



VANCOUVER ISLAND'S

LAST STAND



IT'S TIME FOR ACTION IN VANCOUVER ISLAND'S FORESTS



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Vancouver Island on Canada's west coast has some of the most spectacular rainforest landscapes in the world. It also has a rich and extensive history of First Nations utilizing the resources found in them. It would make sense then, that British Columbia would be a world leader in forest policy – ensuring adequate conservation of these priceless ecosystems.

But on BC's south coast, political leaders aren't seeing the forest for the trees.

On Vancouver Island – the territory of Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth and Coast Salish Nations – about 90 per cent of the most productive (biggest trees) low-elevation old-growth forest has been removed.¹ Despite this scarcity, the BC government continues to permit the business-as-usual logging of remaining old-growth forests.

Old-growth forests are a non-

renewable resource, and leadership from the provincial government is desperately needed to protect them.

The profound importance of Vancouver Island's ancient rainforests simply cannot be overstated. In these rare forests, thousand-year-old trees tower over lush undergrowth, where diverse plant and animal species flourish. These intact ecosystems provide the greatest abundance of traditional resources and medicines utilized by Indigenous peoples – the original stewards of these amazing forests.

Old-growth stands provide habitat for many endangered species, such as marbled murrelets, northern goshawk and Roosevelt elk. Some of these species can only thrive in forests that haven't been logged. These forests

also play a critical role in BC's multi-billion dollar tourism industry.

Perhaps most importantly, coastal temperate rainforests are among the best carbon storehouses on the planet, and are some of our best assets in the fight against climate change. Old-growth forests can store more carbon than younger forests, keeping it out of the atmosphere where it destabilizes the climate and jeopardizes the future of millions of people.

The ecological picture on Vancouver Island is grim, and the economic outlook isn't much better. Multi-national corporations dominate the forest sector and the BC government has allowed for dramatic increases in raw log exports, which has killed jobs and hurt forestry-based

communities up and down the coast. Every year, these corporations send millions of cubic metres of raw wood² – enough to build more than 100,000 new homes³ – overseas without adding any value here in BC.

We need increased conservation of old-growth and other sensitive forests. But justice for forestry workers and the families and communities they support must also be part of revamped forest policy on Vancouver Island.

We can find a way to protect old-growth forests that works for ecosystems, forestry jobs, First Nations and local communities.

There are positive models of conservation and alternative forest management from Clayoquot Sound to the Great Bear Rainforest.

What's missing is the political will to implement these models on a wider scale. That's where you come in. Read this publication to learn more about the state of Vancouver Island's old-growth, and then join the movement to protect these ancient and endangered forests!



Photos top: Ancient trees in the Walbran Valley (Torrance Coste), Clearcut in the Walbran Valley, Vancouver Island (TJ Watt/Ancient Forest Alliance), **left:** Unprotected Castle Giant in the Walbran Valley (Shane Johnson).

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

Resilient but non-renewable

So far, coastal rainforests have been less severely impacted by climate change than other forests. That's because the proximity to the ocean has a moderating effect on climate change and climate impacts like drought, insects and disease. Intact old-growth forests also have a far better chance at maintaining many of their species and adapting to some degree of global warming.⁴ Jurisdictions that set greater amounts of their landscapes off-limits to industrial development will be more resilient in a changing climate than areas where natural systems have been largely altered. Forests cut now will grow back in a dramatically different climate than the forests they are replacing – this means that our remaining old-growth forests are a non-renewable resource.

For decades, the logging industry told us that cutting down and replanting forests was the best way to store climate-changing carbon, because younger trees have a faster rate of growth.⁵ In recent years however, studies have shown that older, larger trees can absorb and store more carbon than younger trees.^{6,7}

The BC government must factor the carbon-storage potential of Vancouver Island's old-growth forests into both its forest management and climate change strategies.

On Vancouver Island, apart from reducing our fossil fuel emissions, the most significant way we can fight climate change is to leave old-growth forests intact, allow logged forests to grow older and end climate-harming practices such as slash burning.

