

# FORESTRY IN BC:

Setting the Record Straight



**Resource Works**

**MAY 2021**

# 1. Authorship

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A graduate of Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia, he was a director of The Nature Trust of British Columbia from 2006 to 2014. He studied economic botany and the long-term consequences of deforestation and climate change at Leiden University in The Netherlands.



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Josiah is passionate about British Columbian forestry and the benefits provided by natural resources in BC and throughout Canada.

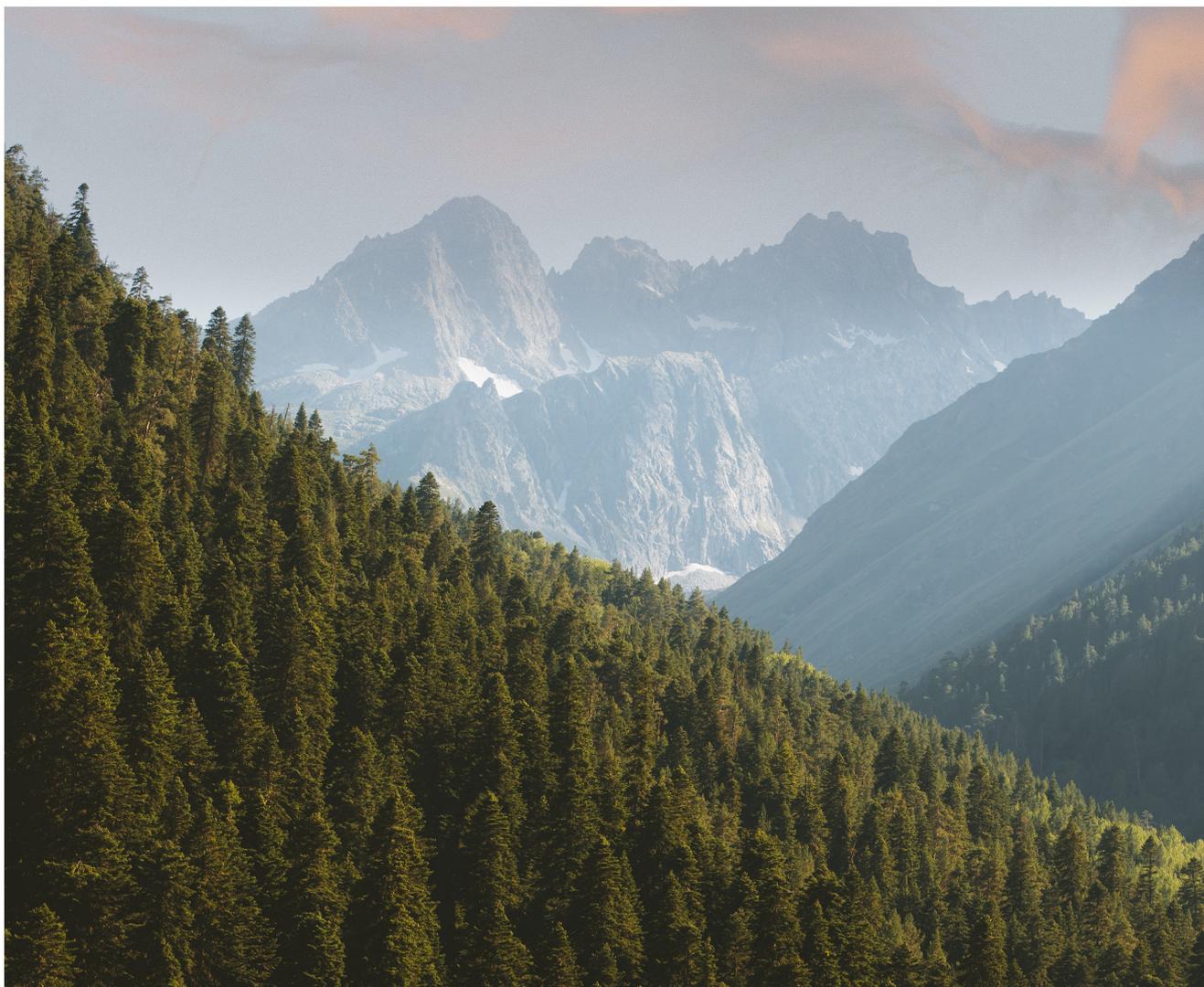


### Resource Works:

A non-profit research and advocacy organization supporting a respectful, fact-based public dialogue on responsible resource development in BC.

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## 2. Introduction

- Alarming claims are being made about the state of forestry in British Columbia. Some say that forests are in a state of crisis that can only be addressed by extreme and immediate actions.  
We decided to review those talking points. Among them, we refute the claims being placed before local governments requesting that motions and resolutions be passed to end old-growth harvesting.  
Our examination included consulting with highly credentialed forest experts, working foresters, and authoritative published sources.  
Our study found that the province is a world leader in forest and environmental conservation. In BC, forestry is tightly regulated to protect and preserve ancient forests, wildlife, and to work sustainably alongside First Nations.



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# 3. Sorting fact from fiction: BC forest conservation

## ■ Is BC in a “forest management crisis”?

A number of environmental non-profit organizations such as the [Sierra Club](#), [Stand Earth](#), and the [David Suzuki Foundation](#) are sounding the alarm that BC’s forests are facing a crisis demanding radical solutions.

“Premier Horgan’s government is likely the last one with a chance to save the last old-growth forests as a legacy for future generations,” the Sierra Club says.

Similarly, Stand Earth says: “BC used to have long intact stretches of these giant trees, but now the sad reality is they are incredibly fragmented – teetering on the brink of extinction.”

The David Suzuki Foundation, meanwhile, sympathized with blockaders and spoke of the “severity of the crisis and the ongoing regulatory delays while some of the last ancient forests are logged”, calling for an end to old-growth logging.

But are BC forests really facing a forest management crisis?

A recent [global comparison](#) (2020) of the state of British Columbia’s forests, conducted as a study by University of British Columbia researchers, concluded that “British Columbia ranks high among other jurisdictions [Australia, China, Japan, the European Union, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the USA] on several key sustainable forest management parameters with legislation and forest management regimes aiming to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of current and future generations.”

Another study from 2016 found British Columbia “to be recognized as having [very demanding legislation](#) and enforcement related to elements of sustainable

forest management, including requirements for wildlife habitat, water quality and public and First Nations involvement.”

Under the Forest Act, it is a legal requirement to reforest every hectare that is harvested on public lands. In addition, reforestation must use tree species that are native and ecologically suitable for the sites to be reforested, unlike most other countries, including New Zealand or the United States.



Most of British Columbia’s forests have been third-party certified for sustainable forest management with one or more of the certification programs by the Forest Stewardship Council, Canadian Standards Association or Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

Just like doctors and lawyers, forests in British Columbia are managed by highly trained registered professionals that are legally accountable for their decisions, prepare plans and oversee all timber harvesting operations in British Columbia.

The fact is, forest management in BC is not in crisis; far from it. Rather, there is a “crisis” of misinformation.

## Do forests have an impact on climate?

It has been claimed that forests are our best ally in fighting the climate crisis and provide essential habitat to species at risk of extinction. This statement is true – forests are indeed one of the best tools to be used in fighting climate change.

The forest carbon cycle plays an integral role in combatting climate change. Older forests store immense amounts of carbon. Younger, growing forests absorb carbon from the atmosphere at a fast rate. And when harvested, carbon in trees continues to be stored within the forest products that are made, especially for lumber and panel products used to construct long-lasting buildings. When harvested areas are reforested, they are soon brought back to absorbing carbon again.



As a form of recognition of how British Columbia’s forests and forest management are capable of fighting the climate crisis, major carbon emitters are starting to look to British Columbia to invest millions of dollars into carbon credits to help offset their own unavoidable emissions.

## Do forests provide essential habitats to species at risk of extinction?

Yes, they do. That’s why at least 15% of the province’s land base is in parks and protected areas and the province is continuously expanding this amount, with 16 new parks and two protected areas just added earlier this year.



At the operational level, forest managers in British Columbia employ numerous forest management strategies specific to the biology and habitat needs for various species-at-risk. Examples include timing of operations near nesting northern goshawks (in addition to substantive buffer reserves), forest reserves for marbled murrelets, reduction in timber harvesting for woodland caribou, and preservation of rare and endangered ecosystems, etc.

In addition to the BC Wildlife Act and other provincial legislation related to the management of wildlife and wildlife habitat, British Columbia follows relevant federal legislation; notably British Columbia provides special consideration for species at risk under Canada’s Species at Risk Act, and for fish and fish habitat under Canada’s Fisheries Act.

## Is logging responsible for an ecological emergency?

It has been stated that coastal temperate rainforests face a state of ecological emergency due to accelerated high rates of logging and climate impacts from droughts and storms. This statement is a false claim. Coastal temperate rainforests are not in a state of ecological emergency. What's important to understand is that:

1. Harvest rates on Crown or public forest lands in British Columbia are determined by the province's chief forester. In establishing a maximum harvest rate (otherwise known as the allowable annual cut or "AAC") for forest-management units across the province, the chief forester conducts extensive analysis. The chief forester considers environmental, social, and economic factors, gathers public input, as well as consulting with industry and First Nations in determining the appropriate AAC.

2. The coastal forests (on Crown land) generally are projected to have a relatively stable AAC over the next 100 years at a [sustainable rate](#) of ~15 million cubic metres.
3. BC's coastal temperate rainforests are not in a state of continuous drought and nor are they experiencing widespread effects from storms.

## Are old-growth forests in BC on the brink of vanishing?

A recent report states that only 35,000 hectares of old-growth forests with very big old trees remain across BC; that in less than 100 years of logging, all but 3% of BC's original big old-growth trees remain. It also stated that large old-growth trees have an essential evolutionary role as reservoirs of genetic diversity and maintain the adaptive potential of tree species, which will be essential as our forests adapt to climate change.



This claim comes from the [BC's Old-Growth Forest, A Last Stand for Biodiversity](#) report, published in April 2020 in order to influence the Old-Growth Forest Strategic Review being conducted by BC at that time.

Expecting any forest to remain in a preserved state forever is false thinking. Forest ecosystems are not static but in constant flux. Landscape factors influence the shape and composition of stands constantly, with examples of such being natural wildfires, or insects such as hemlock looper or mountain pine beetles that can alter forest cover across extensive areas.

The study should be regarded as just a start for growing the understanding of old-growth forests in British Columbia given the following points, and should not be used as a stand-alone basis for guiding future policy decisions on old-growth forest management:



1. As noted in the study, it did not use complete data from all Tree Farm Licences, which can vary across the landscape in terms of old-growth and productivity. Also not used in the study's projections were the millions of protected hectares of the Great Bear Rainforest.
2. The study used site-productivity and forest age class, and assumes that higher productive sites (better growing conditions) with older forests are the only sites with large trees. However, there are many younger forests which have very

large trees, some so large that the general public regards them as "old-growth." A great example is the forests along the North Shore mountains of Metro Vancouver. While most likely not older than 250 years, these forests offer old-growth-like characteristics with wide diameters and very tall heights.

3. The claim that there are only 35,000 hectares remaining for large old-growth trees does not make sense. For instance, the Walbran Carmanah Provincial Park, well known for large old-growth trees, covers an area of 16,365 hectares. Furthermore, the [Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve](#), where no industrial logging can take place and has intact old-growth forests, consists of a terrestrial land base of 148,489 hectares (core areas plus buffer zones). While these aforementioned areas likely do not entirely consist of stands of large trees, further investigation is warranted into the accounting of how much area really exists of large old-growth trees, as the study may be creating the impression that the amount of old-growth is less than there actually is.

## Has anything been done to protect old-growth forests?

For those basing their thinking about old-growth only on sources that are dogmatically opposed to scientific forest management in general, it's important to be aware of policies, regulations and initiatives that contribute to fulfilling the objective of managing for old-growth forests and specifically, protecting very large tree specimens. Here are some:

1. [Special Tree Protection Regulation, Forest and Range Practices Act](#), effective September 11, 2020 – protects trees of a certain diameter and greater. Western red cedar greater than 3.85 metres in diameter will require a protection zone 56 metres in circumference. Failure to identify and protect such trees could result in a fine of up to \$100,000.

