

December 13, 2019

Dear Old Growth Strategic Review Panel

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on old-growth management in British Columbia. As a Registered Forest Professional working in a rural community on Vancouver Island, policy decisions on the management of old growth forests will have indirect and direct impacts of my future, I therefore feel the relevance of having my voice heard.

The current government needs to take a good look at the working forests and the hard facts of how it is being managed. Management decisions on the future of the working forest in BC should be based off facts and not influenced by the perception of how old growth is being managed.

A review of some of the information:

Old Growth Harvesting (based off age class)

35% (13.2 million ha) of the forested areas in BC are available for harvest or in the Timber Harvesting Land Base (THLB). Old growth forests make up 18% (3.5 million ha) of the THLB. On average 1% (200,000 ha) of the overall THLB is harvested annually, 27% (54,000 ha) coming from old growth. On average 1.5% of the available old growth in the THLB is being harvested annually. ¹

Old Growth on the Coast

42% (3.5 million ha) of coastal forests are old growth, 2.8 million ha of that will never be logged due to constraints (protected areas, old growth management areas etc). There is a misconception that the constrained or protected areas are all on the top of mountains. However, ~75% of the constrained forests on the coast is in the most common Biological Ecosystem Classification zone, the Coastal Western Hemlock zone.

Coastal Economics

16% (\$2.8 billion) of the provincial Forest Industry GDP comes from Vancouver Island/Coast Forest regions, 21,310 total jobs are created and supported by the coastal forest industry and 1.4 billion of labor income is generated from the coastal forest industry². On average about 44% of the timber harvested annually in the Vancouver Island/Coast forest region is from old growth. Since the 1990's the interior BC has seen a 7% decline in their Annual Allowable Cut, whereas the coast has seen a 30% decline. A moratorium on old growth would be devastating to rural communities dependent on this sector and have a significant impact to the provincial GDP.

Carbon Sequestration

Forest products have a direct impact on the long-term mitigation of climate change. Carbon that was once stored in the forests will continue to be stored in wood products and new forests will be planted and grow to take up more carbon. Emissions will be avoided by those that would have occurred to produce alternative products like steel or concrete. Research is showing that the forest sector in BC can

¹ <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth/harvesting/>

² https://www.cofi.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-COFI-Regional-Economic-Impact-Study_Final_March2019-2.pdf

have a significant role in helping mitigate climate change.³ Research also suggests that a major contributor to forests being carbon sources is from wildfires and other natural disturbances.⁴

I am aware that much of the above points is not new information for the current government. My ask is that all the information be considered when looking at the future of the working forests in BC. I believe in sustainable forestry in BC, which includes the management and harvesting of old growth. The harvest levels that have been set by the province include the harvesting of old growth. These levels have been set to provide long-term economic stability and ecosystem management. Any abrupt changes to forest policy should be based off evidence-based information and not external pressures.

Sincerely,

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³ <https://pics.uvic.ca/media-release/stepping-tackle-climate-change-options-bc-forestry-sector>

⁴ <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/climate-change/impacts-adaptations/climate-change-impacts-forests/forest-carbon/13085>