

**BC  
VOTES  
May 12  
2009**

**W**hether you are a commuter trying to get to work on time or a parent concerned about safe streets, water and air quality, the environmental policies of the provincial government matter to you.

If you like fishing or camping, the laws that are enacted to protect our parks, forests, rivers and wildlife are important to you too. In fact, we all depend on the environment for everything from clean air, pure water and greenhouse gas storage to recreation, nature appreciation and inspiration for arts and culture. That's why the laws and regulations that are in place to protect our environment impact your life in a thousand different ways every day.

British Columbians often rate our province as one of the most beautiful places on Earth. One of the amazing things about this place is how much of it is owned by all of us, not by some big corporation. Thanks to the foresight of previous generations, 94% of BC is still public land, managed by the Provincial, Municipal and First Na-

**If we could create a future we all want, what would it look like?**

tion's governments on behalf of and for the benefit of everyone.<sup>1</sup>

This includes most of the trees that feed our lumber mills, the mountains where minerals are found, the electricity that powers our homes and factories, and the rivers and streams that nurture our wild salmon. We own the clean drinking water and beautiful wilderness landscapes that sustain our bodies and spirit as well as our wildlife and our tourism industry. Even our agricultural lands, which tend to be in private hands, are protected for the common good within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

But what about the future? If we could create a future we all want, what would it look like?

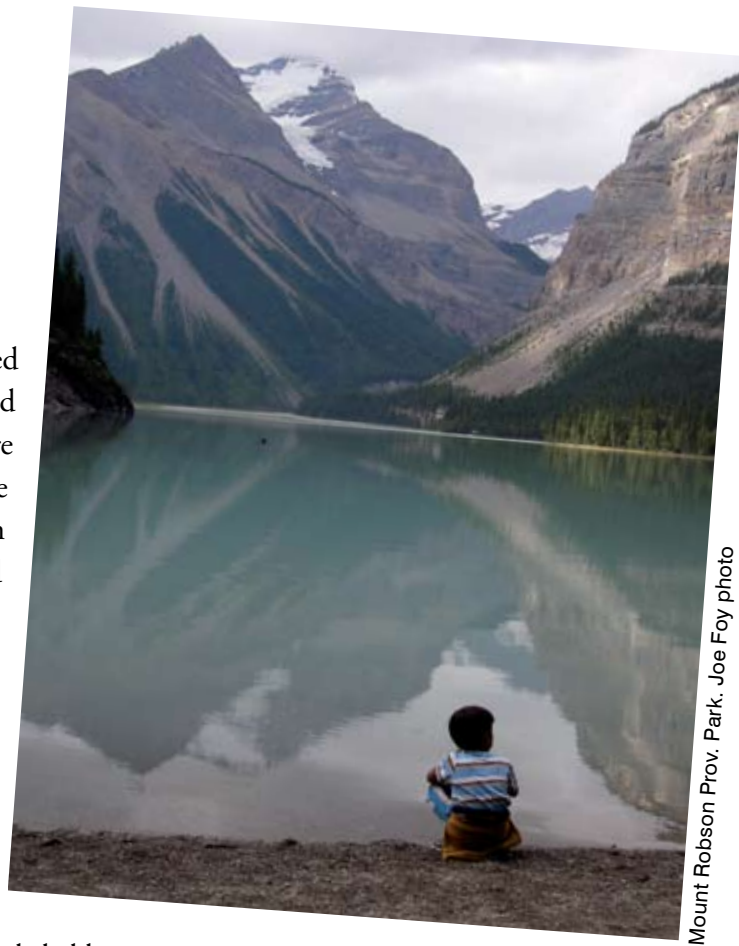
Certainly British Columbians value these natural public assets and want a future where those that have

been damaged are repaired and what remains are conserved for the next generation – as healthy and vibrant as we inherited them. Old-growth forests and wildlife can be protected, wild salmon allowed to thrive, public lands held for all our benefit, and policies on climate, water and air can be put in place that ensure our continued good health. As long as we collectively own the source of our good fortune, we own the future.

