



Andrew Wright photo

# GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST UPDATE MAY 2010

Key milestones achieved March 2009 and Five-Year Plan 2009 – 2014

## A GLOBAL TREASURE AND CONSERVATION MODEL

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, after years of protests<sup>1</sup>, markets campaigns, land use planning<sup>2</sup>, and negotiations, a historic agreement was reached between environmental organizations, logging companies, First Nations communities and the British Columbia government.

1 From Conflict to Collaboration: The Story of the Great Bear Rainforest: [forestethics.org/downloads/WWFpaper.pdf](http://forestethics.org/downloads/WWFpaper.pdf)

2 Central Coast [gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/cencoast/index.html](http://gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/cencoast/index.html)  
North Coast [gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/ncoast/index.html](http://gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/ncoast/index.html)

## EBM: State of forest protection in the Great Bear Rainforest 2009

During the 1990's industrial logging clearcut large swathes of forest in the 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 in parks, conservancies and biodiversity, mining and tourism areas. As part of the March 31 2009 Agreement, new logging regulations, based on Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM), ensure that at least 50 percent of the natural level of old growth forest will be maintained (or restored where forests have been heavily logged) over the entire region. The new logging regulations essentially placed another 700,000 hectares (1,700,000 acres) of rainforest which is outside of protected areas, off limits to logging. The range of rainforest lands off limits to logging is representative of all ecosystem types, from valley bottoms where the tallest trees grow to mountain forest types.

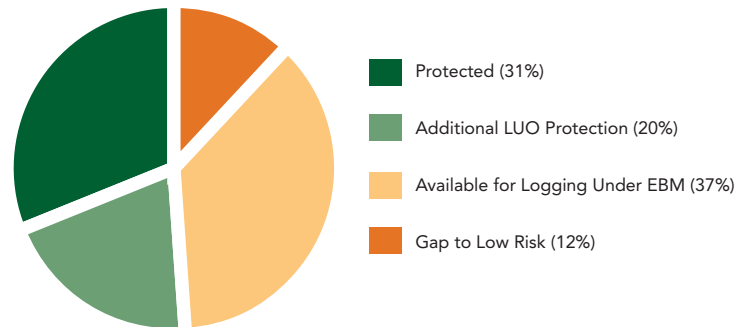
### New conservation measures critically delayed

As of May 2010, however, new conservation measures that were identified within the March 2009 Agreements as a priority by all parties are critically delayed. A network of forests and critical habitat for five species of conservation concern outside of protected areas were supposed to be mapped and set aside from logging as "reserves" by September 2009. Without these measures a number of these key species, could still be at risk, including grizzly bears, marbled murrelets, mountain goats, northern goshawks and tailed frogs. There should be no approvals of new logging or road permits until these measures are in place. Work continues to bring the process back on track.

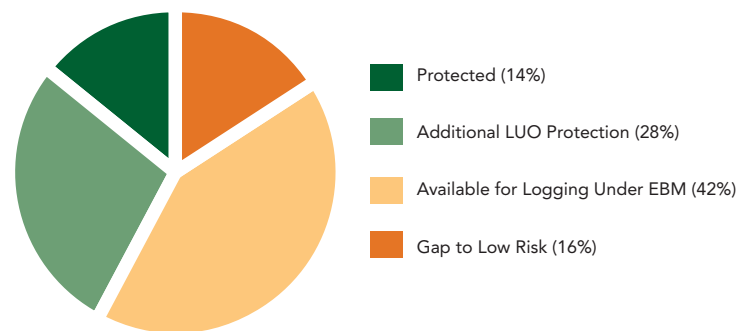
See [www.greatbearwatch.ca](http://www.greatbearwatch.ca) to track the status of reserve planning.

## Forest Conservation: Percentages of forest set aside through protection and regulation

**Graph A.** Percentages of total forest area in the Central and North Coast in protected areas, off limits to logging through 2009 Land Use Objectives, remaining gap to meet low risk, and available for forestry operations under EBM.