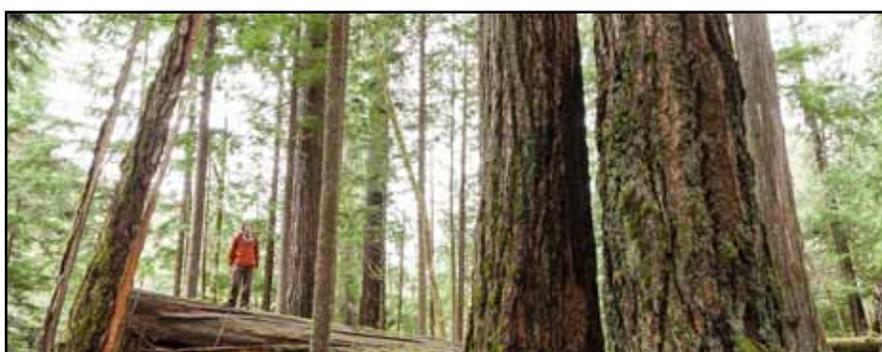


Photo: Koksilah River Grove (TJ Watt/Ancient Forest Alliance).

THE STATE OF THE FOREST ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

Levels of protection for coastal rainforest vary greatly along the BC coast. As a result of the final implementation of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements, 85 per cent of the mostly intact rainforest on BC's Central and North Coast is now permanently off-limits to logging, through a combination of protected areas and strict logging rules. The protected areas represent the full range of the region's forest ecosystems and habitat values.⁸

On Vancouver Island, where the vast majority of the ancient rainforest has already been logged, only 13 per cent of the land base is protected.

Large portions of these protected areas contain non-forest landscapes. Even less (eight per cent) of the Island's productive forest ecosystems are protected, and just three per cent of the valley-bottom rainforests – which contain the biggest and tallest trees – are protected.⁹

Other lands designated for special management by the provincial government, such as Old-Growth Management Areas (OGMAs), cover

only small areas and rarely protect the most endangered ecosystems. Some ecosystems, such as old-growth coastal Douglas-fir, have been reduced to one per cent of their original extent in BC.¹⁰

A 2015 Sierra Club BC analysis showed that almost half of the 155 landscape units on Vancouver Island and the south coast of BC have lost over 70 per cent of their productive old-growth rainforest.¹¹ (Landscape units are large areas of land used in long-term resource management planning.) This threshold is a serious concern, because scientists say ecosystems should retain at least 30 per cent of their old-growth so that wildlife species can continue to survive.

Large parts of Vancouver Island's rainforest are in an ecological emergency, with many species on the brink of disappearing. Unfortunately the BC government is not giving this emergency the attention it deserves.

