



**SIERRA
CLUB BC**

301-2994 Douglas Street
Victoria, B.C. V8T 4N4

T (250) 386-5255
F (250) 386-4453

E info@sierraclub.bc.ca
W www.sierraclub.bc.ca

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Dear candidate,

On behalf of Sierra Club BC, I am writing to share our concerns about the state of Vancouver Island's rainforest and ask you to take action for healthy forests and healthy communities before and after the upcoming municipal election.

Endangered Forests

Vancouver Island's rainforests have been home to First Nations since time immemorial, and they contribute to a diverse economy, including forestry, tourism and wild salmon in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Unfortunately, today, these forests are among the rarest ecosystems on the planet. The vast majority of productive old-growth rainforest on the Island has been logged and replaced by young forest. A recently released Sierra Club BC map entitled "State of Vancouver Island's Coastal Temperate Rainforest" (available at sierraclub.bc.ca/rainforestmap) shows with in-depth detail the scarce remaining old-growth rainforest ecosystems and recent old-growth destruction.

The remaining 218,000 hectares of the most endangered low-elevation old-growth rainforest with the biggest trees and highest carbon storage per hectare (good and medium productivity forest) now only cover 6.5 per cent of Vancouver Island. Some types of forest, such as old-growth Douglas fir on southeastern Vancouver Island, have less than one per cent of their original range left. At-risk species that depend on ancient trees including the marbled murrelet are in decline along with the ancient forests.

Climate Solutions

The original record-high amount of carbon stored in ancient trees has been dramatically reduced as a result of logging and has contributed to climate change. Keeping big old trees standing is a key part of our fight against climate change. More and more research shows that older and bigger trees are much more effective at sequestering carbon compared to younger and smaller trees. In fact, trees absorb the vast majority of their total carbon storage in the second half of their natural lifespan. On Vancouver Island, however, almost all young forest stands are cut again at a very young age and turned into sequestration dead zones for more than 10 years.

Rapid Rate of Logging

Around 10,000 hectares of old-growth rainforest are being cut every year on Vancouver Island (two soccer fields per hour). With so little left, it is now only a matter of time before the logging industry runs out of old-growth trees to harvest and fully transitions to logging second-growth. Communities are facing hard choices, as the forest ecosystems change alongside our climate. Revenue from forestry is shrinking and job numbers from logging are declining. At the same time, intact forests are becoming increasingly important for defending communities from climate impacts such as flooding, drought and



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fire. Intact forests can also provide the basis for a diverse economy, and have value in providing clean water, clean air and habitat for species.

Diverse Voices Call for Old-Growth Conservation

More and more voices are speaking up for protection of endangered rainforest and better forestry practices. In 2016, British Columbia's Chamber of Commerce voted to protect old-growth trees where they have greater economic value for communities if left standing. In September 2016, the majority of delegates at the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention voted to protect all of Vancouver Island's remaining old-growth forest on public land.

In 2017, 25 international environmental groups called on the BC government to protect endangered old-growth rainforests. In 2018, 223 forest scientists wrote Premier Horgan urging him to follow through on the NDP's election promise to use science to take action for B.C.'s old-growth rainforest, using the evidence-based approach of the Great Bear Rainforest as a model.

Solutions Are Possible

The finalization of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements by First Nations governments and the B.C. government in 2016, with the support of a number of environmental organizations and forestry companies, shows that solutions are possible. As a result of these agreements the majority of the old-growth rainforests in the Great Bear Rainforest are now protected from logging. First Nations' shared decision-making with the province over land use in their traditional territories has been solidified and there is certainty about how much old-growth is available for logging subject to stringent standards.

What Future for Vancouver Island?

South of the Great Bear region, however, old-growth clearcutting continues on Vancouver Island, on the south coast and in inland rainforests at a furious pace.

Climate impacts like droughts and storms exert additional pressure and result in severe consequences for watersheds and salmon. With a few exceptions, land use plans do not meaningfully address First Nations' rights and interests and are not based on modern conservation science. Meanwhile, raw log exports are at a record high and jobs per cubic metre at a record low compared to other parts of the world, leaving neither healthy forests nor healthy communities behind.

Unless the provincial government changes course to protect and restore what remains of our endangered old-growth, much of Vancouver Island could turn into a severely degraded landscape this century. That's why we are urging the B.C. government to take immediate action for the well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, for biodiversity, clean air and water, long term forestry jobs and healthy communities, and to save one of the world's most efficient carbon sinks.

Remaining intact or largely intact rainforest areas imminently threatened by logging, such as the Central Walbran and East Creek, need immediate interim protection to allow time for developing a coherent science-based phased approach for protecting and restoring old-growth forests in dangerous decline, starting with the most endangered ecosystems.

Endangered rainforests need protection and the forestry industry needs support to shift from old-growth logging to better forestry practices for second-growth logging. This has to include creating a



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higher number of jobs per cubic metre through more value added economic activity. To accomplish these goals, we should rapidly phase out the practice of exporting raw logs.

Comprehensive steps for conservation and improved forest management for Vancouver Island must respect First Nations' rights and interests, enable a transition to sustainable second-growth forestry, support diverse economic activities such as tourism, and reduce carbon emissions.

Taking action against global warming means improving forest management to reduce carbon emissions from forests and ending wasteful practices such as slash burning.

We are certainly at a cross roads. Time is running out to make a difference in the fate of Vancouver Island's remaining endangered old-growth forests and their countless benefits to the economy and communities.

Will You Be An Old-Growth Forest Champion?

We are writing to urge you to consider the risks we face: ecological collapse of species that depend on intact old-growth rainforest, and economic collapse of forestry jobs that depend on logging old-growth.

Will you stand tall for Vancouver Island's ancient forests? We encourage you to raise this important issue before and after the upcoming local election, and to drive the transformation of Vancouver Island toward economic sustainability grounded in healthy ecosystems. Please get in touch if you are concerned about endangered old-growth forests, to explore how we can work together more closely to defend the trees our community well-being depends on.

Sincerely,

Jens Wieting

Senior Forest and Climate Campaigner

Sierra Club BC