2. BC Timber Sales – Best Management Practices for Coastal Legacy Trees, effective June 1, 2019 – guides harvest-area planning for timber sales to manage for [retention of individual trees](#) of a certain diameter. For western red cedar, retention will be required for trees with a diameter greater than 3-metres.
3. There are even more restrictive management considerations associated with western red cedar and yellow cedar when identified as monumental trees within the traditional territories of some coastal First Nations:
4. The Haida Gwaii Land Use Order and Objectives specifically lists harvesting limitations and [protection of cedar trees](#) identified as “monumental trees” – trees greater than one metre in diameter and seven metres in height, that meet certain quality specifications. These protection measures apply to all Crown lands within the Haida Nation’s traditional territory on Haida Gwaii (which is in addition to cedar stewardship areas and extensive Protected Areas on Haida Gwaii).
5. The Nanawakolas Tribal Council has a protocol of a similar nature to the Haida for their territory, situated along the mid-coast areas, with regard to identification and management of monumental cedar trees. Recently Western Forest Products and Interfor [committed to following this protocol](#) when operating within the Nanawakolas traditional territory.



This is a far cry from the recurrent claim that the share of old-growth is down to a single-digit percentage. At a conservative 400 trees, stems per hectare, this is 1/3 of a billion old growth trees, just on Vancouver Island (3.5% of the provincial land base).

There is some truth to the claim that the southern coastal rainforests of BC would have less old-growth, given that over a century of accelerated urban development which has permanently removed these areas from ever growing forests again.

Concerns about preserving intact old-growth forests are hardly new. Recognizing their growing scarcity, the NDP government of the 1990s took the initiative to protect the Nitinat, Walbran and Carmanah valleys as parks in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve.

Coastal Douglas fir (CDF) ecosystems found along the southeast coast of Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland are some of the rarest in the world. In recognition of that, some [11,000 hectares have been protected](#) with 1,125 hectares recently added by the NDP government in 2017.

The Fairy Creek watershed on Vancouver Island is largely protected (as much as two-thirds) with the establishment of old-growth management areas and wildlife habitat areas. As of March 2021, the province of BC struck an agreement with the

## What is the actual amount of protected old-growth forest?

If you believe some claims, you might think that we are on the brink of losing all the remaining old-growth forests in the province. And that parts of the province lack conservation-area plans, or for that matter, any effort to manage old-growth forests.

But on Vancouver Island alone, 860,000 hectares is considered old forest (>250 years old), of which 520,000 hectares or 62% is protected (as of 2017).



Squamish First Nation to protect 70 hectares of old-growth in Dakota Bowl on the Sunshine Coast. And then, of course, there is the Great Bear Rainforest, upon the creation of, was heralded as a crown jewel for the conservation of old-growth ecosystems.

What might come as a surprise is the vast amount of old-growth forest that remains in British Columbia. At the provincial level, there are 13.2 million hectares of old-growth forests in the province – that’s four times the entire size of Vancouver Island and represents 14% of the entire land base of BC. Of that, [4.4 million hectares are protected](#) (33%) in formally protected areas such as provincial and national parks, ecological reserves, wildlife habitat ranges, old-growth management areas and so on. No timber harvesting can occur in these areas.

## Have wildfires made BC forests a source of carbon emissions rather than a carbon sink?

The claim being made is that BC has faced unprecedented wildfires over recent years due to drought, rising temperatures, loss of biodiversity, pest infestations, and mono-crop tree-planting practices, leading to BC’s forests no longer being a carbon sink but a massive carbon source, releasing 82 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually through wildfires and poor forest management, more than our “official” total provincial emissions of 62 million tonnes.

Wildfires in 2017 and 2018 were particularly widespread due to drier than normal conditions and indeed were unprecedented for area burned. Some of these wildfires in the Interior were in stands killed by mountain pine beetle, although many fires did occur in coastal forests as well.

The increasing intensity of wildfires in the British Columbia has largely been associated with climate change and a century of land-management decisions to fight natural forest fires within the Interior’s fire-oriented ecosystems, which has led to the build-up of organic materials that contributed to the intensity of individual fires.



British Columbia is well known for its high-quality forest management. Practices are always evolving as understanding and respect of different forest values shift. Wildfire mitigation efforts are being conducted around communities. Also, utilizing traditional First Nations knowledge to conduct prescribed burns has been done to reduce biomass in stands and enhance wildlife habitat for certain species such as moose and culturally desirable plant species.

The mountain pine beetle epidemic lasted for some 15 years and killed over 55% of the pine in the Interior. With that much dead forest, there are bound to be wildfires in these stands, although the fire hazard declines over time as the killed trees eventually drop their needles and finer branch material decomposes. Unfortunately, the risk of wildfire will always persist.

The severe wildfires of 2017 and 2018 were not in any way a result of “loss of biodiversity.” This claim does not make sense. In 2017, the wildfires were largely concentrated to the Southern Interior and Coast, while the Northern Interior experienced abnormally wet conditions. In 2018, wildfires were

largely in the Northern Interior and coast.

While some wildfires in 2017 and 2018 did burn some regenerated harvested areas, the vast majority occurred in over-mature natural forests. The association of wildfires occurring because of mono-crop tree-planting practices is absurd, as species composition has nothing to do with dry climatic conditions. Reforestation of harvested areas typically uses tree species similar to what was harvested and what is appropriate for the ecosystems that were identified in pre-harvest fieldwork by forest professionals. Ingress of natural seedlings from adjacent forests also contributes to the diversity of every reforested area. Unlike the US South or other parts of the world, plantation forestry is not practiced in the province. Evidence [continues to emerge](#) that active forest management is needed: forest system are dynamic and change throughout time.

Undoubtedly, wildfires cause the release of carbon stored in plant material and soils. Respectively, Wildfires in 2017 and 2018 burned at an unprecedented level of 1,200,000 hectares and 1,354,284 hectares.

While these were horrible back-to-back years for wildfires in the British Columbia, we were not the only jurisdiction with wildfires. Russia, the US Pacific Northwest, and Australia also experienced increased wildfires. However, 2019 and 2020 for British Columbia were quite the opposite, with some 21,183 hectares and 15,000 hectares burned respectively in those years.



In response to the threat of wildfires around communities, the province has been working to reduce biomass loading, including stand thinning in forests proximal to communities, although much more needs to be done.

It is incorrect to compare individual years when attempting to understand carbon sinks/sources. Obviously, for 2017 and 2018 carbon emissions were very high. Conversely, 2019 and 2020 were very well below the decade average of 347,104 hectares burned. Rapid salvage and reforestation help to mitigate negative effects of carbon emissions and transition the land base back to becoming a sink for absorbing carbon.

## Do old-growth forests differ from other forests when it comes to mitigating climate change?

It has been stated that BC's old-growth temperate rainforests are extremely rare on Earth and have a larger carbon-storage capacity than other types

of forests, storing over 1,000 tonnes of carbon per hectare, while deforestation has released 120 billion tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere, reducing total forest cover from 50% to 30%, while every year deforestation and degradation contribute about 20% to our global greenhouse gas emissions.

Moreover, it is also claimed that "stopping old-growth logging is one of the most immediately effective ways of reducing GHG emissions", and that intact old-growth forests are more resilient in mitigating wildfires and protecting communities from climate impacts.

It is true that old-growth temperate rainforests are relatively less abundant than other forest types found on Earth. It's also true that they have the capacity to store large amounts of carbon (depending, though, on a number of variables as not all old-growth forests are the same).

Often overlooked is that forest products made from old-growth timber also continue to store carbon, while allowing younger stands of trees to be planted that rapidly sequester more carbon.

The frontiers of knowledge are continually advancing in this area. According to a 2021 study: "The claim that old-growth forests play a significant role in climate mitigation, based upon the argument that even the oldest forests keep sucking CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere, is being refuted by researchers at the University of Copenhagen. The researchers document that this argument is based upon incorrectly analyzed data and that the climate-mitigation effect of old and unmanaged forests has been [greatly overestimated.](#)"



Carbon modelling is not an exact science, with ongoing research continually changing our perspectives on the subject.

Reducing the realm of forest science to simplistic pursuit of banning one thing or another is not the way to make sound forest policy. The province and federal government have committed \$290 million under the [Forest Carbon Initiative](#) to manage forest carbon, through projects relating to reforestation, fertilization, road rehabilitation, tree genetics, and fibre utilization.

The absolute best way to reduce GHG emissions is to reduce the source of these emissions, which is most effectively achieved through investment in new technologies.

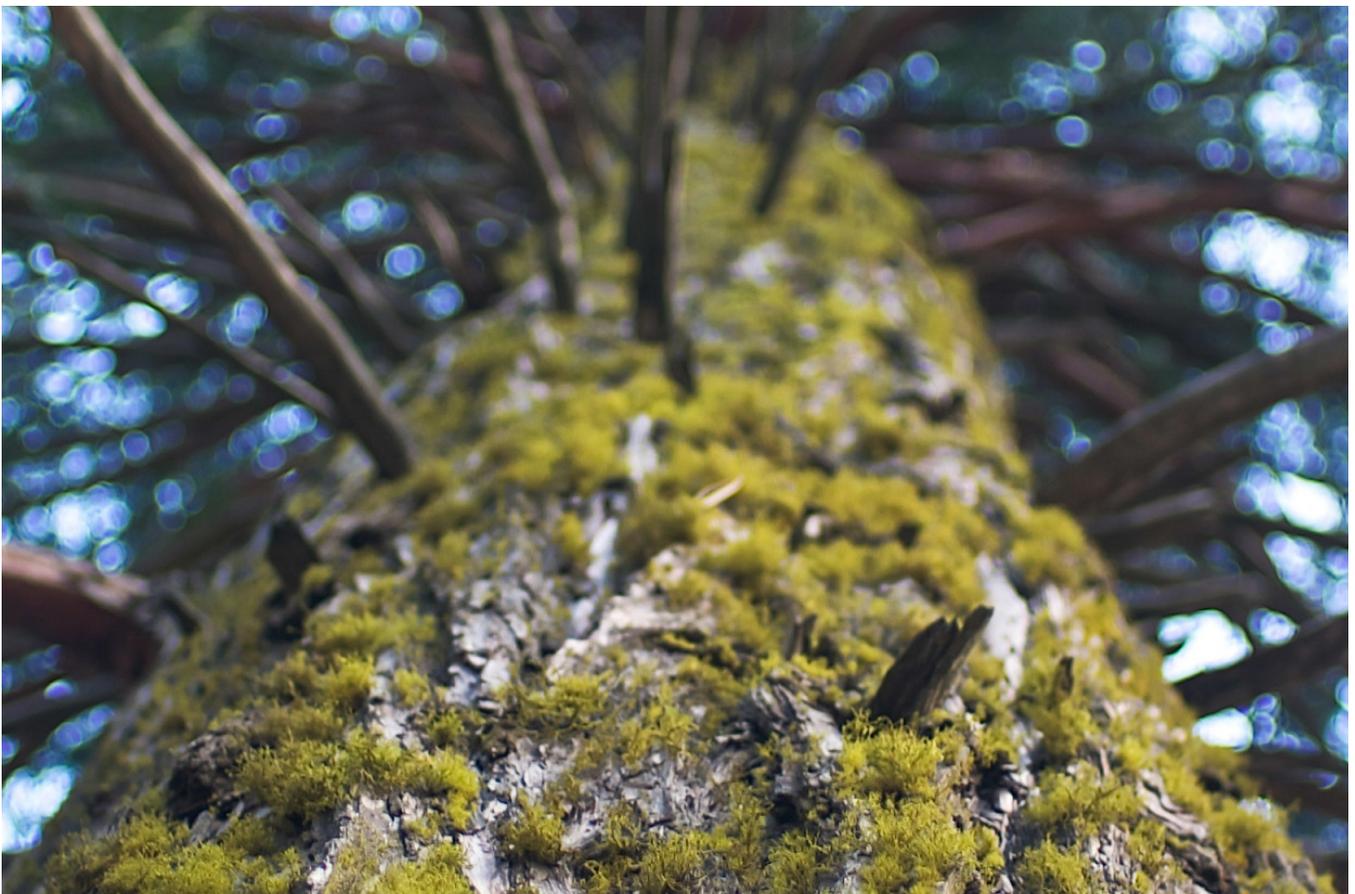
## Do large old-growth trees have a special role in climate action?

