



wildsight
Golden

Box 25 • Golden BC V0A 1H0 • f 250 344 5530 • e golden@wildsight.ca

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To Whom it May Concern,

Re: Wildsight's (Golden Branch) submission regarding- Old Growth Forests consultation

The management of old growth forests in British Columbia needs to reflect all the values of these forested ecosystems. It is time to start considering the social, ecological and other values that are present beyond timber extraction. Old growth forests support a complex array of plants and animals with relationships and biochemical attributes that science is only starting to understand. These forests take at minimum several centuries to develop and current forest management practices do not adequately protect these forests for the future. What remains of old growth forests needs to be preserved in a substantial capacity to ensure resiliency with climate change, the continued survival of many species, ecosystem function, genetic resources and cultural values.

Old growth forests are vital for the survival of many different species, including several considered to be at-risk and these forests are being logged at an alarming rate. In the Golden area, species of particular concern include Mountain Caribou, Grizzly Bears, Wolverine, Whitebark Pine and Olive sided Flycatchers. Locally, Canfor is actively logging old growth in the upper Blaeberry Valley. The loss of old growth forests at the scale that is planned in the Collie, Ensign and Wildcat basins (headwaters of the Blaeberry River) has the potential to affect many more species as well as increase the rate at which storm water and spring snowmelt enter the river. Impacts quickly spread from the area being logged, downstream to fish habitats and into communities.

Logging of old growth in the Golden area over the past few decades has contributed to the expatriation of Mt. Caribou from the Northern Purcell's, and dramatic population declines in the Northern Selkirk's and west slopes of the Central Rockies. These are places where a century ago, the dominant ungulate was Mt. Caribou. Logging of old growth continues in these areas and new development in relatively remote watersheds, such as the Kinbasket Valley, does not adequately consider the effect forest fragmentation has on sensitive species such as Grizzly Bears and Wolverine. Old growth habitat, for the few remaining Mt. Caribou in these areas, needs protecting.

Recent research has determined that forest management practices have reduced the Inland Temperate Rainforest (ITR) to less than 5% old growth forest with the remainder being 66% young and immature forest and 30% as harvested cut blocks (Coxson, Goward, & Werner, 2019). Our demand on natural resources like old growth forests leads to habitat loss for a multitude of species, and leads to habitat fragmentation for at-risk species. It also has climate change impacts, produces pollution, and introduces invasive species, which is another huge threat to biodiversity. Carrying on with business as usual is unsustainable and unacceptable.

We have over 1,000,000 species at risk of extinction on this planet, and 3.9 billion birds have vanished from North American alone since 1970, largely due to human impact (Monroe et.al.,2019). Protecting their habitat is the most effective way of saving species with threatened or endangered status.

Wildsight Golden supports the following recommendations of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Wildsight and West Kootenay EcoSociety joint submission regarding restructuring BC's old growth management:

- Changes must be made to the Forest and Range Practice Act (FRPA) to reflect the true value of old growth forest ecosystem services;
- Old Growth Management Areas (OGMA) must represent all forest types (BEC Zone/Subzone and Variant) in a landscape unit;
- OGMAs have to be substantial in size, preserving single trees does not preserve ecosystem functions;
- OGMAs must be spatially protected for the long-term, not spatially traded when harvest opportunities arise;
- Government oversight needs to return to ensure the effectiveness of OGMA preservation, the current professional reliance model under FRPA is not working;
- OGMA must be replaced when lost by disturbance (fire) on the landscape; and
- OGMAs cannot be doubled as Wildlife Tree Patches, these reserve requirements must be separate;

Please let us know what is being done to work towards protection of old growth in BC.
Sincerely,

Joan Dolinsky, President, Wildsight-Golden

References

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