

# Watershed Sentinel

## Big Tree Talk

### **BC's ancient trees topple as the Province sits on the results of its Old Growth Strategic Review**

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Old Growth redcedar stump in the Stave Lake area, north of Mission, BC | Photo: Joe Foy

There is a lot of big talk in Victoria these days about protecting the last of BC's big tree forests. Victoria is currently sitting on the findings of a panel, the [Old Growth Strategic Review](#), that travelled the province talking to people about BC's remaining ancient forests outside of parks and what should be done about them — meaning, should they be logged or protected?

You and I will get to see the panel's findings and recommendations when their report is released in the coming months. It does make you wonder why the provincial government needs so much time before breaking the news to us all. We pretty much already know that, over decades of mismanagement, the logging industry has shredded the ancient forests. The question is – are we finally going to save the pitiful remnants that remain?

Meanwhile, in April, an independent report entitled [BC's Old Growth Forest: A Last Stand for Biodiversity](#), by Karen Price, Ph.D., Rachel F. Holt, Ph.D., R.P.Bio and Dave Daust R.P.F., M.Sc., concluded that big tree old growth forests have almost vanished. The report says that older second growth forests should now be protected to try to hold on to the province's collapsing forest biodiversity.

The report also delves into the many ways that our government has sought to make us all think there are lots of big tree old growth forests remaining. They've designated something called Old Growth Management Areas, with some areas containing no actual old growth to manage and all areas just too damn small to make much of a difference. And to back up their claims of abundant old growth, the BC government has counted every shrub and wind-blown stick poking out of a bog or clinging to a mountaintop as old growth. This has of course been going on for decades – broken up only by public protest followed by a spate of protected area designations – then it's back to business as usual wiping out the remaining unprotected ancient forests.

Meanwhile, on the frontlines of forest extinctions, everyday people continue to try to hold the line against a logging industry that seems it will never be satisfied until the last endangered species bites the dust.

In the West Kootenay community of Argenta, extremely rare Southern Mountain caribou in the local old growth forest have [not yet derailed logging plans](#), but people fight on to defend the forest.

In the Lower Mainland, logging of old growth forest that is critical spotted owl habitat continues, even with at last count only three owls remaining in the wild.

The Wilderness Committee recently [mapped 312 BC government logging permits](#) in spotted owl habitat – all of them involving increasingly rare Lower Mainland old growth stands.

From the Sunshine Coast to Vancouver Island to Haida Gwaii, forest defenders are doing their very best, as too many old growth forests continue to slip through their fingers.

So when the BC government finally lets us in on what it intends to do with the remaining old growth, the only big talk I am willing to listen to is about big action to protect every shred of old growth big tree forests that remain, backed up with big action to protect older second growth forests as well.

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Joe Foy is the protected areas campaigner for the Wilderness Committee.