

Loss of productive coastal old-growth temperate rainforest¹ and levels of protection on Vancouver Island and Clayoquot Sound in 1993 and in 2018

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the historic Clayoquot Sound mass arrest, a new Sierra Club BC map and data show 31 percent of Vancouver Island’s productive old-growth rainforest remaining in 1993 has been destroyed in the last twenty-five years. Only about a fifth remains intact (twenty-one per cent).

In 1993, sixty per cent of the rainforest in the Clayoquot Sound region - the territory of the Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht and Hesquiaht First Nations - was still intact. Although only part of the region (seventeen per cent) received formal protection after the protests, the vast majority of the old-growth rainforest that remained in the region twenty-five years ago remains intact today (fifty-seven percent).

But the situation couldn’t be more different across the remainder of Vancouver Island. There, only twenty-nine per cent of intact productive old-growth rainforest remained in 1993 and this number is now reduced to a shocking nineteen per cent. The amount protected remains dismal at less than six per cent.

The following table shows hectare numbers and percentages of the original (pre-large scale logging) productive old-growth rainforest for Vancouver Island before large-scale logging began; Vancouver Island without Clayoquot Sound; and Clayoquot Sound. The total area of Clayoquot Sound (272,000 hectares) accounts for 8.3 per cent of Vancouver Island (3,280,000 hectares, including some of the smaller neighboring islands as shown in this [map](#)).

Productive old-growth rainforest	Vancouver Island		Island without Clayoquot Sound		Clayoquot Sound	
	Original old-growth pre-large scale logging	Remaining old-growth in 1993	Protected old-growth in 1993	Remaining old-growth in 2018	Protected old-growth in 2018	Old-growth loss 1993 - 2018
Original old-growth pre-large scale logging	2,236,000	100%	2,136,000	96%	100,100	4%
Remaining old-growth in 1993	684,000	31%	624,000	29%	59,800	60%
Protected old-growth in 1993	87,700	4%	81,800	4%	6,000	6%
Remaining old-growth in 2018	469,000	21%	412,000	19%	56,700	57%
Protected old-growth in 2018	137,000	6%	119,000	6%	17,300	17%
Old-growth loss 1993 - 2018	214,000	31%	211,000	34%	3,100	5%

¹ Productive old-growth rainforest excluding very low-productivity stands that generally grow smaller trees, not targeted for logging and therefore not endangered. Sierra Club BC maps of Vancouver Island show forests over 140 years and older as old forests. With a large number of ecosystems retaining only small percentages of old-growth and very high risk of species extirpation on Vancouver Island, it is important to use a definition that captures all the remaining older forests with old-growth characteristics to inform conservation efforts. On public land, over 80 per cent of these stands are older than 250 years.