Read on to find out about the key environmental policy areas that can help make this future we all want come true. In the run up to the coming provincial election, plan to

attend your local all-candidates meetings, and ask the candidates where they stand on these issues. Help inform others by volunteering with the Wilderness Committee to distribute this newspaper in your community.

Most importantly, on Tuesday, May 12 make sure you vote like the future depends on you... because it really does.



Mount Robson Prov. Park. Joe Foy photo





# wildlife



## Strong, effective provincial endangered species law

There are many different ways to measure wealth, ranging from the rate of economic growth to the size of one's bank account. In the latter category, we are truly blessed, as BC has the largest environmental "bank" of any province.

British Columbia is home to 76% of Canada's bird species, 70% of the nation's freshwater fish species and 66% of its butterfly species.<sup>2</sup>

Grizzly bears, spotted owls and killer whales are just some of the wildlife found in our rugged province. But, unfortunately, these species are also just a few of the over 1,600 species deemed to be "at risk" in BC – a club

nobody wants to belong to.<sup>3</sup>

With our vibrant wildlands, why are there so many endangered species in BC? It's because BC is one of only two provinces in Canada (Alberta is the other) without a law to protect species at risk. In our province, species are left to fend for themselves against climate change, pollution, urban sprawl, invasive species, and loss of habitat from oil and gas exploration, logging and mining.

Introducing a provincial law to protect species at risk is a smart investment in the future. Protecting wetlands for species like the red-legged frog, old-growth forests for the

spotted owl, and rivers for wild salmon helps ensure a healthy environment for wildlife. It also provides clean air, fresh water and pro-

tection against climate change.

Polling shows that over 80% of British Columbians support a strong endangered species law.<sup>4</sup> Everyday citizens obviously understand that if BC's endangered species are to survive they need a law that is based on peer-reviewed science, that will protect wildlife and the habitat they need to live and breed, and that recognizes that healthy ecosystems are essential to healthy human societies and economies. The provincial government needs to honour these concerns and enact a strong law to protect BC's species at risk.



Grizzly bear. John E. Marriott photo  
Saw-whet owl. Jared Hobbs photo



### What's missing in this picture?

BC and Alberta are the only 2 provinces in Canada with no Endangered Species Legislation.



BC has over **1,600** species at risk

A mere 4% of BC's species at risk receive legal listing under provincial laws. Canada's federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) offers little help, as it only applies to federal lands, which cover 1% of the land in British Columbia.



# wild salmon



## Salmon farms out of the ocean

The BC government is putting wild Pacific salmon, the backbone of the BC coast, at risk of extinction. First Nations, coastal communities and tourism – not to mention forests, killer whales, grizzlies and other wildlife – all depend on healthy wild salmon runs.

One major threat to wild salmon, the marine environment and human health is "open-net cage" salmon farming. Peer reviewed scientific studies indicate that parasitic sea lice emanating from salmon farms infect vulnerable juvenile wild salmon that swim past the farms during their migration from their home streams to the sea.

Recent studies reveal up to 95% mortality<sup>5</sup> and predict extinction within eight years for wild pink salmon populations on the mid coast linked to salmon farm sea lice.<sup>6</sup> Other preliminary studies show sea lice infecting wild salmon and herring near salmon farms in northern Georgia Strait, along the migration route of runs of the largest salmon river in the world, the Fraser River. This may be contributing to the reduced wild salmon returns on

the Fraser in recent years.<sup>7</sup>

There is also a "global loss of protein" associated with salmon farming, since it takes two to eight kg of wild fish (ground into feed) to raise just one kg of farmed salmon, a carnivore, thus making farming them inefficient and unsustainable.<sup>8</sup> Raw sewage, toxic pesticides, antibiotics and other drugs used to raise salmon spread to marine life and onto your dinner plate.<sup>9</sup>

A groundbreaking February 2009 BC Supreme Court decision has given the BC government a year to completely transfer all management of salmon farms to the federal government who are legally obliged to protect wild salmon.<sup>10</sup> Salmon farming company Marine Harvest, which participated in

the court case as an "intervener", is appealing this decision.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of the outcome of an appeal, the BC government needs to commit to protecting wild salmon by not approving any new salmon farming licences or production expansions, and immediately removing salmon farms from the ocean, starting with those on wild salmon migration routes.

