



STAFF REPORT

DATE: December 7, 2021 **FILE:** 0560-04 Board

TO: Chair and Directors,
Regional Board

FROM: Dave Leitch
Chief Administrative Officer

RE: OLD GROWTH FOREST MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE

To consider sending the attached letter to Premier John Horgan regarding the management of old growth forests in British Columbia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its November 17, 2021 meeting the Municipal Services Committee discussed the attached UBCM media release and passed the following resolution:

Adams/Evans: MSC 22/21

THAT Director Cornfield work with SRD staff to draft a letter to the Provincial Govt Premier and Minister of Forests from the MSC to be placed on the next SRD Board agenda for approval.

Accordingly, the attached letter has been prepared for the Board's consideration based on the following themes identified by Director Cornfield:

- lack of consultation and engagement with local government
- lack of substantive assessment of local economic impact
- lack of substantive assessment of social impact to communities
- unidentified Provincial support for offsetting job losses and economic impacts

Should the Board wish to proceed with a letter as recommended by the Committee the following resolutions would be in order.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT the report from the Chief Administrative Officer be received.
2. THAT the December 7, 2021 letter regarding old growth forest management be sent to the Premier of BC and the Minister of Forests.

Respectfully:



Dave Leitch
Chief Administrative Officer



OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

File: 0530_01

December 8, 2021

SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY: premier@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable John Horgan, M.L.A.
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V9W 9E1

Dear Premier Horgan:

RE: OLD GROWTH FOREST MANAGEMENT

Old growth deferrals and changes planned to Forest Management prioritize ecosystem health over the health and welfare of BC people, their families and their businesses. Ecosystem based management [EBM] at this time is a largely unproven management strategy. The environment, the economy, and social programs are inextricably connected. A healthy environment and robust social programs require a vibrant economy. You cannot have one without the other two. Everyone benefits when all interests are brought to the table.

We can accept and support change to the way our forest resources are managed. We support inclusive and meaningful dialogue on changes to sustainable forest management that involve all stakeholders. This was the process used to resolve the Broughton Salmon Aquaculture issue. We can accept and support decisions based on fact and science. We do not accept nor support processes that impose decisions that are reactive, emotionally driven and ignore the consequences of those decisions.

Your press releases and publications refer to partnership with first nations but there is no mention of working with local governments. You plan on providing \$12.69 million in capacity funding but there is no mention of capacity funding for local governments. How can you support workers and communities when there has been virtually no engagement or involvement with local governments? You have provided opportunities for us to speak but we feel you have not listened. There has been a definite lack of substantive economic impact assessment and associated social impacts on communities. The technical advisory committee [TAC] was heavily biased to environmental values. There was no representation by a forest economist, no local governments, no first nations, and no industry representatives. No one on the TAC has experience being responsible for forest product manufacturing nor as a local elected official.

Government talks about supports to offset job and economic impacts that **may** follow new harvest restrictions. The economic impacts are already occurring **now!** Contractors are being forced to lay off people as their planned harvesting has been reduced or eliminated. What are loggers going to be retrained for in small communities where there are no other jobs or employment

opportunities? They and their families will be forced to relocate to other communities where there is work.

The economic impact goes well beyond those directly impacted. When you consider all the other businesses that depend on a healthy forest sector there is a real domino effect. It affects communities because it affects families. Families buy homes, their children attend our schools, use community playing fields, arenas and pools. They shop at local business and volunteer throughout the community.

Mr. Premier we urge you to hit the reset button, involve the people most impacted and take the time to do it right.

Sincerely,

Brad Unger
Chair

Copy: Minister of Forests



Old growth deferrals announced



Publishing Date: November 10, 2021

On November 2 the provincial government **announced** that it would be working in partnership with First Nations to defer the harvest of 2.6 million hectares of BC's most at-risk old growth forests. Logging deferrals are viewed as a temporary measure – as recommended in the 2020 Old Growth Strategic Review - to allow for the development of a new approach to sustainable forest management that prioritizes ecosystem health.