It has been stated that large old-growth trees have “an essential evolutionary role as reservoirs of ge-

netic diversity and maintain the adaptive potential of tree species, which will be essential as our forests adapt to climate change.”

It’s definitely true that large old-growth trees and associated ecosystems are already recognized as key aspects of sustainable forest management in British Columbia. Acknowledging the importance of old-growth trees, there are several policies, regulations and initiatives that contribute to fulfilling the objective of managing for old-growth forests and specifically, protecting very large tree specimens.

1. [Special Tree Protection Regulation, Forest and Range Practices Act](#), effective September 11, 2020 – protects trees of a certain diameter and greater. Western red cedar greater than 3.85 metres will require a protection zone 56 metres in circumference. Failure to identify and protect such trees could result in a fine of up to \$100,000.
2. BC Timber Sales – Best Management Practices for Coastal Legacy Trees, effective June 1, 2019





– guides harvest-area planning for timber sales to manage for retention of individual trees of a certain diameter. For western red cedar, [retention will be required](#) for trees with a diameter greater than three metres.

3. The BC government recently completed an [Old-Growth Strategic Review](#) in response to political pressure. The government has committed to implementing the Review's recommendations, including the immediate temporary deferral of harvesting in 353,000 hectares of ecosystems of very high risk.

## Is climate change and excessive logging eliminating the western red cedar species?

In terms of the coastal rainforest, where western red cedar grows, one such hallmark example of conservation is the [Great Bear Rainforest](#). Within this internationally recognized area, industrial forestry is dramatically limited in recognition of the extensive old-growth forests that are of ecological and social significance to the local Indigenous First Nations communities. Approximately 85% of this forested

area is off limits from timber harvesting (3.1 million hectares) and only 15% (550,000 hectares) are available for ecosystem-based forest management (EBM) with site level constraints to protect values and provide economic sustenance to the local communities.

As a reflection of the importance of British Columbia's forests and its associated forest products that it generates, in 2020 there were 47 million hectares of independently (third-party) certified sustainable managed forests in the province. The province has [the most certified hectares of all the provinces](#) and territories in Canada.

British Columbia is not only the most biologically diverse of Canada's provinces, but also one of the most diverse places in the world.

Provisions for future cultural use of large western red cedar trees have been incorporated into several First Nations strategic management plans within their traditional territories, some of which have been incorporated into provincial legislation.

## Can ending old-growth forestry protect forest communities and forest jobs?

That is the claim made by some who argue that harvesting old-growth, and exporting raw logs out of the province, is “bad economics”. It is further claimed that second-growth harvesting and local, value-added processing and manufacturing create a higher number of jobs for British Columbians per cubic metre and can sustain healthy forest-based communities and local forestry jobs into the future.

In fact, Western red cedar, yellow cedar and large higher quality Douglas-fir logs harvested from public lands (no matter if old-growth or second growth) [cannot ever be exported as raw logs](#) – by regulation.

Value-added processing often relies on producing fine-grain and clear (knot-free) wood products that come from old-growth forests. Those calling on the government to increase the amount of local, value-

added processing must be honest and acknowledge that they are, themselves, in doing so calling for a continuation of old-growth harvesting.

Claiming to care about forest-based communities and local forestry jobs while advocating a ban on old-growth forestry is naïve or dishonest. In fact, a ban on harvesting of BC coastal old-growth would result in the [immediate closure](#) of at least four saw-mills, one pulp mill and the entire shake and shingle industry – damaging the very communities and jobs that old-growth campaigners claim to hold dear.

## Is there really a groundswell of support to ban old-growth harvesting?

One of the arguments being used to persuade local government elected councils to pass motions to ban old-growth forestry is that others are doing it so they might as well.





It is stated that “Resolutions to protect BC’s old-growth forest have been sent to the provincial government by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), representing the mayors, city and town councils, and regional districts across BC. . . .”

British Columbia has 162 municipalities. As of May 14, 2021 only eleven of them (6.7%) had passed motions opposing old-growth forestry. This cannot be portrayed as a groundswell movement of any kind.

By contrast, more than 20 municipal councils in November 2020 wrote to Premier John Horgan asking for a balanced approach to the general issue of natural resources, stating “British Columbia relies on its natural-resource product exports as a central pillar of sustaining — and improving — the economic well-being of our five million residents. Through the sale of goods and services to our provincial neighbours, and to other countries throughout the world, the natural-resource sector both grows and diversifies the provincial economy. Early evidence strongly supports the view that enabling resource industries to succeed will be equally central in pandemic recovery.”

Opponents of old-growth forestry have pointed to the support of a pulp and paper workers’ labour

union for banning old-growth harvesting. This is quite ironic because if there was a ban on harvesting old-growth, such a pulp mill closure could be the one that this union’s members work at, demonstrating the lack of understanding of the subject.

## Do forest management costs exceed revenues?

It has been claimed that the cost of managing BC’s publicly-owned forests “has exceeded all direct revenue collected from the forest industry by \$3.65 billion over the past ten years, costing British Columbians \$365 million each year in subsidies to forest companies.”

The province of British Columbia does not provide subsidies to forest companies. In the 2020/2021 provincial budget, the “Forests” line item is forecast to generate \$1.2 billion in revenue. Based on that forecast, the forests will be the single largest source of non-tax, non-fee related form of income for the province. The Ministry of Forests, Range, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development is forecast to have an expense of \$0.9



billion – meaning the province will operate British Columbia’s forests with a surplus for the budget year.

It’s also worth pointing out that the benefits of forestry include not only stumpage, but a whole range of other facts such as fees in lieu of manufacturing; annual rent paid by licensees; municipal and regional district taxes (for private managed forest lands); the BC logging tax; “tourism” dollars paid by forestry workers for accommodations and restaurants (including tree planters, wildfire crews, forest professionals); and other extremely important ripple effects from foundational dollars which are particularly important to First Nations and other rural and remote communities.

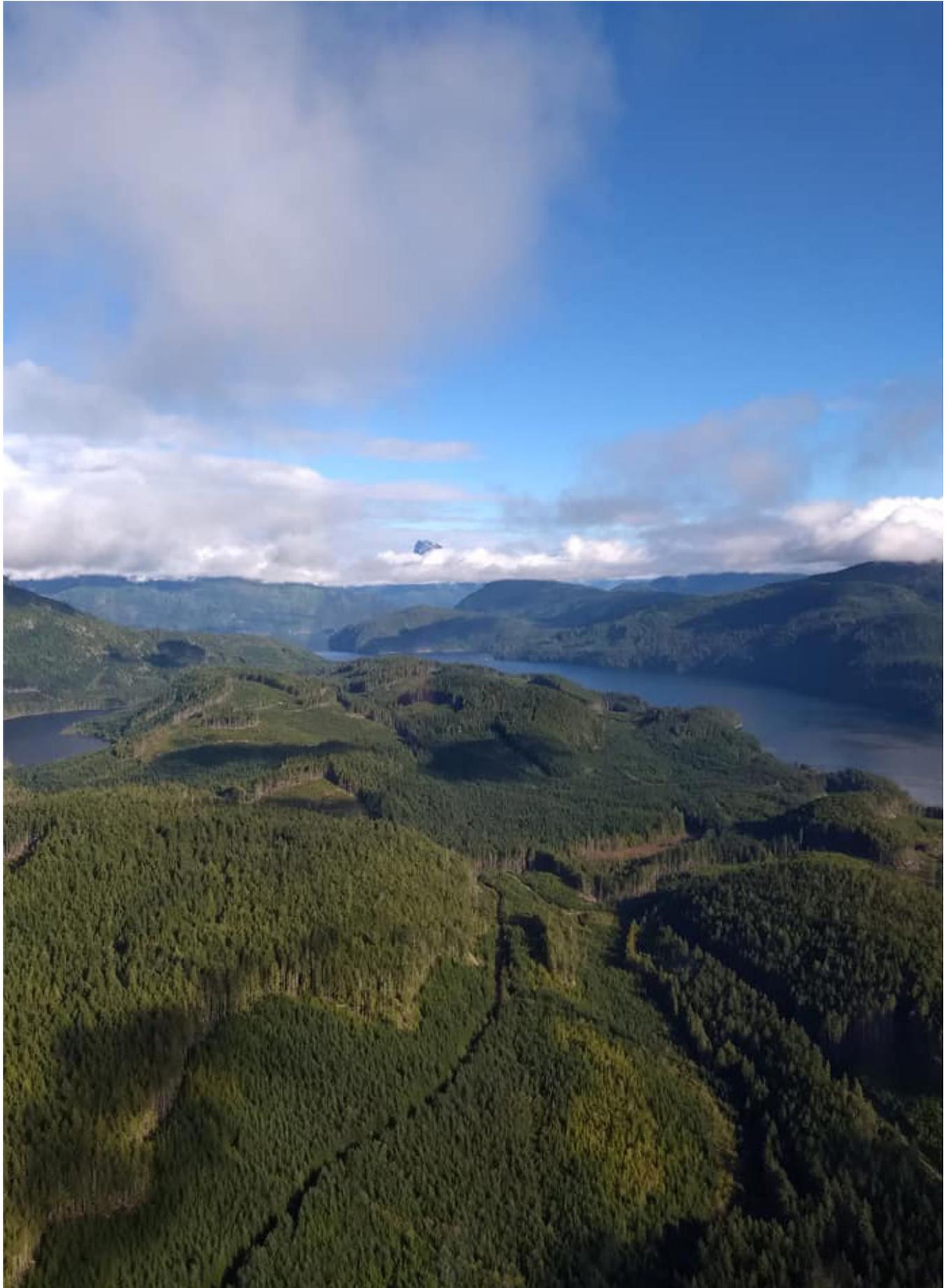
We have the facts.

Managed forests have an overwhelmingly positive impact on the climate and make an outsized contribution to fighting climate change. BC protects a range of rare and at-risk species within its forests, with 15% of forest land bases in parks and protected areas and conservation plans and training for for-

esters. Further, coastal temperate rainforests do not face an ecological emergency due to logging; they are projected to have a stable and sustainable AAC over the next 100 years. Sensationalist “studies” saying old-growth forests are on the verge of disappearing appear to be based on half-truths and faulty accounting. The province already has plans and regulations protecting old-growth forests. On just Vancouver Island, 62% of old-growth is already protected. Despite claims that banning old-growth logging need not result in disaster for forest-based communities, it would result in the immediate closure of at least five mills and the entire shake and shingle industry in coastal BC alone. Forest communities and their workers and families deserve more than disingenuous concern; they deserve the right to work.

There is no forest-management crisis in British Columbia. But if half-truths and pseudo-scientific studies continue to be taken seriously, British Columbians may face a crisis of understanding.

*This chapter was authored by the executive director of Resource Works, Stewart Muir.*



## 4. Here's the real story on Fairy Creek and the future of forestry

- **If all your information is from high-volume advertising campaigns, the following might come as a surprise: the Fairy Creek watershed near British Columbia's Port Renfrew is not at risk because of forestry, writes Stewart Muir.**

By now, most British Columbians have heard about Fairy Creek.

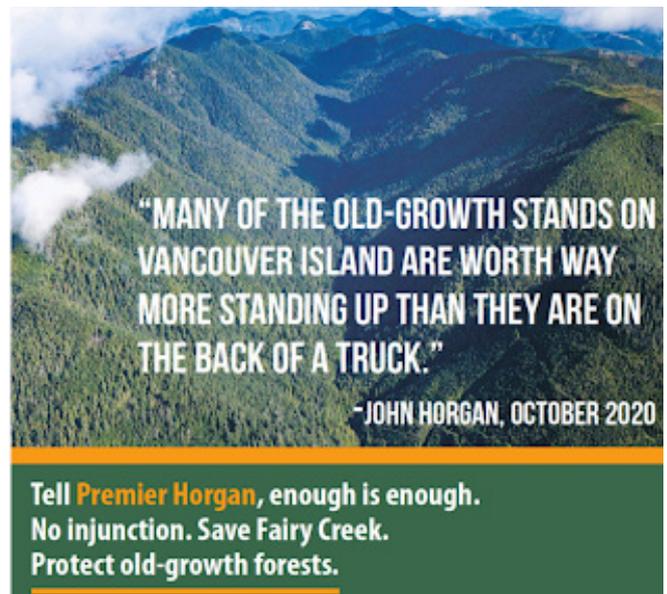
In a microcosm of the information war around BC forest management, environmental activists are calling for an end to logging in the Fairy Creek watershed, located a two-hour drive west of the capital. Subscribers to the Victoria Times-Colonist have been treated to ads showing aerial views of Fairy Creek where the message is that if something isn't done, the forest in the watershed will be lost. Half a dozen poets laureate from around Canada have stepped into the fray to air their concerns about Fairy Creek.