Finally, the provincial and federal governments need to

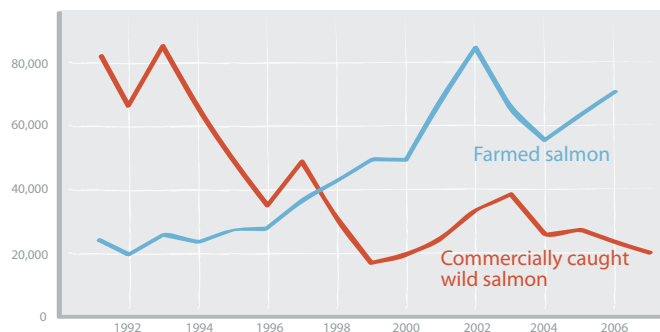
cooperate to completely phase out of salmon farming over the next four years, and must ensure wild salmon and their stream habitat is enhanced and protected from land-based threats such as mining, forestry and hydropower.



Salmon farm. Jeremy Sean Williams photo  
Pacific salmon. Wayne Lynch photo



### Salmon farming production versus commercial salmon catch in BC (tonnes)



Source: Fisheries and Oceans Canada — Statistical Services





# wild lands



## Protect old-growth forests and jobs

From the spruce forests of the north, to the “pocket desert” in the South Okanagan, to the coastal rainforests, BC is home to the most ecologically diverse wilderness remaining in Canada.

Governments of all political stripes have helped protect some of this legacy by creating parks and protected areas around the province. But in our most iconic wilderness – the big-treed rainforests of BC’s south coast – the pace of development has far out-stripped protection. One hundred years of clearcut logging has eliminated three-fourths of the old-growth forests on Vancouver Island and BC’s Southwest Mainland.<sup>12</sup>

The consequences of losing our old-growth have been many: a large and

growing list of endangered species, muddied drinking water, destroyed salmon streams, lost recreational opportunities and First Nations cultural resources, massive amounts of carbon released into the atmosphere, and thousands of BC mill workers’ jobs eliminated.

That’s why the Wilderness Committee, alongside a vocal and determined citizens’ movement, has been calling on government to end old-growth logging in southern BC and the export of unprocessed “raw” logs.

While this may sound like a difficult transition, countries as diverse as New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines have already banned logging in old-growth forests, and instead are logging

second-growth or even third-growth forests with positive results for biodiversity conservation.<sup>13</sup> Before our old-growth rainforests are destroyed, the next BC government needs to embrace a win-win solution

that protects both forests and forest jobs.

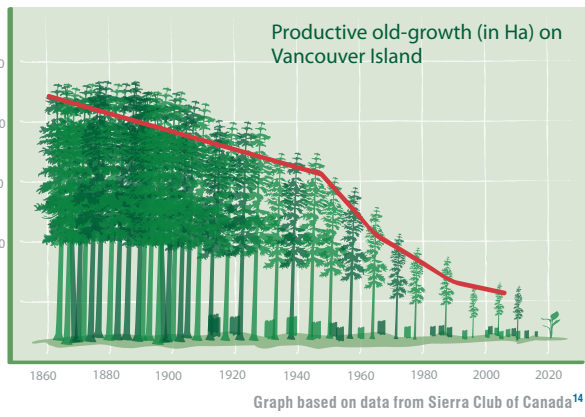
At the same time, other areas of the province still need protection.

Land-use planning processes currently underway, like the Lillooet Planning Process, need to expand protection for areas like the South Chilcotin Mountains and Lost Valley. Other regions, such as the Fraser Valley, have never had a land-use planning process, and need one to ensure protection for special wild places like Statu Lake as well as the areas north and west of Manning Park. Finally, land-use planning processes also need to take into account First Nations planning processes and their candidate areas for protection – like the Tla-o-qui-aht’s proposed Tribal Park in Clayoquot Sound.

With foresight, BC’s next government can ensure our critically threatened old-growth rainforests, and the rest of our wildlands, receive the protection they need to stay healthy for the future.



