



Andrew Wright photo

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Great Bear Rainforest Agreements become reality

Canada is home to the Great Bear Rainforest—the largest intact coastal temperate rainforest on the planet. The Great Bear Rainforest stretches along British Columbia’s coast and is the traditional territory of First Nations who have lived in this rainforest for thousands of years. At 6.4 million hectares in size, it is an area larger than Switzerland.

A spectacular forest ecosystem with many pristine valleys, the Great Bear Rainforest is also known as ‘Canada’s Amazon’ for its dense web of natural life including towering ancient trees, grizzly bears, salmon, wolves, and the rare white spirit bear. Today, less than 25% of this forest type remains worldwide.

In February 2006 an historic agreement was reached between environmentalists, logging companies, First Nations communities and the British Columbia

government after years of protests, markets campaigns, land use planning, and negotiations.

The Great Bear Rainforest Agreements have three components: a new land management regime called Ecosystem-Based Management that includes more than 2 million hectares protected from logging and new lighter touch logging regulations applied outside of protected areas; support for conservation-based economies in coastal communities and strengthened First Nations involvement in decisions affecting their traditional territory. The deadline for implementing the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement was March 31st, 2009.

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<p>Key milestones achieved: 2006 – 2009</p>	<p>Next steps: 2009 – 2014</p>
<p>Protected areas legislated</p> <p>2.1 million hectares protected from logging in conservancies, parks and biodiversity areas, covering one third of the Central and North Coast.</p>	<p>Reserve Network</p> <p>By September 2009 an initial reserve network will be developed outside of protected areas, followed by a more detailed reserve network by March 2014.</p>
<p>Lighter touch logging implemented</p> <p>New logging regulations require the maintenance of 50% of the natural level of old growth of all forest ecosystems across the region.</p>	<p>Logging regulation review</p> <p>By March 2014 logging regulations will be reviewed and amended to achieve the goal of low ecological risk for the forest and key species, along with community wellbeing.</p>
<p>Funding for Conservation Economy</p> <p>A \$120 million funding package for conservation management and ecologically sustainable business ventures in First Nation territories.</p>	<p>Building the conservation economy</p> <p>Transition underway from an economy based on resource-extraction to a diversified conservation economy with a high quality of life in coastal communities.</p>
<p>New governance and decision-making</p> <p>First Nations and the BC government have developed a new government-to-government relationship and mechanisms for collaborative stakeholder involvement.</p>	<p>Ongoing collaborative planning</p> <p>Governments, environmental organizations and logging companies will engage in science-based collaborative planning guided by a five year workplan.</p>

Environmental organizations and logging companies finding solutions

ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club BC are working with coastal forest companies BC Timber Sales, Canfor, Catalyst Paper, Interfor and Western Forest Products to support the creation and implementation of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. Together, these groups form the Joint Solutions Project (JSP) whose aim is to collaborate on the development of a model of conservation and management of globally significant forests. The JSP is working jointly through a set of milestones to implement Ecosystem-Based Management.

New protected areas legislated

2.1 million hectares (5 million acres) in the North and Central coast - one third of the region - are now protected from logging in conservancies, parks and biodiversity areas.

- 111 conservancies with a total area of 1,360,000 hectares, legislated between 2006 and 2008
- 21 biodiversity areas with a total area of 300,000 hectares, made legal in January 2009
- 18 previously established Class A parks with a total area of 443,000 hectares

Conservancies differ from other parks because they prioritize the protection of biological diversity and First Nations values related to social, ceremonial and cultural uses. Conservancies allow First Nations to pursue low-impact economic activities that do not undermine ecological values. Commercial logging, mining, and hydroelectric power generation are prohibited in these areas (except local run-of-river projects to service local communities).

Biodiversity Areas contribute to the conservation of species by limiting the range of land uses within these zones. Commercial timber harvesting and commercial hydro-electric power projects are prohibited. Other resource activities and land uses, like mining and tourism, are permitted, subject to existing regulations and legislation.

Lighter touch logging based on Ecosystem Based Management implemented

Outside of protected areas, logging companies, the Provincial government, and First Nations governments have made a commitment to a new approach to forestry. This approach considers ecological and First Nations community requirements to determine what must be left in the forest before deciding where and how much to log.