Meanwhile, a forest products company that is authorized to conduct logging in the Fairy Creek area has sought and obtained a court injunction to stop blockaders who have been stopping road access since last fall.

What one thinks of the situation depends on who you choose to believe.

Here's what the Facebook page of group Fairy Creek Blockade says: "If the judge grants the injunction they will be sanctioning the destruction of the last pristine valley on Southern Vancouver Island, with almost 3000 acres of unprotected old-growth at risk in the Fairy Creek Rainforest."

That's quite a claim. Amplifying it, here's what readers of the March 25, 2021 print edition of the Times-Colonist saw:



The advocacy organization that purchased this ad, Wilderness Committee, asked readers to make a phone call to Premier John Horgan's office to say Fairy Creek has to be saved and that he should protect old-growth forests. The belief that the advertiser wishes to plant in the reader is that this expanse of trees will be annihilated if the premier does not act. The Fairy Creek Blockade page on Facebook states that "hundreds of hectares of old-growth forest" will be clear cut if something isn't done.

No question, the area in the centre of the photo is the Fairy Creek watershed is pretty darn nice.

But there's just one thing.

The central claim of this ad is false. Thousands of hectares of forest are not at risk. What the photo shows is largely off limits to harvesting or any other kind of economic use. If you saw the ad and took it as your personal cue to phone Premier Horgan's office to berate the staff member picking up the phone, you need to read on.

I know some people may be confused to read what follows here, because it is not what you've been seeing in social media and advertisements. If you're one of those people, I'm very sympathetic. After my training as an environmental historian and my four decades of experience in news media and public communications, and my volunteer work in land conservancy, I'm as committed as anyone to efforts that protect biodiversity. I'm a close observer of climate science and environmental policy. Changes in the global environment do worry me, and like any responsible person I would like to leave the world a better place than I found it. To those who are upset, I'm prepared to share my knowledge so that you can better discern fact from fiction, with the end result that British Columbians overall might wind up at the end of the day with confidence in forest management policies that achieve the balance needed.

As I've said, the claim that the watershed is about to be reduced to a massive clearcut is simply not true.

All of the currently permitted harvesting that Teal-Jones wants to perform lies outside of the Fairy Creek watershed itself. The photograph put before Times-Colonist readers is cropped to show mainly the area that isn't permitted for harvesting, with only a part of the active harvesting area outside the watershed visible.

Contrary to frequently stated claims that Teal-Jones is going into the area pictured to harvest in low-lying creek bottoms, it's just not. As my examination of mapping for this area confirms, the harvest that does occur is at higher elevations where the forest is often a mix of balsam, hemlock and red cedar, with a minor component of yellow cedar. Where cutblocks are approved, they are not going to result in large clearcuts, not just because of retention rules that preserve special features at a site, but also because the cutblocks themselves are small,

by which I mean not much bigger than the footprint of a couple of Wal-Marts. The idea of hundreds, or even thousands, of hectares of "clear-cut devastation" is a complete fabrication. I'm reasonably confident that any newspaper readers who believed the Wilderness Committee advertisement's claim and jumped on the phone to the premier's office are not anti-vaxxers, moon-landing hoax believers or easy targets for miracle balding cures. Yet, purely from the perspective of how easy it was to convince them of a falsehood, they might as well be. I'm sorry if this ruffles any feathers, but clearly even those that should know better, like members of parliament, have gotten on the populist bandwagon that Fairy Creek faces destruction when in fact the majority of it is already protected.

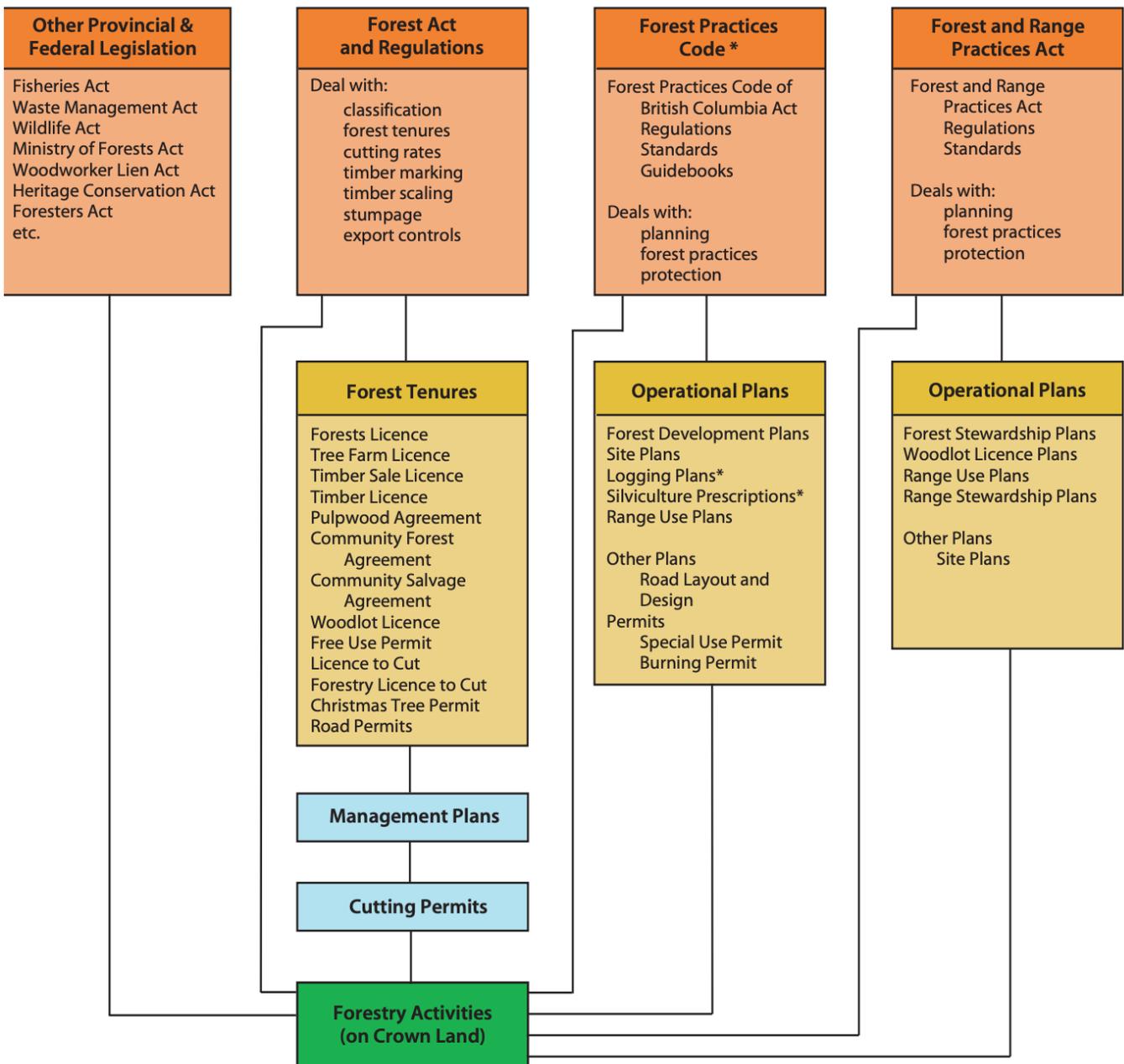
In my quest to share what I know, I've reflected on a public opinion poll that we conducted at Resource Works a couple of years back. We asked British Columbia residents to see what words or phrases they felt described debate and discussion around resource development including forestry. I was somewhat dismayed at the findings. Few people thought the discussion is transparent or honest. We are split on whether it is inclusive or cooperative. How do we get to a better place? Here's my modest proposal when it comes to the particular example of resource development at hand: let's start with some facts.



A lot of people will have the impression from ads like those the Wilderness Committee buys that forestry is some sort of a Wild-West situation. "Wanna be a lumberjack? Grab a chainsaw!" In fact, there is an entire ministry devoted to this one industry. It's the only industry that can say this. (Even energy and mining are lumped into a single, albeit large, ministry.) Like any arm of government, it exists to enact legislation by putting regulations into effect and applying them. In the case of forestry, the ministry's various operations are so sprawling, and the challenges of getting permission to cut down so much as a single tree so great, that some enterprising indi-

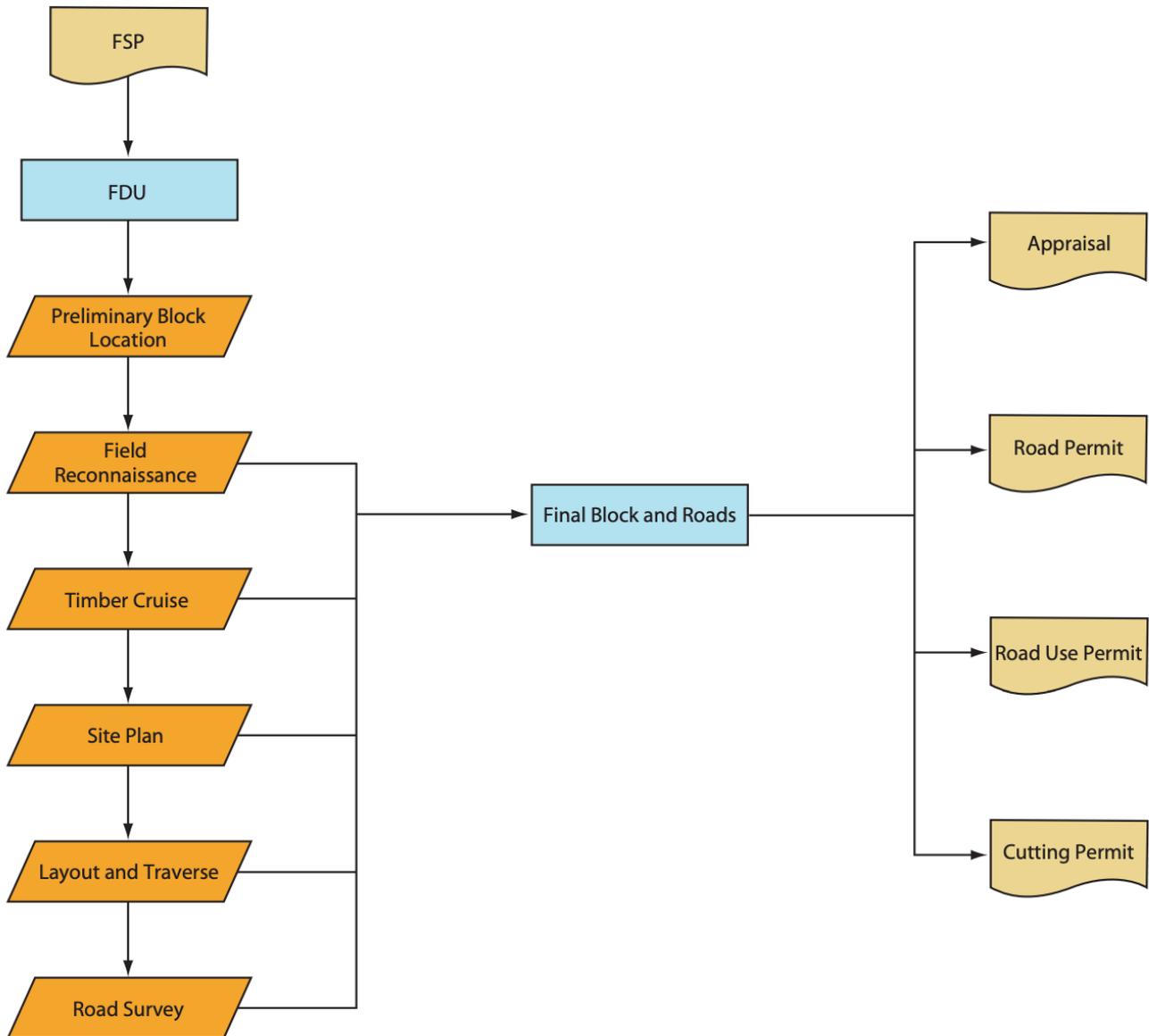
vidual a few years ago had to write an entire manual simply describing how the BC forests ministry operates, diagramming all of the steps required. The images below are drawn from that and provide an easy crash course in our forestry system. (Caveat: the material is a bit dated – new things we have today that should be shown include the Species At Risk Act, the Fisheries Act, the Forest Practices Board and third-party forest management certification.)