Mapping of the deferral areas, now available online, has been shared with First Nations, who have been asked to indicate within the next 30 days whether or not they support the deferrals, require further engagement or would prefer to discuss deferrals in the context of existing treaties, agreements or other arrangements. The

province has committed \$12.69 million in capacity funding over the next three years to support this process. *[Note: readers are encouraged to click on “visit the FTP” link under Old Growth Maps to access shapefiles for spatial data]*

Once the deferral period ends, the province will work with First Nations to provide clarity on what areas will be protected forever, areas that may support some harvesting under specified conditions and areas that can be accessed for sustainable timber management.

In follow up to the announcement, Forests Minister Katrine Conroy held regional calls on November 8th with local governments. The Minister shared details of the announcement, listened to community comments and concerns and answered questions about the deferral process. Recognizing that old growth deferrals will have an impact on BC communities, the Minister committed to providing a suite of supports to help forest workers, communities and First Nations including short term employment opportunities, education and skills training as well as retirement bridging. The province has committed to further engagement with UBCM and local governments in the coming weeks and months as the deferral process unfolds.

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British Columbia News

Government taking action on old-growth deferrals

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/25648>

Tuesday, November 2, 2021 1:35 PM

VIEW TRANSLATIONS

Victoria - The Province has announced its intention to work in partnership with First Nations to defer harvest of ancient, rare and priority large stands of old growth within 2.6 million hectares of B.C.'s most at-risk old-growth forests.

"Forests are a part of who we are as British Columbians. We have a responsibility to ensure the benefits are shared, today and with future generations," said Premier John Horgan. "Following the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, we are taking steps to fundamentally transform the way we manage our old-growth forests, lands and resources."

Logging deferrals are a temporary measure – recommended by 2020's Old Growth Strategic Review – to prevent irreversible biodiversity loss while First Nations, the Province and other partners develop a new approach to sustainable forest management that prioritizes ecosystem health and community prosperity throughout B.C. This new approach will be based on the recommendations provided in the Old Growth Strategic Review and will recognize that a shift to prioritize ecosystem health is necessary if the forests are to continue to provide essential benefits, such as clean air, clean water, carbon storage, conservation of biodiversity and timber.

Details of these forest stands – mapped and defined by a panel of independent scientific and ecological experts – have been shared with First Nations rights and title holders so they can advise how to proceed on the deferral areas within their respective territories. The Province is requesting that First Nations indicate within the next 30 days whether or not they support the deferrals, require further engagement to incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge, or would prefer to discuss deferrals through existing treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements. Capacity funding of up to \$12.69 million over three years is available to support this process.

To support the deferral process, government will immediately cease advertising and selling BC Timber Sales in the affected areas.

"We're building a new vision for forest care to better share all the benefits of our forests together, for generations and generations to come," said Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. "We are committed to working in partnership with First Nations to make sure we get this right and to supporting workers and communities as we develop a sustainable approach to managing BC's old-growth forests."

The Province is also bringing together strategically co-ordinated and comprehensive supports to help forest workers, communities and First Nations with the necessary supports to offset job and economic impacts that may follow new harvest restrictions. Programs will include connecting workers with short-term employment opportunities, education and skills training or funds to bridge to retirement. The Province will also work in partnership with business and communities to develop new supports that will assist rural communities to create jobs through diversified economies, infrastructure projects and innovation in industry.

When the deferral period ends, the newly identified at-risk forests will either be added to B.C.'s 3.5 million hectares of old-growth forests already off-limits to harvesting, or included within new forest management plans.

As per the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, government will work in partnership with First Nations to provide clarity on the areas of forest that should be protected forever, the areas that may support some harvest under strict management conditions that prioritize ecosystem health, and the areas that can be

accessed for sustainable timber management to support workers and communities. The result will be permanent protection for more of B.C.'s most important old growth and more clarity to support investment and jobs.