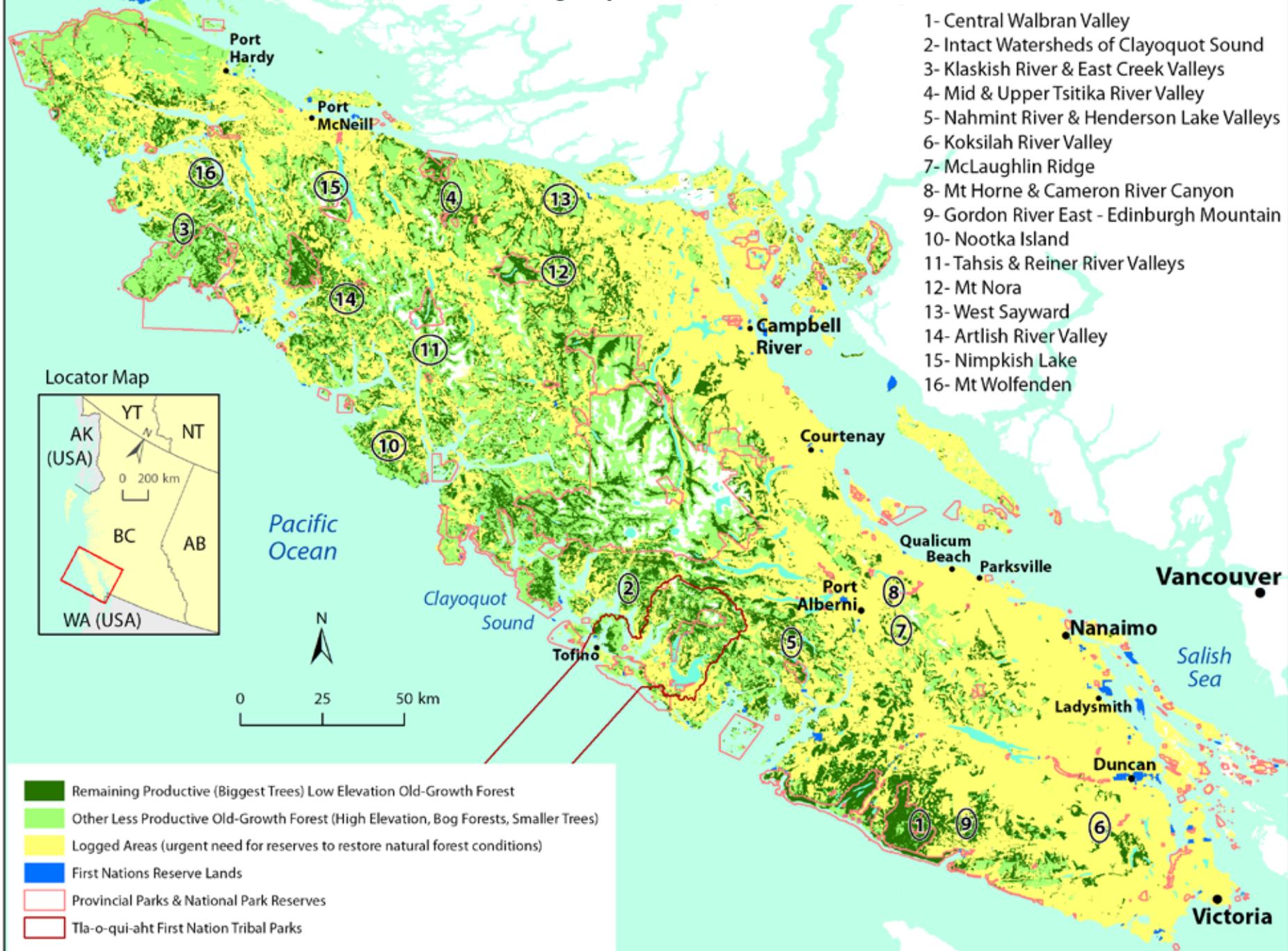


Photo: Pacific treefrog (Michael Wheatley).



Photo: White lily (Michael Wheatley).

Some Ecologically Valuable Areas to be Considered for Protection and Restoration



CLAYOQUOT SOUND:

A green island in a sea of clearcuts

Across Vancouver Island, the vast majority of forest has been clearcut or fragmented by industrial logging — with the exception of one region.

On the Island's west coast, Clayoquot Sound

– a series of deep valleys, long inlets and hidden bays – stands as it has for millennia.

This area contains the densest concentration of intact old-growth valleys on Vancouver Island.



Photo: Mearns Island, Clayoquot Sound (Adrian Dorst).

The unique state of this region is due largely to the power of the Indigenous peoples who have lived here since time immemorial. Clayoquot Sound is comprised of the unceded territories of the Hesquiaht, Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, who have fended off industrial destruction on much of their lands and waters. Despite their vigilance, a number of intact valleys lack



Photo: Recent logging in Kennedy Flats, Clayoquot Sound (Joe Foy).

legal protection from commercial logging.

The Tla-o-qui-aht, whose territory encompasses the mountains, lakes and inlets surrounding the town of Tofino, have pioneered the concept of tribal

parks by declaring land management areas based on their authority and traditional teachings.¹²

In 2015, the *Hawiih* (Hereditary Chiefs) of the Ahousaht First Nation declared

a moratorium on industrial logging in their territory, a step that could set the stage towards a lasting conservation solution for the region's remaining unprotected valleys.¹³

Clayoquot Sound is also an integral region in the history of the environmental movement: the "War in the Woods" protests here in 1993 marked the largest act of peaceful civil disobedience in Canadian history.

Together with other environmental organizations, Sierra Club BC and the Wilderness Committee are working to support the conservation vision of the First Nations in Clayoquot Sound, and are advocating for a lasting solution that protects this renowned ecosystem.

of the Pacheedaht First Nation, who have stewarded the forest for thousands of years.

In 2015, after learning of logging company Teal Jones' plans to cut into the heart of the Walbran, the Wilderness Committee and Sierra Club BC warned the company and the provincial government that this could incite a significant conflict like the one that arose in this same valley in the early 1990s.

The government and Teal Jones ignored the calls from thousands of citizens to halt old-growth logging and protect the Central Walbran Valley. Logging began in late 2015, just outside the Central Walbran, and blockades began shortly after.

