

The Rationale for Protecting Old growth In BC

Submitted by Ralph Keller, adhoc chairperson of the Discovery Island Marine Tourism Group & The Tourism Chair, the Tourism/ Forestry Working Group

The Working Group is a collection of Discovery Island & Campbell River based tourism and forest sector companies which meet annually to discuss issues, conflicts, and potential resolutions.

Value of mature and old growth forest land to the Tourism Sector

Four years ago, to draw attention to the negative impact of excessive clearcutting, The Discovery Islands Marine Tourism group received the support of 140 Discovery Islands tourism businesses to lobby the government to protect more forests in the Discovery Islands. In 2018, the Discovery Island tourism sector generated around 50 million dollars employing over 1,000 people. The success of the tourism sector here is built entirely on forested scenery and wildlife tours. There is surprising little low elevation old growth forest remaining. If there was any accessible old growth it would be well used. Campbell River's motorized marine wildlife & scenery tours alone create revenues of about \$10 million per season.

The value of old growth to the tourism sector in the Discovery Islands rival or exceed revenues in the forest industry here. To protect and enhance tax revenues, governments simply can't ignore tourism any longer.

30 years ago, the GDP of the Tourism sector in BC was approximately ¼ the size of the forest industry at \$2.5 billion. The forest industry was worth about \$10 billion. For the last 6-8 years, both industries have been about the same size at around \$12 billion. Unless the forest industry re-capitalizes it's value added manufacturing sector, tourism will permanently over take it in size. Tourism in BC could easily double without over stressing existing resources.

I'm going to argue in favour of protecting more old growth, especially low elevation coastal rainforests in S.W. BC. And where protecting old growth stands is no longer an option--like much of South Western BC, then some accessible stands of 2nd growth should be protected and recruited to become old growth to support the tourism sector, for public amenity, and to support biological diversity.

Direct Benefits of Old forests

Coastal old growth rainforests, coupled with Orcas, Grizzly bears and First Nations are primary resources which attract visitors to BC. Like the forest industry, tourism attracts a lot of foreign exchange capital which is good for the economy. Those smatterings of old growth remnants like Stanley Park, Gold Stream, Cathedral Grove, & Pacific Rim are signature forests for BC.

-- BC's old growth forests are world famous and add value to surrounding communities (Far, far greater than their timber value).

--Can we imagine Vancouver without Stanley Park? The closer one gets to Stanley Park, the higher the land values. Isn't it great someone had the foresight to protect it?

--What if we'd never logged an entire island like Read or Quadra and left it as old growth. What would it be worth to economy? Estimates top \$10 million per year. By contrast if Read Island's forests were sustainably managed, the most they could produce would be \$2.5 million per year. Had our forefathers had the foresight to protect Read Island and left it as an intact example of Old growth forest it would have become world famous and likely been designated a UN world heritage site.

Consider the intrinsic value of Pacific Rim National Park and its forests. The communities of Tofino and Ucluelet benefit so much from the value of surrounding old growth forests which greatly exceed their commercial timber value. Here is a quote from the March issue of Westerly magazine:

“Tofino’s tourism industry generates \$240 million of economic impact, according to the town’s destination marketing organization Tourism Tofino. Tourism Tofino announced the staggering figure in a media release on Tuesday that explained an economic impact and visitation study conducted by InterVISTAS Consulting Inc. found that tourism supports 2,670 direct jobs—1,720 full-time equivalent jobs—generating \$60 million in annual wages.

The release adds that Tofino hosted an estimated 600,000 visitors in 2018 and that local businesses serving those visitors contribute over \$57 million in municipal, provincial and federal tax revenues.”
<https://www.westerlynews.ca/business/tourism-tofino-says-towns-visitation-generate-240-million-annually/>

Of course, Pacific Rim National Park has beaches as well but what would that experience be like without its accompanying grand old growth forests?