First of all, there is all the legislation. Check this out: That's the big picture. Now suppose you are a forest products company like Teal-Jones. You want to



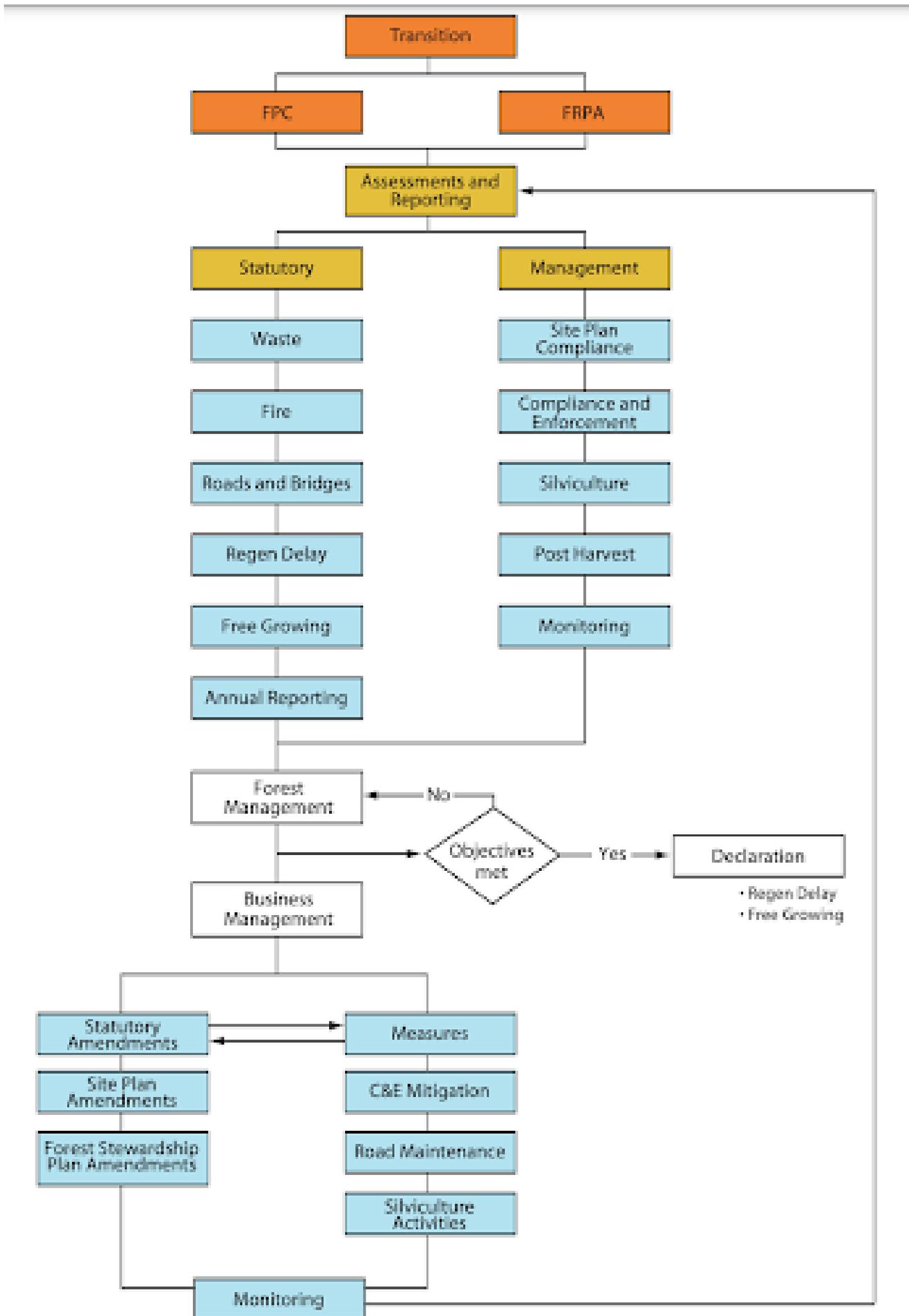
harvest timber to keep your employees working, and to do that you will have to first of all get permission. Here are the steps for that (and once again, these

processes can change over time and this diagram may be somewhat out of date):



All those are just the steps needed before the company can even apply for a cutting permit. It's an enormous amount of costly work that has to be done by accredited professionals, and then signed off by bureaucrats who will be in serious trouble if they fail to apply all of the laws in the first diagram.

Now suppose after several years of these processes, the forest company is finally ready to get its permit, what then? Alas, it turns out that cutting permits are not dispensed by vending machine either. Here's the process for that:



What a nightmare of bureaucracy. Is anyone actually crazy enough to subject themselves to this Kafkaesque maze of regulation? Fortunately for those who benefit from the province’s amazing health and school systems that are paid for in a large way by forest revenues, not everyone is as paperwork-averse as me. British Columbia has about 100,000 people who work in the forest industry and are willing to put in the effort. Nobody collects a paycheque unless all of this stuff gets done and done properly.

The truth is that, even though the American citizen who is running the Fairy Creek Blockade campaign from Washington State (yes, that’s another startling fact about this situation) wants us to believe oth-

erwise, British Columbians do have an effective administrative system that protects the environment.

Recently I went to Teal-Jones and asked if they could provide me with a map showing the actual situation in Fairy Creek. Perhaps because this honourable, family-owned, BC-based company has seen its good name dragged through the mud, they were willing to help. What they produced is convincing evidence that the Wilderness Committee claim, and all of the attendant hullabaloo, is off base. I have verified the authenticity of the information.

Here is the map side by side with the photo from the Wilderness Committee advertisement:



What a difference there is between the reality of the actual situation and the hype of the ad.

In the annotated map at left, the Fairy Creek watershed is contained within the purple boundary. (If you’re reading this on a phone, you may need to zoom in a bit to see it.) Though it is on a flat plane, this area lines up fairly closely to the angled aerial photograph used in the pressure group’s paid ad.

Note the sizeable area inside the watershed that is

surrounded by a light green line (this also extends outside of the watershed). It looks like the area inside has been slightly lightened to stand out. Within this area, harvesting is not allowed. The darker green line, as well as other smaller shapes with the same coloured outline, are Old-Growth Management Areas – no harvesting either.

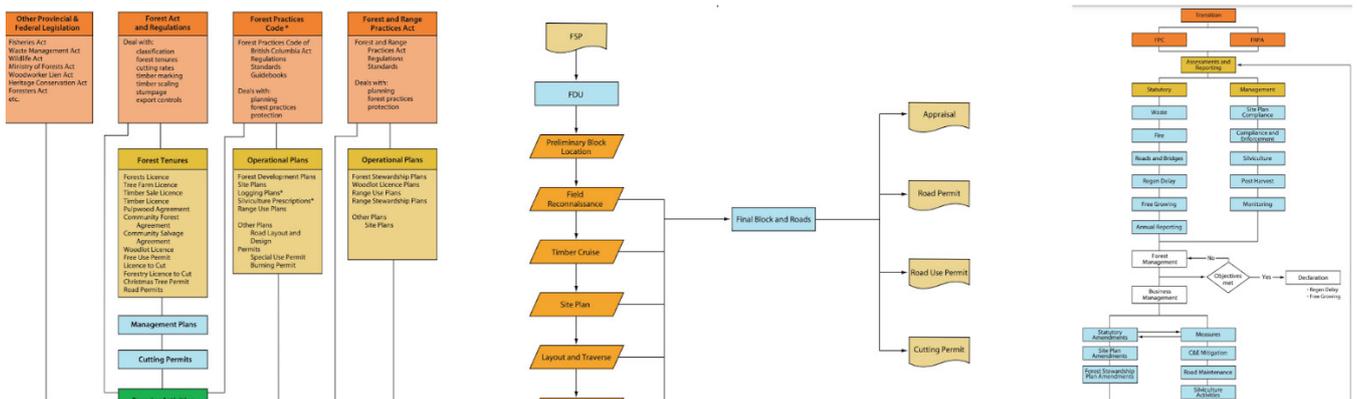
The work currently permitted adjacent to Fairy Creek watershed (pink shapes) is located 100% outside of

that catchment, and it is fully in compliance with the entire forest practices system we have. Areas harvested recently, within the rules set down in our labyrinthine forest management system that requires replanting, are shaded green.

The one area labelled “planned harvest area” measures 21 hectares in area. (Imagine you are standing inside a large Costco store: that is 2 hectares.) A majority of this potential future cutblock does lie in the watershed, but outside the protected areas. (Most of this cutblock is actually not technically old-growth due to being less than 250 years old, but if you or I were standing in the middle of it we likely wouldn’t find the difference worth arguing about.) Suppose that the requisite permits are secured in future for

harvest to occur in this area, may you wonder how forestry workers will access the area. Will they cut a new road up through that pristine watershed to get there? Not necessary, as a network of forest roads already in place north of the watershed is how harvesters would gain access. Contrary to the insistence of some forest protest organizers, the amount of new road required to reach the planned area is very small – just 620 metres in length. The route would cross no streams and if this option is pursued any new roadway would be built to a far higher standard than existed before the early 1990s.

Remember those law and regulation diagrams above? Here they are again, all together in one view:



Think about this: because of the regulations and their application as outlined, BC’s forest harvest plans and practices are about as tight as it is possible to imagine. The harvest plans on the Teal-Jones map are infused by this regulatory regime, with the support of an applied technology apparatus. (Consider just one strand of that: the science that goes into replanting practices. Climate change is a factor here: if temperatures go up a degree, a species might need 10% more water, so harvesting and replanting provide an opportunity to draw on the provincial seed bank for site-appropriate seedlings that will thrive in future conditions.)

Far from being an example of the absence of rules, the Fairy Creek story is actually satisfying evidence of their efficacy.

But for the individuals parading past Vancouver’s City Hall on the 27th of March (below), this is information they have not heard about and, perhaps, are not interested in.

Decades of practice and ever-escalating regulation have resulted in British Columbia possessing what I quite confidently can call a globally leading forest management regime.





For them, the Fairy Creek banner might as well be a fashion accessory. It functions as a statement about who they think they are. “No large public gatherings? To hell with your fascist Covid-19 rules, we’re saving Fairy Creek!” They may sincerely believe the advertised claim that the unbroken green vista of Fairy Creek watershed is about to be turned into a vast clearcut. But they have been thoroughly misled. What if, instead, these passionate young people tried something useful like attempting to halt the rapid disappearance of tropical rainforests where BC-like regulatory systems do not exist or are flouted, and environmentalists take actual mortal risks to expose bad practices? Imagine if they used their privilege to write letters to ensure that the murderers of forest defenders José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva and his wife, Maria do Espírito Santo da Silva, who were killed in Brazil pursuing what they believed in, face justice. That would be something.

The reality is that Fairy Creek represents all that is successful and good about modern forestry as practiced in British Columbia. Here, over 80 per cent of the area is sustainable forest-management certified. Harvest-opposers continue to physically block forestry workers from doing their renewable and

lawful jobs. Even though they are losing wages, the forestry workers have been downright amiable in their interactions with the protesters. One blockader related that a Teal-Jones crew member toured her around the area, showing her a regrown cutblock being harvested again that the man himself remembers harvesting when he was young. Contrast this to elsewhere and it’s a credit to the foundational civic values we enjoy in Canada.