We are calling on the BC government to immediately protect the 486-hectare core area of the Central Walbran Valley, and preserve the remaining unprotected rainforest of the Walbran.

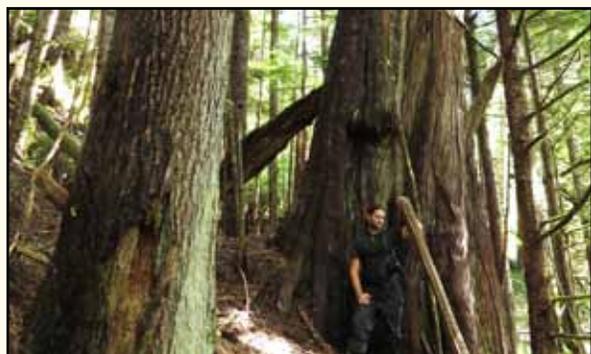


Photo: Old-growth trees in Walbran Valley (Torrance Coste).

OLD-GROWTH INTEGRAL TO INDIGENOUS CULTURE

by Joe Martin, Tuu tuu qwis naw shilth, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation



The ancient rainforest is a very important part of the world's ecosystems.

Indigenous people have always held these forests sacred as a place to go for connection to the natural world. They are also a very important place for gathering the traditional medicines our people depend on.

We believe that everything is connected, and that these rainforests provide one of life's most important ingredients: good clean water, on which all life depends.

Our teachings say that when we use anything from the forest, we do so with great care and the utmost respect!

When we select trees for any use, we do it with much respect, making certain that there are no eagle nests or wolf or bear dens close by. When we take a tree, we are sure to use the entire tree – every part of it. This too becomes important when we select trees.

These old-growth forests are where the songs and dances and teachings of natural laws were conceived and used in the different ceremonies in our culture. The songs and dances of every creature and the teachings of every natural law come from here, so ensuring the survival of these forests is very, very important for us.



Photos: Ancient cedar cut in Klanawa Valley (TJ Watt/Ancient Forest Alliance), Canoe carving in Clayoquot Sound (Layla Cuucqa Rorick).



THE CENTRAL WALBRAN VALLEY:

Southern Vancouver Island's last stand

Large, intact tracts of old-growth rainforest are rare, and on southern Vancouver Island, the Central Walbran Valley stands alone.

On a part of the Island where the landscape has been torn apart by industrial logging, the Walbran is now the only contiguous prime ancient forest large enough to provide habitat for healthy populations of endangered species in this part of the Island. **Much of the valley remains unprotected, and the clearcuts are moving closer to some the most magnificent stands.**

The Walbran is just a few hours outside of Victoria, and can be accessed by logging road from both Port Renfrew and Lake Cowichan. This valley is in the unceded territory

RAW LOG EXPORTS:

A made-in-BC problem that's only gotten worse

The controversial practice of shipping raw logs (completely unprocessed tree trunks) overseas has been in place for

years. Exporting raw logs provides the lowest possible economic value for BC communities, starves local mills of timber and extinguishes forestry jobs.

Recently, the scale of the problem has skyrocketed. **BC now exports more than five million cubic metres of unprocessed wood every year,** with record-breaking raw log exports occurring in the last five years.¹⁴

If we put all the raw logs BC exported in 2015 onto logging trucks and lined those trucks up end to end, they would stretch from Vancouver to Thunder Bay,

Province	Total harvest (m ³)	Total jobs	Forest cut to create one job (m ³)
BC	71,135,000	58,300	1,220
Ontario	12,600,000	43,800	288

Interprovincial Forestry Comparison, 2012 Data. Source: Statistics Canada.

Ontario. That's enough wood to build well over 100,000 homes.

The economic impact of raw log exports is all too apparent. British Columbia is the biggest exporter of raw logs of all Canadian provinces, and **BC's forest industry creates less jobs and revenue for every tree cut than any other province.** To create the same amount of money and the same amount of jobs as Ontario or Quebec's forest sectors, BC cuts down more than four times as many trees.¹⁵

Sending trees harvested in BC to BC mills will create more jobs in this province, allow us to reduce the amount we log annually and give forests more time to rejuvenate.