Endangered giant redcedar, Upper Walbran Valley. Jeremy Sean Williams photo Ancient Douglas-fir, Upper Walbran Valley. Ken Wu photo



# public lands



## Press pause on private power

British Columbia is unique in Canada not only for diverse ecosystems and its wealth of species, but also for the fact that 94% of the land is still publicly owned. This gives the provincial government a tre-

mendous opportunity to manage the land base for both the environment and the public good.

There are many issues to be addressed to properly manage public lands. These include reinvigorating our provincial Ministry of Environment, which has seen heavy budget cuts since the late 1990s.<sup>15</sup> In 2002, these cuts extended to BC Parks, and while attempts to put resorts into parks by citizen outcries in the last few years, we still need to get our park rangers off the endangered species list.

BC has one of lowest ratios of rangers per hectare of any parks system in Canada.<sup>16</sup>

However, no threat to public lands looms larger than that

posed by the unchecked explosion of so-called “run of river” private power projects. The rush to stake our streams and rivers was triggered by the 2002 Energy Plan when the provincial government forbade publicly owned BC Hydro from producing new sources of electricity while at the same time opening the door to the privatization of our rivers by “Independent Power Producers” (or IPPs).<sup>17</sup>

Since 2002, around 600 of BC’s rivers and creeks have been staked by private companies.<sup>18</sup> The burden of numerous IPPs on the landscape means that power produced this way cannot truly be called ‘green’ power. A typical project requires river diversion, dams, logging, powerhouses, and many kilometres

of roads and transmission lines.<sup>19</sup> Astoundingly, the government evaluates each project as a “one-off” without assessing the cumulative impact of multiple projects on the land. For instance, the Sea-to-Sky corridor could

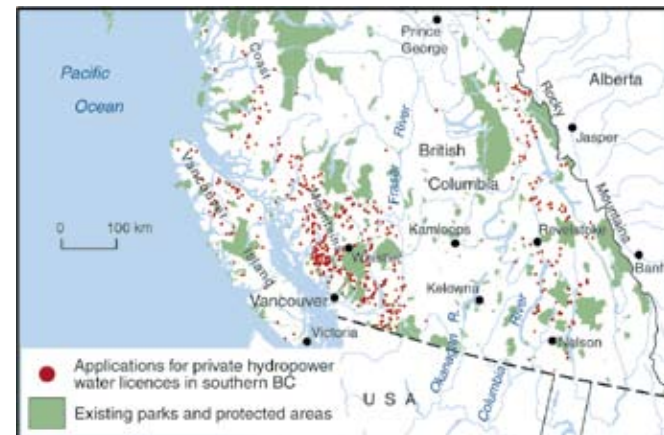
see 112 of these private power projects developed between Horseshoe Bay and Pemberton.<sup>20</sup>

Clean green energy is the way of the future, but it must be done correctly. To ensure the best benefit for the public and our energy security, new power generation projects must meet all four of these criteria:

- regionally planned,
- environmentally appropriate,
- acceptable to First Nations and
- publicly owned

Until structures and systems can be put in place to make sure these criteria can be met, the BC government needs a moratorium on this unchecked power play.

### Independent Power Producers privatizing our rivers.



Garibaldi Prov. Park. Michael Wheatley photo  
Goat River. Paul Morgan photo







# healthy communities



## Time to stop highway expansion

Clean air, clean water, an abundant and healthy food supply, and climate friendly sustainable local economies don't happen by accident. They are the result of careful planning. The BC government has taken some positive steps in the right direction with the introduction of a carbon tax and a strong commitment to reduce climate-changing emissions by 30% by 2020.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, these commitments are being contradicted by proposals for unsustainable transportation projects and other initiatives that would negatively impact community and environmental health. The multi-billion dollar federal-provincial Gateway Project proposal is the antithesis of the "smart growth" that leads to liveable communities.

Gateway includes new and expanded port infrastructure, highways, bridges, rail yards and container terminals, all to facilitate the import of more disposable goods from overseas and the export of more of B.C.'s non-renewable resources. Gateway would also involve paving over acres of our best farmland, plus increasing the number of cars and trucks on the road, and big ships in our ports.