How did things get to be this way? The visual power of that aerial image of Fairy Creek, however dodgy the narrative, is perhaps accentuated by the creek’s lyrical moniker (Fairies, nymphs and other forest creatures dwell here! Donate today!). No wonder the poets stepped in. It probably helps that the watershed happens to be located an easy drive from Victoria on a good highway, the provincial capital being where numerous advocacy groups including quite a number of environmental organizations have their offices. Existing road networks off the highway have allowed safe and easy access.

In stark contrast to this campaign of convenience is the actual situation.

In the forests surrounding the protected Fairy Creek watershed, reforestation has delivered on its goal of restoring natural forest successfully just as the forest managers say it does. The local First Nation is actively engaged in timber-harvest activities in the southern parts of the watershed close to the highway, creating social and economic benefits for the Pacheedaht people, as any reasonable person should be satisfied to see. Creek bottoms are off limits to harvesting. Extensive landscape and stand-level planning by foresters, biologists, and geotechnicians must take place alongside reviews by First Nations and government officials before any tree is ever allowed to be cut. Planning is done to ensure biodiversity, wildlife and wilderness values are incorporated into any future harvesting plans. In sum, British Columbia is in an era when timber-harvesting practices are enlightened and all biodiversity, wildlife and wilderness values are incorporated into plans that cannot be implemented until they are vetted by the legendary bureaucracy of the forests ministry.

Today, public processes are also underway to review

how old-growth harvesting occurs in British Columbia. This has been broadly welcomed as a process with the potential to ensure long-term sustainable stewardship of forests and their economic use. In coming days, some pressure groups who say this is not enough are talking about escalating their actions to “save” Fairy Creek. This is unfortunate. Public policy decisions affecting forestry are too consequential to allow weaponized disinformation tactics to blow things off course.

Having reviewed all of the information, I have concluded that Fairy Creek is not in any way at risk because of forestry. In fact, its lovely appearance today is a direct consequence of many decades of successful forest management practices including protection and reforestation. No matter what happens in Fairy Creek in future, with today’s strict regulations remaining in place we can know that its special values will not be diminished.

*This chapter was written by Stewart Muir. It originally appeared as an [article here](#).*





# 5. At Fairy Creek, misinformation is having a watershed moment

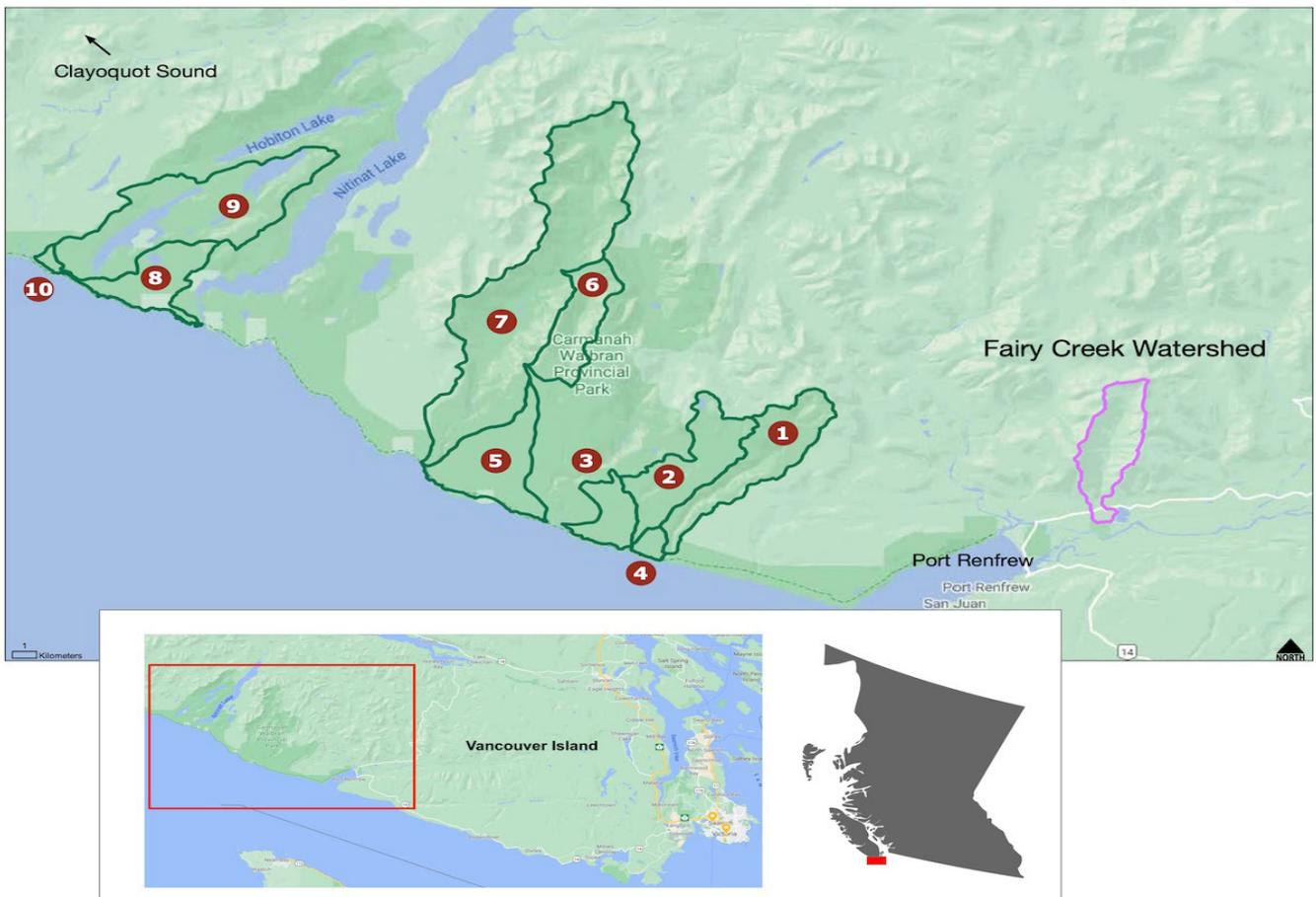
■ **“Shifting the forestry paradigm” requires getting down to serious efforts – but not violence, writes Stewart Muir.**

For months now, the Fairy Creek pressure campaign has continued as logging roads existing to allow forest companies to carry out permitted harvesting work have been blockaded by interest groups. Their argument is that this is the only way to prevent logging in what they say is southern Vancouver Island’s last intact old-growth forest. Much has been made of this claim, for example in the British Columbia Legislature on March 25, 2021. That’s when Sonia

Furstenau, BC Green Party leader, stated:

“Today the BC Supreme Court is hearing forest company Teal-Jones’s application for an injunction against the protesters at Fairy Creek. If the injunction is granted, we could see people arrested for attempting to stop preparations for logging in the last intact ancient forest valley on southern Vancouver Island.”

Top 10 intact watersheds on southern Vancouver Island (that aren’t Fairy Creek)



The claim comes at a time when British Columbia seems headed for a turbulent time in forestry as the state of forest management is being held up to scrutiny following a review process that resulted in recommendations to the government that were accepted. However, further work will be required for these recommendations – representing a “paradigm shift” in forest management – to be implemented. At such a moment, it is expected that having accurate information and an agreed set of facts is a necessary condition for constructive dialogue. In this report, we at Resource Works are bringing forward the authenticated, relevant information that too often has been overlooked when forestry practices are talked about.

With the Green leader’s official statement in the Legislature now on the permanent record, Resource Works wanted to understand exactly what she meant. Her words have been accepted as a simple statement of fact by many in the news media, and are a staple talking point for various organizations seeking publicity by seeking to thwart approved harvesting in the area surrounding the Fairy Creek watershed.

It turns out that the statement could not be further from the truth. Fairy Creek is not in any way the “last intact ancient forest valley on southern Vancouver Island”. In fact, we identified 10 intact watersheds south of Clayoquot Sound on southern Vancouver Island, in addition to Fairy Creek (which, incidentally, is not itself intact). The first one on the list is located only 10 kilometres from Fairy Creek.

Based on examination of mapping records, here’s

the actual list of intact old-growth watersheds south of Clayoquot Sound:

1. Cullite Creek – 1,618 hectares. Watershed was part of a tree forest license (TFL46) prior to Carmanah Walbran Park being established and added to the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.
2. Logan Creek – 1,505 hectares. This watershed borders a tree forest license at the head of the watershed. It was part of the TFL prior to Carmanah Walbran Park being established and the area being added to the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.
3. Adrenaline Creek – 609 hectares. Another watershed removed from a TFL and added to the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.
4. Shoreline watershed. Information unavailable
5. Kulaht Creek – 15,030 hectares.
6. August Creek – 1,098 hectares – a tributary to Carmanah Creek.
7. Carmanah Creek – 5,626 hectares. About 4% of this watershed was harvested before being made a park
8. Tsuquadra – 1,009 hectares. A portion of this area was once part of a tree forest license prior to the addition of the “Nitinat Triangle” to the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.
9. Tsusiat – 3,312 hectares. As with the Tsuquadra watershed, this area was added to the Nitinat Triangle.
10. Shoreline watershed. Information unavailable.



The term “intact” here might be controversial for some. Even the Fairy Creek watershed, which MLA Furstenau is on the record calling intact, has been subject to extensive harvesting in its lower reaches. Some would even argue that “two-thirds” intact is hardly the same as “the last intact watershed”. The list of 10 intact, protected watersheds here generally applies a higher standard of the term. In some cases one might argue for use of the term “mostly intact”. Certainly, in the top 10 list there is no watershed that is less intact than Fairy Creek.

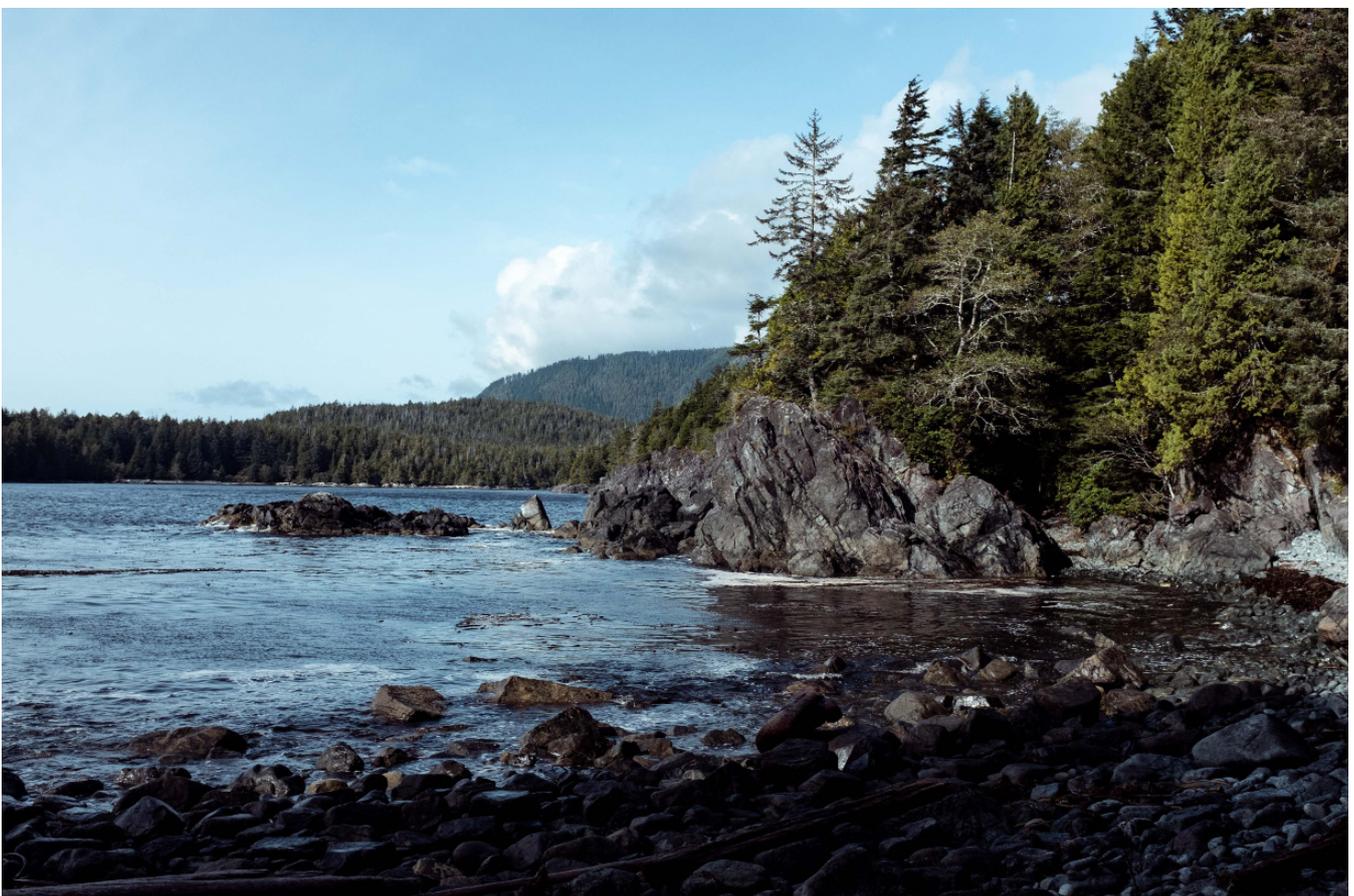
Nevertheless, others in the environmental movement continue to repeat the Fursteneau phrase. [The Tyee](#), for example, is happy to call Fairy Creek “the last intact valley on southern Vancouver Island” despite the facts.

