

# OLD GROWTH FOREST REVIEW

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Further to my telephone conversation with the BC Old Growth Forest Review Panel, I would like to contribute the following written comments regarding old growth forests in British Columbia, and mature forests of this province, in general, to the review panel.

## DEFINITION OF OLD GROWTH FORESTS:

As the panel is fully aware, there are a number of very different forest types in BC, of various ages, species, elevations, ecosystems. It is impossible to have a “one size fits all” solution to forest management in this province, and this needs to be recognized by government, industry, the public, and the forestry sector.

Before any headway can be made, a clear definition of what constitutes “old growth” needs to be made. In the meantime, the harvesting of very old, and not so old, mature forests should be stopped at once, until such time as the definition of what constitutes old growth has been established. While this panel is receiving comments and the taxpayer is funding this review, our provinces mature, and not so mature, forests are being decimated, some say at the rate of 500 football fields per day! Many believe this is a crime. If nothing else the current harvesting practices are completely unsustainable.

My family and I have lived on Maurelle Island, at the mouth of Bute Inlet for nearly 40 years. During this time we have seen the forests in this area, on our island and the surrounding islands

undergo many changes. Most of them not for the better, and for the past 30 years or so, mostly at the hands of the big, and often foreign owned, timber companies, with very little return to the local community, or even the broader community. In fact, on Maurelle Island itself, recently logged heavily under the hand of BCTS, the cost of the infrastructure largely exceeded the proceeds from the harvested timber, in stumpage fees alone. The industrial road systems alone, a make-work project for the road building companies, have removed large tracts of mature forest, that will never even be replanted. Since the latest harvests there have large amounts of post logging blowdown, erosion and irreparable damage to our island's watershed.

In the following points I refer to the coastal, mixed Douglas fir forests that I am most familiar with, although the points I make are also relevant to the forests of the BC interior which are all part and parcel of the entire forest and watershed systems of the province. They are all connected, therefore what happens in one area, has a definite impact on another.

#### **OLD GROWTH and MATURE FORESTS of BC are IMPORTANT because they:**

- Provide the oxygen that sustains life on earth.
  - Are an essential component of the earth's rainwater cycle system. Retain, and let down gradually, the earth's finite water, drop by drop.
  - Contribute to, and retain the earth's thin soil layer and help to prevent erosion.
- Provide the medium and sustenance for, and are part of, the complex, delicately balanced ecology of life on earth.
- Provide multiple and complex habitat for a whole web of wildlife, as well as materials useful to humans, which if respected and managed very carefully could continue to do so indefinitely.
- Are a vital part of the earth's climate system; keeping temperatures cool in the summers, sheltering and protecting wildlife and soil from harsh winter weather.
- Provide livelihoods for local communities in multiple ways including small scale, family operated woodlots, a growing eco-tourism sector, harvesting of secondary natural

forest products such as fungi, greenery for florists, berries, nature trails, fresh air walks etc.

- Are vital in providing habitat in the form of the streams and rivers that provide for the life-cycle of the five Pacific salmon species of the BC coast, which in turn are an extremely vital, as well as endangered, life form that sustains fisher folk families, higher forms of wildlife such as grizzly and black bears, bald eagles and other fish eating birds, and indeed the healthy forest systems themselves.
- Provide a vast carbon sink, which during this era of extreme climate change is an obvious necessity, and especially important if Canada is ever going to meet its targets under the Paris Accord.

It is important to recognize that many people in this province rely on the forest industry for their livelihoods and it should be a priority to help these families transition to less destructive, more sustainable jobs, careers, and futures. The focus and support needs to move away from the big, multi-national, industrial, corporate-shareholder profit model which actually contributes very little to our future economy, but rather depletes our natural resources at the ultimate expense of all of the people of British Columbia and the natural environment that could, with proper conservation and governance, provide very well for all into the future.