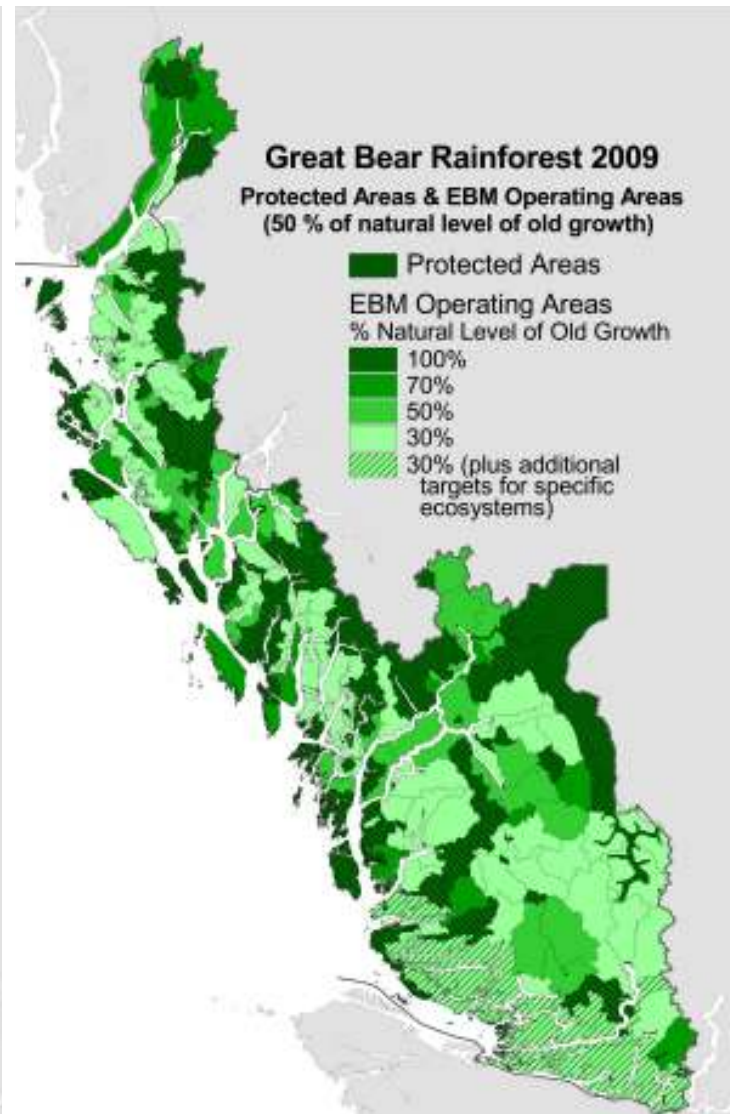
**Graph B.** Percentages of very productive forest area in the Central and North Coast in protected areas, off limits to logging through 2009 Land Use Objectives, remaining gap to meet low risk, and available for forestry operations under EBM.



Graph A shows the percentages of the total forest area in the Central and North Coast (3.7 million hectares) in protected areas (31 per cent), off limits to logging through 2009 Land Use Objectives (20 percent), the remaining gap to meet low risk (12 percent), and that which is available for forestry operations under EBM (37 percent).

For very productive forest types (Graph B, approximately 250,000 hectares) where the tallest trees grow, the gap to ecological health is bigger. Only 42 percent of this forest type is off limits to logging under 2009 Land Use Objectives and another 16 percent will be required to meet low ecological risk.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the relationship between ecological risk and forest productivity in the Great Bear Rainforest see "Assessing the Ecological Health of the Great Bear Rainforest," RSP 2008: [savethegreatbear.org/resources/Reports/assessingecohealth/view](http://savethegreatbear.org/resources/Reports/assessingecohealth/view)



## March 31, 2009: Key Milestones achieved and Five-year plan 2009 - 2014

The 2006 Agreements had four components with key milestones: legislation of more than 2 million hectares protected from logging; 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.

On March 31, 2009 environmental groups along with the B.C. government, industry and First Nations announced implementation of the key milestones and agreement on a five-year plan to achieve the concurrent goals of low ecological risk<sup>4</sup> and high quality of life in communities by 2014.

