fisheries, and non-timber forest products (e.g. wild mushrooms). Local communities across British Columbia stand to benefit from long-term, sustainable revenues and jobs by keeping old-growth forests standing.

Old-growth forests are central to many First Nations cultures, which rely on ancient cedars for building traditional canoes, long houses, totem poles, masks and other items, and on plants, wildlife, and wild salmon for food and medicines. 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
- 

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_