The minister responsible for forestry, Katrine Conroy, was on the spot in Question Period over successive days of BC Green questions. It’s apparent from the transcripts that the Greens were seeking to keep the spotlight focused on the “last intact watershed”

fallacy and other related claims. On the same day as Furstenau’s sweeping but untrue statement cited above, Conroy said: “The member is inaccurate in her numbers. She likes to put out numbers. I don’t know ... I would love to meet with her to talk to her and have a briefing on where she’s getting her numbers from, because they are inaccurate.”

It’s impossible to say why the BC Green leader was willing to make such an unambiguous yet untrue statement in the House. After all, there is no need to make factually incorrect statements when the Legislature has extensive research facilities available to members.

The episode is a reminder that without reliable information, it’s difficult or impossible to develop policies that respect the need for government-to-government discussions with Indigenous Nations while also talking to workers, industry, and local communities who are dependent – directly or indirectly – on the forest industry that employs 24,000 residents on the coast alone.





On April 1, 2021 forest product company Teal-Jones won the injunction it sought to get back to work on its permitted operation. Supreme Court of BC Justice Verhoeven, in issuing his decision, noted that protesters are a “very militant group” who have “expressly threatened a ‘protracted civil disobedience struggle’”. Verhoeven observed that these protesters refer to a “war” and “battles” and that company actions in seeking an injunction “will be met with resistance”.

[Wrote Verhoeven](#): “These are words that may incite violence.”

Those words proved to be prescient.

Just a day later, on the evening of April 2, Victoria’s Camosun College [issued a statement](#) responding to concerns that a faculty member had threatened potentially deadly actions against forest workers. “We do not condone any type of behaviour that is illegal or harmful to others,” stated Rodney Porter, the college’s executive director of communications and marketing. (It turned out the individual had not been employed by the college since 2019. The college [updated its statement](#) on April 3.)

Here’s a striking truth about the Fairy Creek situation: the fact is that old-growth trees and wildlife in the Fairy Creek watershed are already substantially protected. In fact, the very protections that environmental groups seek are already in place. The existence of 10 other protected and intact watersheds south of Clayoquot Sound is further reinforcement of this.

One might ask: what are blockaders really fighting

for, since it’s clearly not the last intact watershed on southern Vancouver Island that’s at risk. For Fairy Creek to be the last pristine watershed on southern Vancouver Island, 10 others will first have to be logged but it’s clear that most or all of them are off limits to logging.

Is Fairy Creek the site of ongoing blockades and protests simply because it is physically easy to get to from pressure groups based in Victoria? Is it serving as a picturesque stage set for some greater environmental question or other concern, unrelated to the specifics of local forest management practices?

And: How much of the potential violence that concerns Justice Verhoeven and Camosun College is attributable to carelessness about the facts?

“Shifting the forestry paradigm” requires getting down to serious work that will ultimately be to the benefit of everyone. One thing that’s desperately needed is a way to separate fact from fiction. For those in elected office, taking the high road will benefit everyone in the long run – and keep our society safe.

*This chapter was written by Stewart Muir, the executive director of Resource Works. His article originally [appeared here](#).*

# 6. Pacheedaht First Nation: An example of reconciliation and development

- **In spite of a concerted pressure campaign to sideline this Indigenous group’s economic opportunities, the Pacheedaht provide an example of how reconciliation and development go hand in hand, writes Josiah Haynes.**

Not long ago, two-thirds of Pacheedaht First Nation band members lived outside their ancestral land, which includes the Fairy Creek watershed. Work was hard to find, and of its 163,000 hectares of land, all the Pacheedaht’s forested area was allocated to outside forestry operations through forest tenures and licences. Now, the Pacheedaht manage or co-manage a forest area with 140,000 cubic metres of annual cut, operate a sawmill, and are planning more forestry projects. Good forestry jobs are flowing into the community, so much so that [Natural Resources Canada said](#):

“One of the Nation’s hurdles is having enough of their people living in the area trained to fill the positions and help build their resources.” There is optimism that “more Pacheedaht people will move back to the area as the forestry activities and other ventures grow and the Nation prospers.”

What happened?

Small success begets great success. Back in 2010, the Pacheedaht were awarded Woodlot Licence 1957—forestry rights to an annual cut of 1,500 cubic metres near the community. The same year, Pacheedaht and Andersen Timber entered into a fifty-fifty partnership to purchase a 20,240-hectare portion of Tree Farm Licence (TFL) 25 in Jordan River, on traditional Pacheedaht territory. Now called TFL 61, the Pacheedaht and Andersen Timber formed

one company to own the TFL tenure and another to manage it, providing an important stream of income and opportunity to the Nation.

Eight years later, in 2018, the Pacheedaht First Nation, the Cowichan Lake Community Forest Co-op, BC Timber Sales, and the Province of BC reached a new community [forest agreement for the Qala:yit Community Forest](#). The agreement included an allowable annual cut of 31,498 cubic metres in about 8,000 hectares of Crown land.

“In partnership with the Cowichan Lake Community Forest Co-operative, BC Timber Sales and the Province, we are achieving our goal of greater resource management in our traditional territory,” said Chief Jeff Jones of the Pacheedaht First Nation.

Now, the Pacheedaht own and operate two forestry facilities, with a third on the way. They include a log sorting facility in TFL 61 and a sawmill in Port Renfrew, with plans to build a chipping facility in the community.

Beyond its forestry operations and partnerships, the Pacheedaht and BC signed a Forest Consultation and [Revenue Sharing Agreement in 2017](#). Under the agreement, the First Nation receives a percentage of stumpage revenues from all timber cut by tenure holders on its traditional lands.

Chief Jones said: “Pacheedaht for a long time has

been shut out from the financial benefits that the resources extracted from our Traditional Territory have bestowed upon corporations and the government of BC. . . . We are pleased with the steps BC has taken to partially address this and with our progress to date to acquire forest tenure rights within our Territory. All will lead to the self-reliance and well-being of our people once again.”

But success draws detractors.

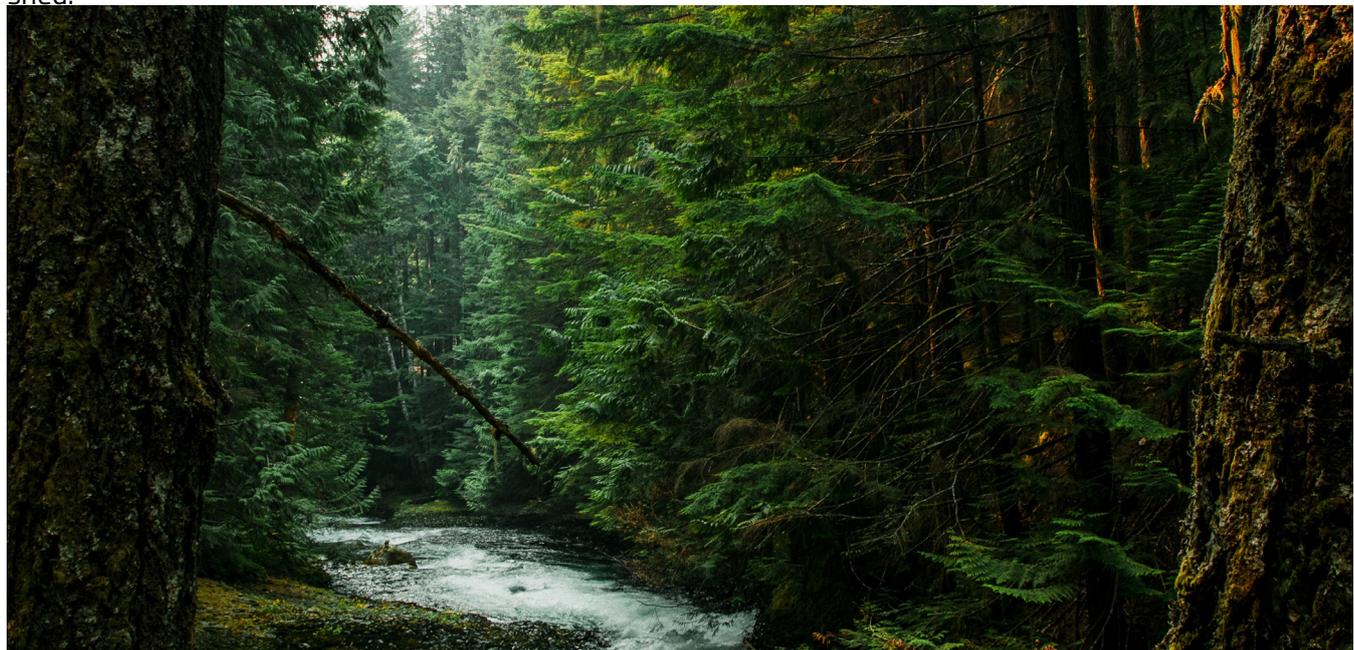
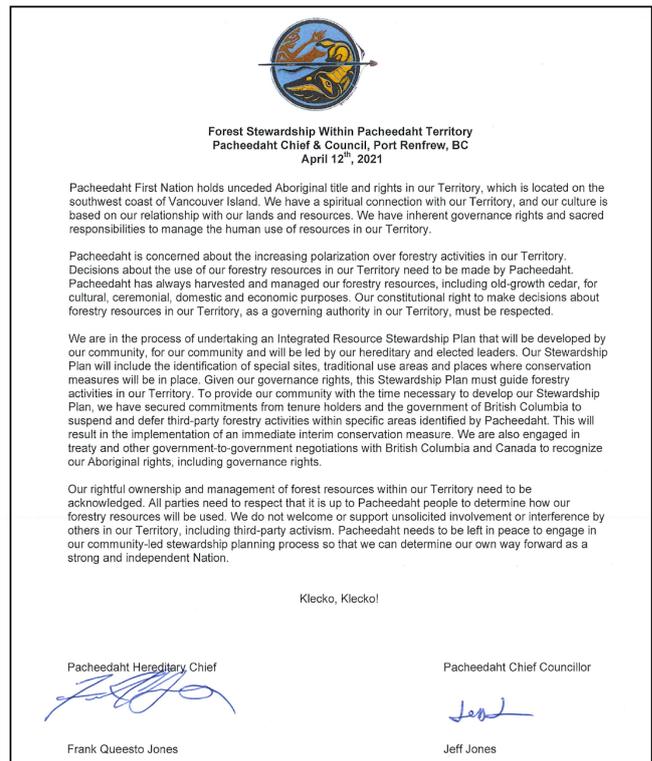
Since August 2020, a handful of environmental activists, largely from outside the Pacheedaht community, have blockaded a logging road to Fairy Creek, within Pacheedaht territory. Another blockade was added near Bugaboo Creek, where six protests are [organized remotely by a teenager in Washington State](#). Into the spring of 2021, the campaign continued to escalate with protesters defying both a court order order and COVID-19 rules to disrupt authorized work by the First Nation.

Camped near Port Renfrew, both groups attempt to stop Teal-Jones, a BC-based logging company, from building a road to the Fairy Creek watershed, where they believe the company may cut down old-growth cedars. Teal-Jones, however, has not applied for a cut-block in the Fairy Creek watershed.