"A commitment to partnership with First Nations and integrating their perspectives on land is fundamental to facilitating the required paradigm shift in forest management that includes old growth as a key component of ecosystem health," said Garry Merkel, one of five members of the independent technical panel, and co-author of the Old Growth Strategic Review. "Once temporary deferrals are in place for the most at-risk ecosystems, government can turn toward implementation of the remaining recommendations of the strategic review and developing a new path forward."

There are already some parts of the province, such as the Great Bear Rainforest, where Indigenous Nations are working in partnership with government and industry to diversify management goals. These innovative partnerships demonstrate what can be achieved together and it is the provincial government's intent to build upon this type of forest management model throughout the province.

"By doing this work, we're following through with the recommendations from the Old Growth Strategic Review, and our commitment to reconciliation in line with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act," Premier Horgan said.

The Province will provide resources to support First Nations in assessing new data and decisions on deferrals and participating in the development of the Province's new approach to sustainable forest management. This will allow First Nations and the Province to determine if forest carbon offsets could be used to support the protection of old growth. The Province will also establish a new process to enable individuals and organizations to donate funds to purchase existing timber licences and preserve old-growth stands.

Learn More:

To learn more about the new vision for B.C.'s forests visit: www.gov.bc.ca/forestfuture
(<http://www.gov.bc.ca/forestfuture>)

B.C.'s old-growth strategy: www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth (<http://www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth>)

Modernization of B.C. forest policy: www.gov.bc.ca/modernforestpolicy (<http://www.gov.bc.ca/modernforestpolicy>)

Learn more about B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples> (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>)

Three backgrounders follow.
Lindsay Byers

Press Secretary
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Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Media Relations
250 896-4320

Backgrounders

Milestones to a new vision for old growth

The Old Growth Strategic Review report, *A New Future for Old Forests*, was released in September 2020. Government began implementing its 14 recommendations immediately.

Actions to date include:

- Government engaged with the First Nations Leadership Council to discuss the report and begin work on the approach for Recommendation 1: “Engage the full involvement of Indigenous leaders and organizations to review this report and any subsequent policy or strategy development and implementation.” Government is announcing new capacity funding of up to \$12.69 million over three years to help support this work.
- In response to Recommendation 6: “Until a new strategy is implemented, defer development in old forests where ecosystems are at very high and near-term risk of irreversible biodiversity loss,” harvest has been deferred in 11 areas of old growth throughout B.C. The most recent deferrals include those in the Fairy Creek and central Walbran area, initiated at the request of the Pacheedaht, Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht First Nations. The Special Tree Protection Regulation will also protect as many as 1,500 of B.C.’s most iconic old-growth trees and one hectare of forest surrounding them.
- To further support Recommendation 6, the province formed an independent Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel. Its advice on where priority areas should be deferred has been received and is informing government’s current discussions with First Nations rights and title holders. Further deferrals will soon follow from these discussions.
- The Technical Advisory Panel’s work, in collaboration with government, also addresses Recommendation 5: “Provide the public with timely and objective information about forest conditions and trends,” by producing and releasing maps and data on the distribution and condition of old growth in B.C.
- Work on Recommendations 1, 5 and 6, as outlined above, is underway, as is Recommendation 7: “Bring management of old forests into compliance with existing provincial targets and guidelines for maintaining biological diversity.”

Key timelines for addressing the recommendations of the old-growth independent panel report can be found online: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/oldgrowth_path.png (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/oldgrowth_path.png)

This work is leading to a new old-growth strategy that is part of government’s vision for forests in B.C. The old-growth strategy is expected to be complete in 2023.

For more information, please visit www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth (<http://www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth>)

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Technical Advisory Panel recommendations

In June 2021, government appointed an independent panel of scientists and foresters to help with B.C.’s next steps on old growth. The purpose of the panel was to provide maps, analysis and detailed status of old-growth ecosystems in British Columbia in order to improve public information, consistent with Recommendation 5 from the Old Growth Strategic Review. The panel was also asked to provide recommendations on priority areas for implementation of deferrals, consistent with Recommendation 6 from the Old Growth Strategic Review.

