

January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Dear Mr. Merkel and Mr. Gorley, Old Growth Forests Panel Members:

Thank you for taking the time to seek input from BC citizens regarding attitudes towards old growth forests in our province. I am writing to you as a private citizen who enjoys recreating in nature in BC and in other parts of the world, where large trees and mature rain forests are valued as a huge international tourist draw. To help inform my perspective, my brother in law is a forester on Vancouver Island, and another relative is doing a Masters Program in Forestry at UBC in Natural Resources Conservation.

I have serious concerns about the lack of sustainable forestry practices in British Columbia, as overseen by current and past governments. These in particular relate to the ongoing full bore logging of old growth forests at a time when BC's diminishing forests and ecosystems are in crisis. My concerns also relate to the lack of valuing of intact forests from an ecological, tourism and recreation point of view, as opposed to as a timber resource only.

### **Revising Forest Management Legislation to Incorporate Currently Uncosted Values of Intact Forest Ecosystems**

A new overall forestry strategy urgently needs to be developed by the provincial government which takes into account the currently *uncosted* value of BC's forests for tourism, recreation, aesthetic values, carbon absorption, air and water purity, and fish and wildlife habitat.

This is becoming increasingly important as forests are decimated by wildfires, pine beetle, diseases, drought, and overharvesting.

So far, successive provincial governments have seemed to be in thrall to the forest industry. While we all recognize the need for employment, the Province needs to recalibrate expectations, as wildfires and disease eat away at remaining tree supplies.

Are we going to increasingly allow our province to be logged to death, harvesting trees where it was formerly off limits, including areas of old growth, in view corridors and in critical watersheds and other endangered species habitat? Our old growth forests are particularly irreplaceable ecologically, and from a carbon storage and tourism perspective.

Did you know that according to the BC government's own figures, "In 2017, the tourism industry generated \$18.4 billion in revenue, a 41.3% increase over 2007"? Tourism is growing at a faster rate than most other BC industries, and is a major employer across BC.

Our unspoiled wild places, our huge trees, and our amazing variety of birds and wildlife are among the most unique assets and tourism draws to “Super Natural” BC. Increasingly prevalent and visible logging scars are at odds with what international visitors come here expecting to see.

An example of this is in Juan de Fuca Provincial Park on Vancouver Island. The Juan de Fuca Trail is internationally famous, and in an area of Vancouver Island with several record sized old growth trees. And yet, some sections of the Juan de Fuca trail are horribly visually compromised by logged sections clearly within view of the trail just outside the narrow park’s boundary, where logging should never have taken place.

In light of this, what many BC residents would like to see is for the BC Government to actually enlarge the very narrow Juan de Fuca Provincial Park by making it wider, and to incorporate the adjacent old growth forest within its boundaries. This would help to protect the existing trees in this extremely narrow park from blowdown in high winds.

There are many other record size old growth trees on Vancouver Island which remain unprotected. These trees are a huge draw for tourists, nature lovers, photographers, and hikers. Their enormous ongoing value to tourism and the local economy greatly exceed any one time monetary value gained by destroying them for a few planks of lumber. It is therefore not surprising that Port Renfrew on Vancouver Island, to name just one location, is aiming to become a destination for old growth / big tree tourism, a huge and growing sector for international tourists.

Our old growth forests are comparable in beauty and majesty to California’s Redwood forests, but for some inexplicable reason, the government does not seem to place any long term value on this globally unique and irreplaceable asset.

Please act quickly to place a moratorium on logging old growth ecosystems, especially on Vancouver Island, in southwestern British Columbia, and in the Interior wet belt, until an inventory has been made of the remaining old growth forest, and new regulations devised. Legislation must be put in place to protect these irreplaceable giants and their endangered ecosystems by giving all, or at least significantly large portions of these habitats protected or park status before the last vestiges are destroyed.

Protecting small stand of trees is not enough, as they cannot withstand wind and drought conditions unless a large enough surrounding old growth ecosystem is also preserved. Please exercise foresight and a vision for long term stewardship for future generations by protecting large tracts of these globally unique and irreplaceable primordial forests now.

Another reason there should be no more harvesting of the small remaining tracts of old growth forest in BC is that they provide critical habitat for many endangered species in the province. These forests are home to a number of rare species at risk. In *The Globe and Mail* on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, there was an article about how around the world one million species of animals and plants are facing extinction, many within decades, if governments continue with a “business as usual” approach.

New Zealand, Thailand, Sri Lanka, The Philippines, and Finland have all banned the logging of old growth forests in recent years, despite impacts to their forestry sectors. Meanwhile, in BC, we are cutting down Vancouver Island’s remaining intact old growth forests at three times the rate they are being harvested in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. According to the Wilderness Committee, more than 34 soccer fields worth of old growth forest are harvested on Vancouver Island *every day*.

Our government urgently needs to rightly value the small remaining vestiges of old growth forest for the globally unique and endangered ecosystems they are, and to protect these irreplaceable and invaluable forests. Empirical research demonstrates that old growth forests have more economic value left standing than being harvested when factoring in their tourism, recreational, carbon storage and other values.

Government needs to act now to protect the remaining magnificent old growth forests on Vancouver Island, in southwestern BC, in the Interior wet belt, and elsewhere in the province while the opportunity to do so still exists.

Following are some specific recommendations in relation to old growth forests, conservation, and the forest industry, which we all acknowledge to be struggling for a variety of reasons:

1. Put a moratorium on further old growth logging in BC until a proper assessment has been done of remaining old growth areas with a view to legislating the protection of all or most of what remains as critical habitat for a number of species at risk and other uncoded values.
2. Protect the vast majority of remaining old growth forests by converting them to parks and conservation areas.
3. Put conservation first. Decide that sustainable forestry practices and habitat impacts must be top of mind going forward.
4. Reinstate / revise legislation to protect from logging view corridors from important highways, lakes, and tourist destinations.
5. Focus on harvesting of second growth forests and replanting of varieties of trees informed by current research and best practices.

6. Amend the Forest and Range Practices Act this year to protect old-growth forests by using science-based evidence to inform old-growth management; eliminate loopholes in any legislation that permits the logging of endangered old-growth forests.
7. Hire more provincial forest scientists to monitor logging companies rather than expect them to monitor themselves; the current approach has been a dismal failure.
8. Recognize BC's acute need to have more watersheds protected by putting them off limits to logging.
9. Invest in more secondary wood processing facilities in BC to provide employment to forestry workers rather than exporting the majority of raw logs overseas.
10. Be willing to invest in retraining for forestry workers.
11. Enter the modern era by recognizing that currently uncosted values of intact forests merit just as much consideration for legislation as lumber only. Prime among these values are critically important wildlife habitat (especially old growth forests); recreation; tourism; carbon storage; filters for clean water and air; erosion and siltation control; protection for fish habitat; and aesthetic values.

I believe that our old growth forests are a symbol of all that is wild and beautiful in our province. They are a non-renewable resource; they cannot be replaced.

Actions speak louder than words. The government needs to take its long term stewardship responsibilities seriously. It must act immediately to protect remaining old growth on Vancouver Island and elsewhere in the province while the opportunity to do so still exists.

I look forward to hearing how your Panel will address these critical and time sensitive issues, before it is too late.

Sincerely,

Hilary Reid  
Vancouver BC