

Summary Briefing Note to the Provincial Forestry Advisory Council: Core Policy Measures for a Sustainable Forestry Paradigm Shift in BC

Ancient Forest Alliance (AFA) & Endangered Ecosystem Alliance (EEA) December 2025

Right now, forestry in BC is at a crossroads, with collapsing ecosystems and forestry employment due to a volume-driven system dependent on liquidating the last endangered ecosystems.

The Provincial Forestry Advisory Council (PFAC) has both the opportunity and responsibility to explicitly call on the province to increase their responsibility – not to decrease or absolve themselves of government leadership (their dream come true) – for the ecological paradigm shift promised by the province.

We cannot emphasize the centrality of provincial leadership, legislation, and policy enough as being foundational for the solution here – without it, the timber industry will increase its dominance over land use decision-making directly and via different surrogates dependent upon them (often viewed as “community” interests by those with idealistic views about local community management).

At its core, any paradigm shift must ensure:

1. The systematic protection of the last endangered old-growth forests.
2. Historic levels of incentives and restructuring for a rapid transition away from our old-growth timber dependency into a modernized, value-added, sustainable, second-growth industry (a “throw the kitchen table at it” scale of incentives and restructuring).

There is an ocean of words and recommendations coming at PFAC, which we sense will result in the loss of our central policy recommendations. After our last call with Garry Merkel and Hugh Scorah, we wanted to summarize the absolute core of them here:

A Historic Scale of Incentives for a Modernized, Sustainable, Value-Added Second-Growth Forest Industry

Current challenge: BC has failed to meaningfully transition toward value-added, second-growth forestry and has instead maintained a reliance on old-growth logging, resulting in the continual loss of our most endangered ecosystems, along with jobs and mills.

Reason: Insufficient incentives and regulations to drive a shift toward a modernized, value-added, second-growth system of forestry.

Solution:

The province must implement a large-scale, transformative system of incentives and regulations, which could include, but would not be limited to:

1. Attaching stipulations for value-added, second-growth forestry investments to BC's share of the federal \$1.2 billion Softwood Lumber support funding in lieu of the US tariffs.
2. Other major financial incentives for value-added, second-growth investments, including rebates from the log exports tax "fee-in-lieu", PST relief, provincial property tax relief, annual tenure (TFL, FL, etc) fee relief, and from stumpage fee rebates (fears about triggering Softwood Lumber tariffs are already largely a moot point due to Trump's new tariffs that are unhinged from any semblance of rational policy). Together, this economic relief would provide an unprecedented level of incentives for reinvestment and modernization away from BC's old-growth timber dependency.
3. A larger, investment-driven fund seeded by government and supported by investors for a modernized, sustainable, second-growth forest industry that supplants the old-growth AAC, providing both carbon and biodiversity benefits.
4. Increases in log export restrictions through regulations and enhanced export taxes.
5. Stipulations that tenure holders must put a certain percentage (some have suggested 50%) of their wood up for sale on the open market through regional log sorts for the manufacturing sector.
6. Support from the province for R&D and marketing for sustainable, value-added second-growth products.
7. Support for BCIT/ educational technical training programs needed for a modernized wood products industry.

A Proactive BC Protected Areas Strategy (PAS)

Current challenge: The province is failing to move forward across much of BC and in many ecosystems to expand the protected areas system to meet its 30% by 2030 goal.

Reason: BC's approach to protected areas remains largely ad hoc. The province currently waits for protected area proposals from First Nations, many of whom lack the capacity, insight and financing to initiate these processes without government support.

Solution:

1. The province must establish a proactive [Protected Areas Strategy](#) that develops a candidate list of the highest conservation value areas in ecosystems at greatest risk for potential protection. Then they must actively approach respective First Nations to pursue their potential protection through shared decision-making.
2. This strategy must be guided by [Ecosystem-Based Protection Targets](#) developed through the promised [Biodiversity & Health Framework](#).

Ecosystem-Based Targets (via the BEH Framework) to Prioritize the Most Endangered Old-Growth

Current challenge: Existing protected areas do not adequately encompass the most at-risk old-growth ecosystems, leaving them open to logging.

Reason: BC's current targets are constrained by directives to not unduly impact the timber supply, and they fail to factor in forest productivity distinctions (hence we "log the big trees and save the small trees") and key distinctions in ecosystems. In addition, they guide the conservation reserve system in the working landscapes but do not guide the protected areas system (which is also ad hoc), and they are not based on the latest conservation biology and landscape ecology science, which requires scaling-up targets.

Solution: BC needs to move forward with the promised BEH Framework, and ensure that biodiversity targets are based on the latest science, are finer scale to include ecosystem distinctions like forest productivity gradients, and take precedent over timber supply considerations. These targets must guide a systematic expansion of the legislated protected areas system (via a BC Protected Areas Strategy) and not just conservation reserves and retention levels in the working landscapes.

Solutions-Space Funding To Secure Remaining Old-Growth Logging Deferrals

Current challenge: The most at-risk old-growth forests in British Columbia continue to be logged, including areas identified for immediate logging deferrals by the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP).

Reason: Many First Nations currently rely on revenues from old-growth logging. As a result, approving logging deferrals can result in significant and immediate financial losses, making deferrals economically unfeasible.

Solution:

The province must provide interim "solutions space" funding to First Nations that are economically dependent on old-growth logging. This funding must fully cover the short-term revenue losses associated with approving logging deferrals, enabling deferral decisions to be made without economic concern, whilst longer-term land use plans are developed. It can be sourced from parts of the BC Nature Agreement funds, and through new funds procured through various resource rent fees (stumpage, oil and gas royalties, mining fees, etc.).

A Chief Ecologist Office

Current challenge: Timber volume harvesting targets currently function as the overriding constraint on land-use, forestry, and conservation decisions. This approach has locked the province into an inflexible, outdated forest industry, driving ecological degradation and contributing to the collapse of forestry employment.

Reason: The Chief Forester holds decisive technical authority over Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) determinations, yet the role is not mandated to prioritize ecosystem integrity as a first-order consideration. As a result, the most pervasive land use across the province is shaped by a timber-centric bias.

Solution:

The province should establish a Chief Ecologist office to oversee AAC determinations, ensuring they are set *after* legislated protected areas and conservation reserves are established for the most endangered ecosystems in the province. This would enable a necessary shift from volume-based to area-based forest management, align forestry decisions with ecological reality, and support a credible transition to a sustainable, resilient forest economy.