Recommendation 6 from the Old Growth Strategic Review noted that, “there are some areas of the province where failure to act now could lead to permanent loss of rare or unique ecosystem components...” This was the basis of their recommendation that, “until a new strategy is implemented, defer development in old forests where ecosystems are at very high risk of irreversible biodiversity loss.”

The panel has completed its work and provided a summary report of its methods, analysis and recommendations as well as a series of eight maps (www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth). The panel's recommendations are focused on old-growth ecology and are intended to support the discussion between provincial and Indigenous governments.

In order to identify priority areas for deferral panel members based their work on the direction provided in the Old Growth Strategic Review and have recommended that the focus should be on big-treed old growth, ancient old growth and rare old growth. The panel's analysis shows that of the 56.2 million hectares of forest in B.C., 11.1 million hectares is old growth. This consists of:

- **Big-treed old growth, 6.2 million hectares:** Big-treed old growth is naturally rare. And, since it has been heavily targeted by harvesting, big-treed old growth is now very rare compared to its historic distribution, putting it at extremely high near-term risk. The technical panel has recommended 1.7 million hectares of this be deferred.
- **Rare old growth, 0.8 million hectares:** If an ecosystem has been heavily harvested and very little old growth remains, these remnant areas are, by definition, rare. The panel has recommended 0.5 million hectares of this be deferred.
- **Ancient old growth, 0.6 million hectares:** Ancient forest is globally rare and particularly irreplaceable because of the time it takes to grow an ancient forest. The panel has recommended that 0.4 million hectares of this be deferred.

It is estimated that, historically, there were approximately 25 million hectares of old forest in B.C. Of this, 11.1 million hectares of old growth remain, approximately one-third of which, 3.5 million hectares, is already protected. B.C. is working toward a comprehensive old-growth strategy based on the 14 recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review.

Summary tables of the panel's analysis on these forest types in B.C. is available here:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Summary_Tables_Old_Growth.pdf

(https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Summary_Tables_Old_Growth.pdf)

The panel's work supports the discussions between the Provincial and Indigenous governments.

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Supports for workers, First Nations, communities impacted by old-growth deferrals

The Province will implement co-ordinated and comprehensive supports for workers, communities and First Nations through the development of new programs and by continuing and enhancing existing programs.

Supports through existing programs

The Province will continue to provide supports through existing programs, as well as enhancing them to ensure workers, communities and First Nation communities have access to supports that help people and communities transition to new economic opportunities:

- **Forest Employment Program:** Creates short-term employment to help forest contractors explore new work.
- **Skills Training for Job Pathways:** Connects affected workers, communities and First Nation communities with skills training and educational opportunities for new careers.
- **Community Rapid Response Team:** This team will provide in-community support and will co-ordinate with ministries and organizations to ensure supports are in place for individuals and communities.
- **Rural Business and Community Recovery Initiative:** Recovery advisers will be in place to help create jobs, support rural businesses and communities, and support strategic decision-making.

- **Bridging to Retirement:** Forestry workers 55 and older may receive supports to help transition to retirement.

Potential new programs

The Province will work in partnership with businesses, communities and First Nation communities to develop a suite of targeted supports that will help mitigate the adverse economic impacts associated with old-growth deferrals. Areas of focus include developing:

- Supports for job creation in rural British Columbia through value-add forestry and other manufacturing.
- Supports for infrastructure and economic development projects that promote diversification and resilience. This could be similar to the StrongerBC Rural Economic Recovery stream of the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure program that supported projects such as upgrading industrial parks, destination development, airport expansions, marine access, recreation and heritage infrastructure.
- Establish an internal government office to bridge and leverage cross-ministry connections for strategic collaboration on rural diversification.

Learn more about support programs: www.gov.bc.ca/forestfuture (<http://www.gov.bc.ca/forestfuture>)

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Translations

- [Old_Growth_French.pdf](https://bcgovnews.azureedge.net/translations/releases/2021FLNRO0068-002088/Old_Growth_French.pdf) (https://bcgovnews.azureedge.net/translations/releases/2021FLNRO0068-002088/Old_Growth_French.pdf)