Then BC Forest Minister Doug Donaldson noted that the Marbled Murrelet Wildlife Habitat Area [already protects about two-thirds](#) of the Fairy Creek watershed.

Logging is an essential part of the Pacheedaht First Nation’s economy, and neither chief Jones nor the band council has offered support to the protests.

In fact, on April 12, 2021, the Nation issued a firmly worded statement that it does not welcome or support “unsolicited involvement or interference by others in our Territory, including third-party activism.” Both Hereditary Chief Frank Queesto Jones and Chief Councillor Jeff Jones signed the statement.



Protecting old-growth forests on their territory is not an afterthought for the Pacheedaht. An abundance of old-growth cedars is essential for the nation to continue traditional practices, including building ocean-going canoes and totem poles. In 2005, the Nation developed the [Pacheedaht Cedar Conservation Strategy](#), identifying the volume and size of cedar needed for traditional activities. The Nation took a long-term view in developing its cedar conservation strategy, as cedars take about 400 years to grow to the required size. The plan has received [recognition and compliance from BC's government and all major forest licensees](#) within Pacheedaht territory.

The strategy is just one example of the collaborative approach the Nation has adopted with such success.

For some time, the Nation has been in talks with the governments of BC and Canada on treaty negotiations. Before completing the BC Treaty Commission's stage four of six treaty implementation stages, the Pacheedaht signed an [Incremental Treaty Agreement](#) in 2013. The agreement provided the Nation "with transitional economic benefits in advance of a Final Agreement and is in the spirit and vision of the New Relationship."

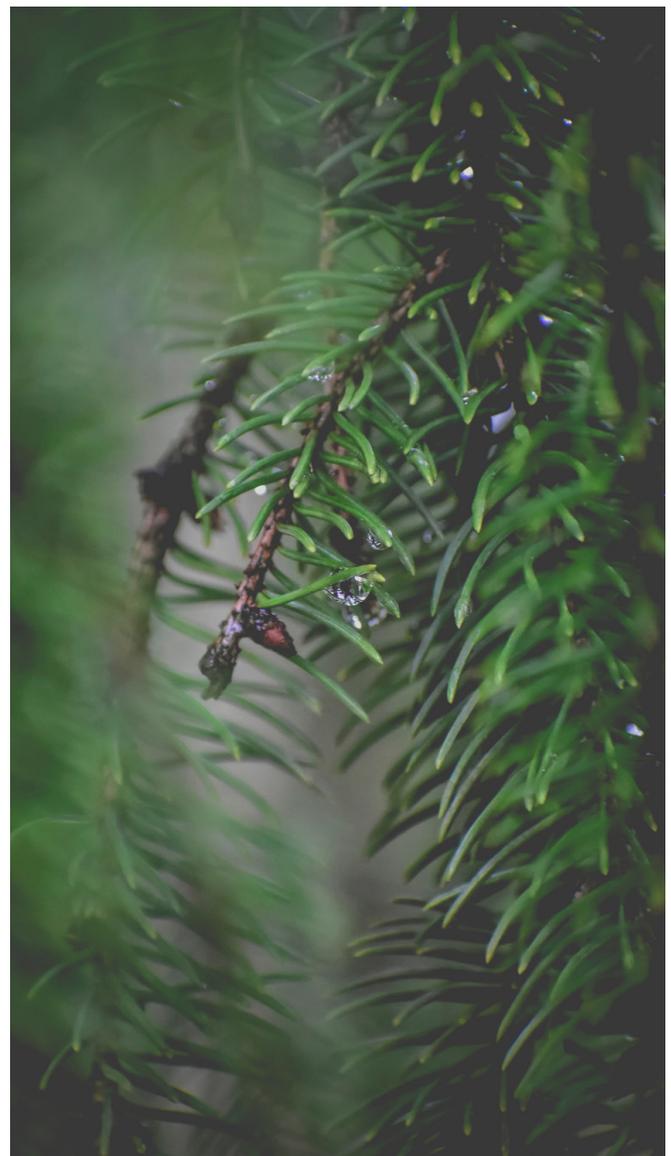
In 2019, the parties reached an [Agreement in Principle](#), completing the fourth stage of negotiations. Among other changes, the agreement in principle gives the First Nation "exclusive authority to determine, collect and administer any fees, rents or other charges, except taxes, relating to the harvesting of Forest Resources on . . . Pacheedaht Lands". It also includes plans for collaborative wildfire suppression and cost-sharing arrangements in addition to forestry studies, among other benefits, including greater Pacheedaht control over traditional lands and more opportunities for social and economic development.

According to the [BC Treaty Commission's Annual Report](#) for 2020, "Pacheedaht will have ownership of approximately 1,897 hectares of land transferred to the nation, including former reserves, and a capital transfer of approximately \$19.72 million. The treaty will recognize and protect Pacheedaht's inherent

title and rights, establish how the First Nation's laws interact with federal and provincial laws, recognize harvesting and resource rights throughout its territory, and establish the land, cash, and governance provisions of the treaty."

The Pacheedaht First Nation is an example of how to combine reconciliation with local development. Theirs is a success story highlighting the opportunity to harmonize reconciliation and development and how the economic development of First Nations can progress responsibly and in good faith with federal and provincial governments.

*This chapter was written by Josiah Haynes, writing and research coordinator at Resource Works. His article was [originally published here](#).*





# 7. Conclusion

The facts “are in” on BC forestry.

Managed forests have an overwhelmingly positive impact on the climate and an outsized contribution to fighting climate change by acting as a carbon sink and by being more resilient to forest fires.

When it comes to protecting natural habitats, managed forests do not operate in a sort of industrial “Wild-West”. BC is blessed with diverse wildlife living within its forests and has some of the highest protection in the world. BC also has the 3rd largest park system in North America after national parks systems of Canada and the United States. The province protects a range of rare and at-risk species within its forests, with 15% of forest land bases in parks and protected areas and conservation plans and training for foresters.

Further, forestry operations do not pose a risk to coastal temperate rainforests in BC. Coastal temperate rainforests do not face an ecological emergency due to logging; they are projected to have a stable and sustainable AAC over the next 100 years. Moreover, sensationalist “studies” purporting to show that old-growth forests are on the verge of disappearance appear to be based on half-truths and faulty accounting. The province already has strict regulations and strategies protecting old-growth forests. On Vancouver Island alone, 62% of old-growth is already protected.

Despite claims that banning old-growth logging need not result in disaster for forest-based communities like Campbell River and others, it would result in the immediate closure of at least five mills and the entire shake and shingle industry in coastal BC alone. Forest communities and their workers and families deserve more than disingenuous concern; they deserve the right to work. That also applies to First Nations forestry communities.

The Chief and council of Pacheedaht First Nation, whose traditional lands Fairy Creek lies within, writes: “Our constitutional right to make decisions about forestry resources in our Territory, as a

governing authority within our Territory, must be respected”.

The Nation had [strong words for the Capital Regional District](#) board, who motioned to adopt a resolution “to work with the Pachedaht and the province to defer logging in old-growth forestry on southern Vancouver Island”.

“In the event that Pacheedaht First Nation determines at some point in the future that our Nation would benefit from increased involvement from CRD in the stewardship of [our Traditional Territory](#), we will contact you.”

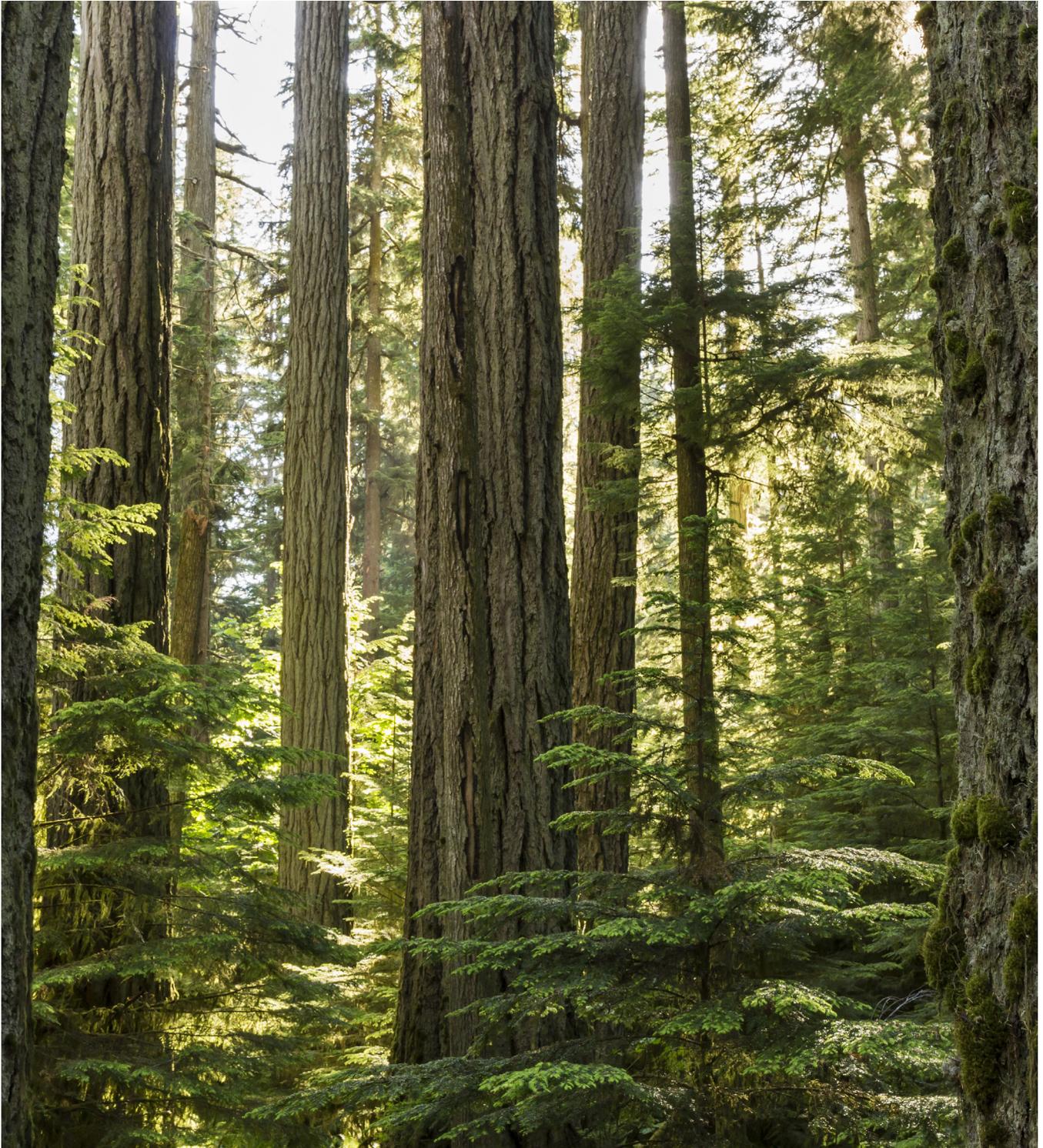
Chief Robert Dennis of the Huu-ay-aht First Nations has been outspoken about the [positive contribution that forestry has made for his people](#), and about how important the industry is to his Nation’s wellbeing.

“If you’re going to take income away from a group of people that can feed their families, then come up with an alternative,” he said. “We’ll always have people opposing what we’re doing. Keep on logging, keep on harvesting. Because if we do that, everyone benefits”.

There is no forest management crisis in British Columbia. But as we have seen, when half-truths, pseudo-scientific studies, and disingenuous solidarity with First Nations forestry communities continue to be taken seriously, British Columbians face a crisis of understanding.

In the wake of COVID-19, British Columbians need the facts on forestry. With growing economic challenges, British Columbia’s premier, historic, and modern industry can provide jobs, security, and financial support to thousands.

On what is perhaps its most important industry, our province has suffered from division and radicalism spread by misinformation. But when it comes to caring for our environment and respecting workers, sensationalism fails where facts, calm, and respect for the public process succeeds.



### Resource Works:

A non-profit research and advocacy organization supporting a respectful, fact-based public dialogue on responsible resource development in BC.

# FORESTRY IN BC:

Setting the Record Straight



Resource Works

MAY 2021