Key components of the five-year plan include: development of a reserve network outside of the protected areas; logging regulations to be revised upwards to maintain 70 % of natural levels of old growth over time (the regulations currently maintain 50 % of natural levels of old growth over the entire region); further support for transition from an economy based on industrial resource-extraction to a diversified conservation economy; and ongoing science-based collaborative planning. Progress will be assessed through annual reports.

<sup>4</sup> The Coast Information Team (team of science experts) established that low risk to the ecosystem is attained when 70% or more of the natural levels of old forest are maintained ([www.citbc.org](http://www.citbc.org)).

## Key milestones achieved: 2006 – 2009

### Protected areas legislated

2.1 million hectares protected from logging in conservancies, parks and biodiversity areas, covering one third of the Central and North Coast.

### Lighter touch logging implemented

New logging regulations require the maintenance of 50% of the natural level of old growth of all forest ecosystems across the region.

### Funding for Conservation Economy

A \$120 million funding package for conservation management and ecologically sustainable business ventures in First Nation territories.

### New governance and decision-making

First Nations and the BC government have developed a new government-to-government relationship, and mechanisms for collaborative stakeholder involvement.

## Next steps: 2009 – 2014

### Reserve Network

By the end of 2009 or early 2010 an initial reserve network will be developed outside of protected areas, followed by a more detailed reserve network by March 2014.

### Logging regulations amended

By March 2014 logging regulations will be reviewed and amended to achieve the goal of low ecological risk for the forest and key species.<sup>5</sup>

### Building the conservation economy

Transition underway from an economy based on resource-extraction to a diversified conservation economy with a high quality of life in coastal communities.

### Ongoing collaborative planning

Provincial and First Nation governments, environmental organizations and logging companies will engage in collaborative planning guided by a five year work-plan.



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<sup>5</sup> All parties have agreed that the objective of the review will be to concurrently achieve low ecological risk and high human well being and, if this is not possible, seek meaningful increments to both.

# Key milestones achieved March 2009

## NEW PROTECTED AREAS LEGISLATED

2.1 million hectares (5 million acres) in the North and Central Coast<sup>6</sup> - one third of the region - are now protected from logging in Conservancies<sup>7</sup>, parks and Biodiversity, Mining and Tourism Areas<sup>8</sup>. In specific terms:

- 115 Conservancies with a total area of 1,360,000 hectares were legislated between 2006 and 2008
- 21 Biodiversity, Mining and Tourism Areas with a total area of 300,000 hectares were legalized in January 2009
- 18 Class 'A' parks were previously established with a total area of 443,000 hectares

Together, the protected areas in the Central and North Coast comprise:

- 55 percent of estuaries
- 42 percent of wetlands
- 40 percent of known salmon-bearing streams
- 30 percent of all habitat for key species such as northern goshawks, marbled murrelets and grizzly bears
- 34 percent of old growth forest and 39 percent of mature forest.

6 A map that shows all parks, conservancies and biodiversity areas of the region can be found at [savethegreatbear.org/resources/Maps](http://savethegreatbear.org/resources/Maps)

7 conservancy legislation: [leg.bc.ca/38th2nd/3rd\\_read/gov28-3.htm](http://leg.bc.ca/38th2nd/3rd_read/gov28-3.htm)

8 [ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/central\\_north\\_coast/biodiversity.html](http://ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/central_north_coast/biodiversity.html)



On Haida Gwaii, 11 new conservancies were legislated in January 2009, doubling the total protected area on the islands. In other words approximately half a million hectares or half of Haida Gwaii's area is now protected.

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 nearby communities).

Biodiversity, Mining and Tourism 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.

In addition to Conservancies and Biodiversity, Mining and Tourism Areas there are almost 1.3 million hectares designated in three large areas as Grizzly Bear Management Areas. Hunting is prohibited in these areas.

## 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<sup>9</sup>. 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.

9 Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) is an approach to management that results in low risk to ecological integrity (or values), while at the same time promoting human wellbeing. The Ecosystem-Based Management Handbook can be found on the website of the Coast Information Team: [www.citbc.org](http://www.citbc.org)

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 into 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

## SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY WELL-BEING INITIATIVES IN FIRST NATION TERRITORIES

The intent of Ecosystem-Based Management in the Great Bear Rainforest is to achieve ecological health and improve human well-being.<sup>10</sup> A key component of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements and a major contribution towards a higher quality of life in particular in First Nations communities was achieved through Coast Opportunity Funds.<sup>11</sup> This \$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 conservation package is divided into two funds managed and disbursed through the 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 which will fund grants each year into perpetuity for conservation management in First Nations traditional territories in the Great Bear Rainforest.

