

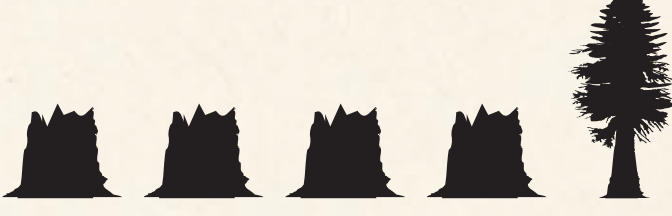
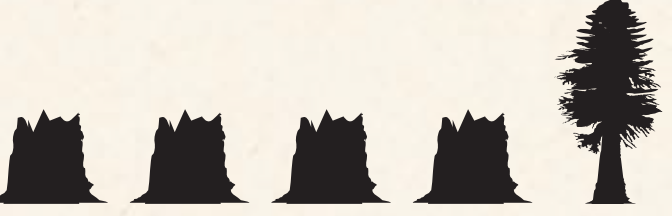
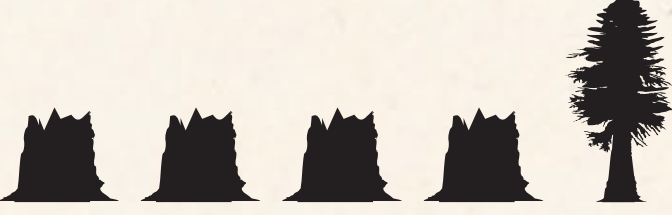


B.C. Government Old-Growth Report Card

Date: March 11, 2023

Premier: David Eby

In the fall of 2020, the B.C. NDP government pledged to implement the Old-Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) panel recommendations 'in their totality.' The 14 recommendations, published and committed to 2.5 years ago, follow a 3-year timeframe (including short-term actions) and call on the B.C. government to work with First Nations for a paradigm shift that makes ecological integrity and biodiversity the top priority.

In November 2022, Premier David Eby pledged to "accelerate action" on old-growth and has since signaled some positive long-term steps. However, there has been a lack of concrete outcomes and the Premier's first budget lacked the ambition to transform promises into action. This report card grades how the B.C. government is doing, five-sixths of the way through the OGSR panel's 3-year framework. With just 6 months left to meet its pledge, the province still has a window to address delays and commit to an ambitious updated work plan to finalize implementation.

SUBJECT	PROGRESS	GRADE
<p>Immediate action for at-risk forest (interim protection within 6 months)</p>		<p>D</p>
<p>The OGSR panel called for interim protection (deferrals) for at-risk old-growth within 6 months to prevent irreversible biodiversity loss while provincial and First Nations governments develop long-term conservation solutions. In February, the province shared that logging had been deferred in 2.1 million hectares of old-growth. However, only 1.16 million hectares of these deferrals are part of the original 2.6 million hectares of old-growth identified as the most at-risk by the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) and about 55% remain open to logging. In addition, TAP scientists were clear that deferrals were particularly important in areas where logging was already planned (estimated at about 50,000 hectares). Since no deferral maps have been released, it is nearly impossible to assess whether deferrals have been implemented in areas about to be logged and which forests remain at risk. NGO research shows that tens of thousands of hectares of proposed old-growth deferral areas are already clearcut or remain at imminent risk. To improve this grade the B.C. government must immediately provide First Nations with funding to address economic impacts of additional logging deferrals in the most at-risk old-growth forests.</p>		
<p>Funding for implementation, First Nations and forestry transition</p>		<p>D</p>
<p>Budget 2022 included \$185 million to help workers, industry and communities impacted by logging deferrals. In February 2023, B.C. announced to double funding to support manufacturing of higher-value wood products to \$180 million and \$21 million for Forest Landscape Planning with First Nations. While these recent investments are positive steps, they are largely in response to mill closures, and are not sufficient for transformative change for forest communities. The province also committed to creating a new 'conservation financing mechanism' within the next 6 months – unfortunately, this means that the conservation funding itself is still missing, both short-term for deferrals and long-term to support new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. Crucially, the expected Nature Agreement between the provincial and federal government has yet to be announced, including matching funding to help achieve the goal to increase protection of lands to 30% by 2030 (now also supported by the B.C. government). To improve this grade and enable old-growth solutions, governments have to establish a dedicated fund of at least several hundred million dollars for Indigenous-led conservation solutions for at-risk old-growth.</p>		
<p>Change course and prioritize ecosystem integrity and biodiversity</p>		<p>D</p>
<p>The OGSR panel's call for a paradigm shift in forest stewardship requires substantial changes in regulation and direction given to decision-makers, like the chief forester and district managers. In February, after a long wait, the B.C. government repealed language making timber supply the top priority in forestry regulation. This was an important step. However, so far, the B.C. government has only made timid amendments to provincial forestry laws with little change on the ground as already approved logging plans remain largely unchanged and logging continues in at-risk forests and critical habitat of endangered species. B.C. has removed a barrier but not yet prioritized biodiversity over timber as called for by the OGSR. In response to recommendation 2 of the OGSR to enact biodiversity legislation, the B.C. government recently committed to creating a declaration on biodiversity and ecosystem health by June of 2023, but there is still no timeline for this law. The commitment to protect 30% of the land in B.C. by 2030 has the potential to support implementation of the OGSR but should not be used to give up 2023 milestone dates. To improve this grade, the B.C. government must speed up the pace of old-growth deferrals, science-based old-growth and species habitat recovery targets, forestry law amendments, and development of Forest Landscape Plans that safeguard biodiversity across the province.</p>		
<p>3-year workplan with milestone dates</p>		<p>F</p>
<p>The OGSR panel recommendations were embedded in a 3-year framework with 6-month steps, starting with immediate action for at-risk forests and full partnership with First Nations, followed by a transition plan prioritizing ecological integrity and alternatives to clearcutting. In 2021, the B.C. government included their own 3-year plan in their forestry intentions paper but instead of committing to milestone dates, it described all recommendations as 'ongoing' work – a clear recipe for 'talk-and-log.' Now, 2.5 years into the 3-year framework provided by the OGSR, none of the 14 recommendations have been fully implemented and the government has yet to develop a completely updated old-growth action plan (expected at the end of 2023). To improve this grade, the B.C. government must set implementation milestones with deadlines, consistent with the OGSR panel framework.</p>		
<p>Transparency and communication</p>		<p>F</p>
<p>The work undertaken by the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) and shared by the B.C. government in 2021 marked progress in transparent communication about the state of old-growth forests. But this progress has been overshadowed by insufficient and sometimes misleading communication about progress. Instead of substantial, detailed OGSR implementation reports, there have been only limited updates embedded in media releases. Recent updates didn't include a distinction between deferrals in at-risk old-growth categories and other old-growth, and no regional or ecological information about where deferrals have been implemented, meaning entire ecosystems or regions may be left out of the deferral process. In the fall, the province claimed record-low old-growth logging but their own data showed hardly any change in the last 3 years (about 150 soccer fields of old-growth logged per day). Instead of being transparent about progress, or the lack thereof, the province has repeatedly cherry-picked data to exaggerate limited progress to date. To improve this grade, the B.C. government must regularly share accurate and detailed information on progress implementing all OGSR recommendations, especially deferrals, logging rates and the state of forests in B.C.</p>		

As delays continue, the old-growth crisis in B.C. worsens. Time is running out to save what is left. Amid a climate and extinction crisis, a continued lack of interim protection will result in irreversible loss for present and future generations. This delay must end immediately.