All of this would result in an estimated 30% increase of carbon emis-

sions<sup>22</sup>, plus increased pollution while reducing our food security.

The BC government should redirect funds from the Gateway project to investment in a comprehensive public transit plan that helps the Lower Mainland meet provincial commitments to reduce carbon emissions.

To stay on track with the BC Transit Plan, our provincial government must put forward a minimum of \$450 million in annual operating funds. This, along with protecting local food security by placing a hard line around the Agricultural Land Reserve, could be the cornerstone of creating thousands of new jobs in a sustainable BC economy and a legacy of healthy communities for years to come.

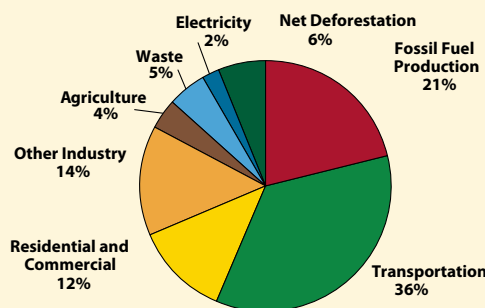
Another growing concern for communities is recent proposals to burn garbage in incinerators and the increased exposure to air-borne toxins



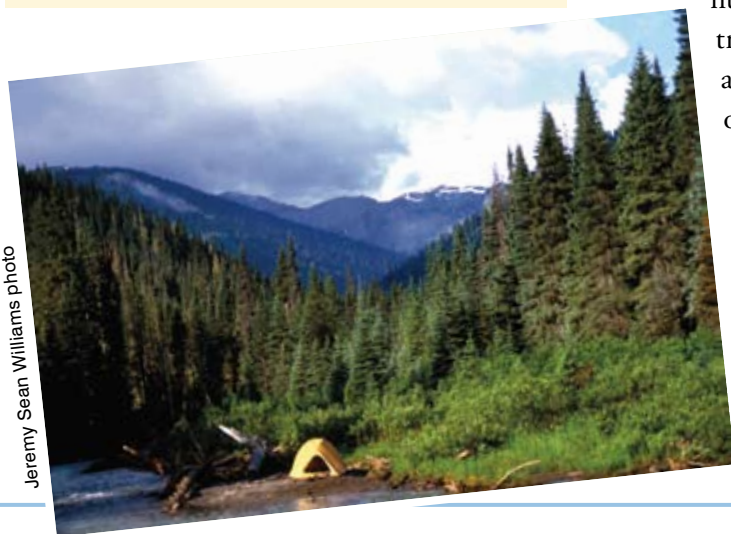
Joe Foy photos

that end up in water, soil and our bodies as a result of burning garbage. Instead of increasing our exposure to harmful toxins we should be banning all substances listed by the Canadian Environmental Protection Agency as Class 1 toxins. Better provincial labelling laws are also needed so consumers can make informed decisions to protect themselves from toxins.

BC greenhouse gas emissions (2006)



Source: LiveSmart BC<sup>23</sup>



Jeremy Sean Williams photo

# ACT ...like the future depends on you!

step one

## Get Informed

Visit the website of the major parties to know where they stand on these issues, and for information on all-candidates meetings in your electoral district.

BC Liberals [bcliberals.com](http://bcliberals.com)  
BC New Democrats [bcndp.ca](http://bcndp.ca)  
Green Party of BC [greenparty.bc.ca](http://greenparty.bc.ca)

step two

## Inform Others

If you like what you've read, why not lend a hand? Phone today to join the Vote Wild! team.

In the Vancouver area: (604) 683-8220  
Outside Vancouver: 1-800-661-9453

You can also download copies of our Vote Wild! report at [wildernesscommittee.org/vote09](http://wildernesscommittee.org/vote09)

step three

## VOTE

Citizens only get to vote every four years so make sure you don't miss your chance. If you're not already registered, or aren't sure if you're registered, visit the Elections BC web site at [elections.bc.ca](http://elections.bc.ca) now. You can find out where your voting station is from their web site too!

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# YES! Here's my support for your public education campaign.

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