The new logging regulations made legal in March 2009 will mean that:

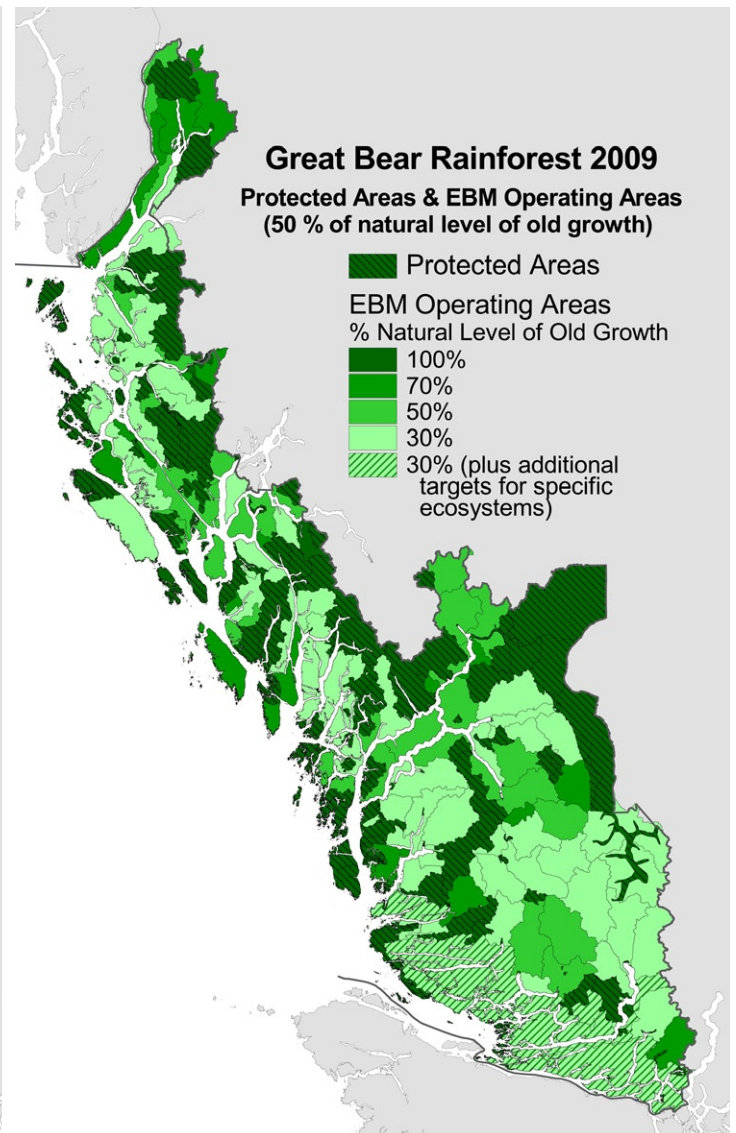
- the amount of old growth forest that can be logged across the landscape, in each watershed, and in each ecosystem type will be restricted; over the entire region 50 percent of the natural level of old growth forest of each ecosystem type will have to be maintained (or restored where forests have been heavily logged). This translates to an additional 700,000 hectares of forest set aside from logging.
- estuaries, streams, wetlands, and lakes will be afforded more protection with increased forested buffers
- large portions of grizzly bear habitat will be maintained
- First Nations cultural features will be protected, and monumental cedar for First Nations use will be maintained

Funding for Conservation Economy in First Nation territories

A \$120 million conservation financing package to fund conservation management projects and ecologically sustainable business ventures for First Nations was sparked by environmental groups and funded through private philanthropic donations and funds from the B.C. and Canadian governments.

This sum is divided into two funds to be managed and disbursed through Coast Opportunity Funds:

- \$60 million for the Economic Development Fund, to support economically viable and environmentally sustainable businesses. To be disbursed during the next 5-7 years;
- \$60 million for the Conservation Endowment Fund, a permanent endowment whose income will fund grants each year into perpetuity for conservation management in First Nations traditional territories in the Great Bear Rainforest.



Great Bear Rainforest: snapshots in time

During the 1990's industrial logging clearcut large swathes of forest in B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest. Up until 2005 the region remained largely unprotected with just 7 percent (443,000 hectares) of the region protected in parks.

Today 33 per cent of the region (2.1 million hectares) is protected from logging. New logging regulations, based on Ecosystem Based Management, ensure that over the entire region 50 percent of the natural level of old growth forest will have to be maintained (or restored where forests have been heavily logged). The new logging regulations put over 700,000 hectares (1,700,000 acres) of rainforest, outside of protected areas, off limits to logging. The rainforest off limits to logging is representative of all ecosystem types, from valley bottoms where the tallest trees grow to mountain forest types.