The Ecosystem-Based Management Handbook identifies the goal to maintain ecological integrity as an overarching context for achieving high levels of human well-being, that implies a commitment to sustainable, cautious resource use.

As part of the collective efforts to implement EBM on the ground the three environmental organizations together with Coastal First Nations facilitate the EBM Learning Forums in different communities along the coast, focusing on wide-ranging topics like management planning for protected areas, conservation financing and the new logging regulations. The environmental organizations also support local First Nations Guardian Watchman programs to ensure that all communities have 'eyes and ears' in their territories to monitor resource use and the state of the environment.

Among other new initiatives the environmental organizations support the creation of the 'Great Bear Training Institute' to increase education opportunities throughout the region.

The three environmental organizations are also supportive of new First Nations tenure arrangements that support the implementation of EBM and First Nations access to resources and revenue.

<sup>10</sup> The EBM Handbook defines EBM as "an adaptive approach to managing human activities that seeks to ensure the coexistence of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems and human communities. The intent is to maintain those spatial and temporal characteristics of ecosystems such that component species and ecological processes can be sustained, and human wellbeing supported and improved."

<sup>11</sup> [www.coastfunds.ca](http://www.coastfunds.ca)

# Environmental organizations and logging companies finding solutions

ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club BC are working with coastal forest companies BCTimber Sales, Howe Sound Pulp and Paper, Catalyst Paper, Interfor and Western Forest Products to support the creation and implementation of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements. 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 benchmarks to implement Ecosystem-Based Management. In the Mid Coast Timber Supply Area three operating companies achieved Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for almost a million hectares within the Great Bear Rainforest in January 2010.



Jens Wieting photo

## *The Great Bear Rainforest Agreements and climate change*

The implementation phase of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements was accompanied by new information about the threats of global warming and the urgency to mitigate and adapt to climate change. All parties involved are becoming increasingly aware of the implications of climate change in the context of the ongoing implementation of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements.

The full implementation of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements could also provide a model to address mitigation (reducing emissions from forests) and adaptation (allowing species space to adapt to global warming). Achieving management to low ecological risk by 2014 will be key to reducing the cumulative stress for ecosystems and protect one of the best carbon storehouses in Canada<sup>12</sup>. Broad support for achieving this goal will greatly depend on access to new incentives for reduced logging like conservation carbon credits as a measure that contributes to mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

<sup>12</sup>"Ecosystem-Based Management in the Great Bear Rainforest, Defense for Climate and Species," RSP 2009. [www.savethegreatbear.org/resources/Reports/climate\\_report\\_03\\_09](http://www.savethegreatbear.org/resources/Reports/climate_report_03_09)



## Outlook

The Great Bear Rainforest Agreements of February 2006 represented an international milestone in large-scale biodiversity conservation. The work of all parties in the following three years ensured substantial and measurable conservation gains leading to March 2009. These same parties agree that transitioning from a resource-based economy to a conservation-based economy will require more time and that further significant steps are required to achieve low ecological risk by 2014.

The five year plan launched in March 2009 calls for the same concerted and collaborative focus by environmental groups, the B.C. Government, the forest industry and First Nations. Only in this way can the overarching and interconnected goals of low ecological risk and high quality of life in communities be achieved.

There remain old and new threats to the Great Bear Rainforest, like the lack of adequate provincial government resourcing, the possible lifting of the oil tanker moratorium, oil and gas exploration, open net salmon farms and trophy hunting of bears. These will have to be addressed to preserve this ecological treasure for future generations.

To track progress implementing the March 2009 Great Bear Rainforest Agreements, visit [www.GreatBearWatch.ca](http://www.GreatBearWatch.ca).

*ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club BC promote conservation options and economic alternatives to industrial logging on British Columbia's Central and North Coast and Haida Gwaii.*

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