

Old Growth Strategy Submittal

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What does Old Growth mean to the qathet Regional District and how do we value it?

Because of the qRD's (qathet Regional District) history of logging, fires, and other influences, there is not a lot of old growth forest (however it is defined) accessible to the average resident, but the forest as a whole is highly valued by the population. It is an integral part of the economy, the recreational activities, the cultural activities, and the area's identity. Logging and its supporting industries provide employment to many people in our community and the industry is celebrated in many ways, in no way more visible than the Powell River Logger Sports which has become a well-attended annual event drawing competitors and audience members from a global market. On the recreational side we have a multitude of non-profit organizations that build and maintain bridges, huts, campsites, rock climbing routes and hundreds of kilometers of trails. Culturally the forest has played an intricate part in the lives and history of the local Tla' amin Nation for thousands of years, as well as in the lives of the more recent arrivals. The forest, and access to the forest, is a major reason why many of the residents of the qRD came here in the first place and why they decide to stay.

How is Old Growth managed in the qathet Regional District?

There are many ways that the forest is managed in our area. On a provincial level, BC Parks manages over fourteen million hectares of land in BC (14.4% of the entire land mass), the vast majority of which does not allow various commercial operations, including logging. There are also many local parks where logging operations are prohibited. The logging industry practices forest management as well - we can use a local logging company as an example. This company, a major player in the logging industry in qRD, adheres to CSA standards and follows a Sustainable Forest Management Plan that has been endorsed by the PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification). In order to maintain their certification there are many "indicators" that they track that help them make sure that they are maintaining the ecosystem, harvesting at a sustainable level, and protecting areas of particular cultural significance. These practices affect the economic viability of harvesting timber. There are also many built-in and governmentally-set restrictions that add to the challenges of logging on the coast. If we consider Block 1 of TFL (Tree Farm License) 39, which is the area that has been allotted to this logging company in the qRD, the Harvestable Land Base is actually less than a third of the Total Land Base after roads, non-forested areas, non-productive areas, and protected areas (Old

Growth Management Areas, Riparian Management Areas, Wildlife Habitat Areas and Ungulate Winter Ranges) are removed. Increased restrictions on the harvesting of old growth timber would reduce the viability of the industry and affect the local economy negatively.

How could Old Growth be more effectively managed?

The term “Old Growth” needs to be defined and reliable, unbiased information needs to be circulated in order to educate the public. Many protected areas are inaccessible and are therefore unseen, leading people to believe they don’t exist. Also, second growth trees are oftentimes mistaken for old growth because of their size, which can lead to frustration. Leaving a greater number of big trees, regardless of their age, may be a way to keep everyone happy. There exists a Big Tree Registry at the University of British Columbia – perhaps expanding this registry and making it a requirement of the logging industry to recognize and retain any trees that fall within the set guidelines will go far towards alleviating confrontation between the logging companies and the public. Establishing a program where local organizations and individuals can identify areas of significant value to them (regardless of their status as old growth or second growth) and nominate them for protection may be a way to balance the interests of the industry and the people.

In the long term, a steady transition from old growth logging to second growth logging will help guarantee a healthy logging economy for BC for decades to come while retaining the cultural and recreational aspects of the forest as well. Scientific studies show what a healthy forest is and the correct procedures for maintaining a healthy forest should be adhered to. Protecting the ecosystems that exist within the forest should be given top priority, and with the proper strategy in place there’s no reason why the logging industry can’t operate within that strategy.