The Value of Redwood forests

Another outstanding case in point being the protection of Redwood forests in Oregon and California. Redwood National and State Parks managers estimate that the annual combined visitation to all four parks within the partnership is, at a minimum, 700,000 people per year. At this level of visitation, it is likely that the parks bring at least \$42,000,000 in visitor spending and over 500 local jobs to the economy. Federal & State parks featuring redwoods total over 130,000 acres (200 sq. miles). There are also large redwood reserves in Oregon. These low elevation spectacular forests are easily accessible to the public. Compare this to accessible low elevation forests on Vancouver Island.

https://www.nps.gov/redw/learn/news/local_economy.htm

Tourism & Economic Diversity

In rural BC, wilderness or scenery based tourism even out the forest sector boom & bust cycles we’ve had to live with in the past. 40 years ago, a major forest industry strike or general economic downturn was highly noticed in Campbell River...to the point where downtown shops started to close. Today, even with a 6 month old Western Forest Products strike, barely any one notices. And then there’s additional taxes that tourism pays to all levels of government. ..minimally 11% of gross revenues.

Indirect Benefits of Old Forests

For tourism, there are the obvious direct values in old growth. But there are also indirect values.

Like...Economic Diversification

There’s benefits to the economic diversification protecting old forests brings.

I think it especially important to protect and recruit old growth near populated areas in S.W. BC. where most of BC’s population resides. It is widely acknowledged that spectacular old forests have a restorative effect on people. As a professional guide and tourism operator of some 45 years, I have witnessed the positive effect of forested wilderness on people countless times. 2nd growth forests are OK but as soon as someone sees a real old growth forest, 2nd growth forests just don’t cut it any more.

Intact forests attract talented professionals and wealthy people

Attracting wealthy philanthropists like the like Eric & Christina Peterson who created the Tula foundation & the Hakai Institute and Dana and Lisa Damegards who fund local entrepreneurial projects. Both these families arrived to coastal BC bringing with them, hundreds of millions of dollars in wealth which they disperse here. The Tula Foundation on Quadra Island employs about 50 people. These people could go anywhere in the world but they came here because of the natural beauty of these forested islands.

The west coast of North America i.e. Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, & San Francisco enjoy high quality environments in terms of climate, forests, water, mountains a.k.a. nature beauty. Those destinations attract wealthy people who can choose to live wherever they want but they also attract business, technology and highly skilled professionals. Companies want to attract and keep high quality employees and they do this by locating headquarters in nice places. When was the last time you heard of a high tech company setting up shop in Detroit, Buffalo or Saskatoon?

Biological Diversity

See Pictures sent via email

You don't need to have a degree in forestry to see that managed forests are being simplified in terms of structural and biological diversity. Big tree and large dead structures on the forest floor are important.

--They provide habitat for innumerable plants and animals.

--Large coarse woody debris (read: dead old growth structure) is a biological anchor for nearly everything you can think of which depends on the forest for habitat. Modern forestry eliminates large structure from the landscape.

--FLNRO regulations penalize licensees who leave too much debris behind. This is to reduce waste and fire hazard. But it destroys habitat for forest dwelling creatures.

--Large trees are also critical structures to purify ground water through roots and canopy.

--Old Growth forests are also much more fire resistant than second growth. Notice large trees with fire scars and branches high up the tree. Young forests are more vulnerable to wild fire.

Modern short rotation forestry has become incompatible with maintaining all the systems old growth forests traditionally maintain. Really, we need to call a spade a spade here and stop calling it forestry and start calling it long rotation farming where all we are trying to do is grow fibre—to the exclusion of anything else. In that case, we need to increase ecosystem representation at all ecosystem levels from high quality sea level sites to Alpine. By all scientific accounts, short rotation forest management significantly reduces biological diversity.

Old growth & Climate Change

--Carbon Sinks

BC forests are evolving from a global carbon bank to global CO₂ producers. Tree plantations rotations are too short. The fibre harvested on a short rotation is recycled into CO₂ before the next rotation is harvested. If we let forests, they will help us fight climate change. But, we need to protect more mature forests.

Source: Forestry and Carbon in British Columbia: Summary Dr. Jim Pojar February 2019