Having the most inefficient forest industry in the country may be acceptable to the BC government, but it's unacceptable for British Columbians. **It's time for a ban on raw log exports in BC.**



Photo: Shipping raw logs to Asia (Ron Watts/All Canada Photos).

WANTED: A new conservation plan for Vancouver Island's rainforest

A comprehensive conservation strategy for Vancouver Island must begin with immediate steps to safeguard remaining intact areas. This must be followed by expedited planning to restore forest in all areas of the Island where old-growth rainforest ecosystems are at high risk of losing the species that rely on them.

Internationally, conservation scientists have introduced a principle that says "nature needs half." This suggests that we should maintain 50 per cent of natural ecosystems for species habitat and to safeguard the planet's life support systems.

To get there, the BC government must end industrial logging of endangered old-growth and ban raw log exports.

Sierra Club BC and the Wilderness Committee advocate for a new land-use planning process that prioritizes ecological health in forest ecosystems, First Nations land rights and climate change. Based on the review of the best available science, we recommend setting aside half of Vancouver Island's rainforest through a combination of additional protected areas, restoration areas and a new natural forest designation for forests that should not be logged.

This strategy could be guided by mechanisms similar to those used in the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. While the Great Bear Rainforest is different than Vancouver Island from a socio-economic perspective, the conflict between conservation and logging interests is similar

and can be solved using a similar, science-based approach.

Another option is the tribal park model, currently championed by First Nations like the Tla-o-qui-aht in Clayoquot Sound. It's time for our leaders to officially recognize this innovative and powerful First Nations-led land-use model.

We are calling on the BC government to make forest health a priority – instead of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals – and to protect and restore forests as habitat, intact watersheds and carbon sinks. This way, we can reduce carbon emissions instead of increasing them.

Immediate action will give forest-dependent species a better chance to adapt to the changing climate. In the era of climate change, carbon storage must be an integral element of forest management in BC. Methods like longer harvesting cycles, selective logging and the elimination of slash burning and wood waste must be prioritized to reduce carbon losses.

With improved forest management, BC can create forestry jobs tied to reducing carbon emissions, which could replace jobs in climate-changing fossil-fuel industries. By prioritizing forestry over LNG, we can build sustainable livelihoods in an industry that stabilizes rather than jeopardizes our collective future.

If the BC government supports this vision and reduces the amount of forest cut per year to a realistic, sustainable level, they can save our rainforests and ensure forestry jobs for future generations.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: Ensuring Adequate Protection of the Ancient Rainforest

While overall protection of Vancouver Island's rainforest is inadequate, there are some important protected areas that provide habitat for endangered species, including western toads and northern goshawks. These include protected areas in Clayoquot Sound, the Brooks Peninsula on the North Island and Carmanah-Walbran in the South.

In addition to this, there are thousands of hectares of unprotected old-growth rainforest still standing on the Island and on BC's South Coast – much of it adjacent to existing protected areas. Setting these unprotected old-growth areas off-limits to logging would improve both the amount and continuity of conservation areas. This connectivity is very important for the long-term survival of wildlife species.

The BC government must move quickly to protect the last remaining intact rainforest valleys on the Island. These include ancient forests in Clayoquot Sound, the unprotected Klaskish Valley (including East Creek) and the partly unprotected Central Walbran Valley. Preserving these areas is of paramount importance in order to restore north-south connectivity between intact rainforests.

Other smaller but similarly important areas with intact rainforest are: Mt. Wolfenden, Nimpkish Lake, Tsitika River, Artlish River, West Sayward, Mount Nora, Tahsis and Leiner Rivers, Nootka Island, Nahmint and Henderson Lakes, Mt. Horne, McLaughlin Ridge, Koksilah River and Gordon River East/Edinburgh Mountain Ancient Forest.



Photo: Logging at McLaughlin Ridge (WC files).

TAKE ACTION

Please write to BC's Premier and Minister of Forests and ask them to commit to:

- A conservation plan for Vancouver Island's rainforest, which immediately protects endangered old-growth and restores second-growth forest to ensure species habitat, clean water, clean air and support for a diverse economy (including sectors such as tourism)
- Sustainable, value-added forestry jobs in coastal communities and an end to raw-log exports
- Saving our best carbon sink by ensuring healthy forest management and phasing out destructive and climate-harming clearcut logging, slash burning and wood waste



Photo: Sustainable forestry rally in Duncan, BC (Torrance Coste).

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