

AN OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER JOHN HORGAN AND MINISTER OF FORESTS KATRINE CONROY



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A REQUEST TO PLACE A MORATORIUM ON OLD-GROWTH LOGGING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

January 15, 2021

Dear Premier Horgan and Minister Conroy:

We write to you today out of grave concern for our last and vanishing old-growth forests in British Columbia. In view of the social, cultural and ecological values of these vastly diminished, yet iconic ecosystems, we respectfully request that you place an immediate moratorium on all harvesting of our remaining old-growth forests as a means to save these precious areas of biodiversity and climate change resilience. Old-growth forests have high cultural significance for First Nations and we would ask that their views be considered with equal priority in the decision-making process.

First, an introduction. We are the Ecoforestry Institute Society, the owners and trustees of Wildwood, the longest continuously managed ecoforest on the west coast of North America. Situated in Yellow Point on the east coast of Vancouver Island, Wildwood was previously owned by Merv Wilkinson, who received the Order of BC and the Order of Canada for his pioneering work in ecoforestry. EIS has managed the property since 2001 and gained ownership in 2016. We are proud to hold it in stewardship on behalf of the people of BC.

Wildwood has been harvested since 1945 on a single tree selection basis and according to the practices and principles of ecoforestry. Harvests are conducted while ensuring all ecosystems and wildlife habitats remain intact and functioning. It is a model that has served us well, with Wildwood retaining its old growth legacies over time while providing income from its forest harvesting. It now models a diverse income stream from multiple revenue sources.

We understand all too well how old-growth forests contribute not only to a multitude of cultural and economic returns over generations but also provide those essential life functions – wildlife habitat, oxygen production, carbon storage, water and nutrient recycling – that allow us and our fellow living beings to exist on this planet. We are sure you understand this dynamic as well and how intact forests are inherent to the character and spirit of our great province.

We commend you for committing to adopting all the recommendations in the Gorley/Merkel Old-Growth Report, but your statement that your consultation

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Wildwood is located at
2929 Crane Rd.
Ladysmith, BC

process regarding their recommendations will take place over the next three years is very alarming. There is no doubt that consultations with First Nations and stakeholders are critical and must occur, yet if the clearcutting of our old-growth forests continues during this time, perhaps at even faster rates than ever as industrial forest companies sense oncoming changes, the areas remaining will be significantly diminished. Forestry workers, too, are understandably concerned about their employment futures. Indeed, the United Steel Workers Union and forest communities across BC must be assured of a transition to a new and sustainable future that is independent of the availability of old-growth forest.

We believe that we have come now to a place where we can no longer risk what little remains of old-growth ecosystems. Government has long known the risk to cutting this non-renewable resource, and over time, both the Auditor General and the Forest Practices Board have spoken of the need for innovative approaches and practices on the part of government to preserve these forests. We understand that, historically, government has relied heavily on forestry as an economic revenue stream and job creator, yet the current need for increased taxpayer subsidies and the ongoing industry mechanization guarantees this industry is no longer the economic driver it once was. We argue that the benefits of old-growth forests to our province in terms of their biodiversity, carbon sequestration, tourism and cultural values far outweigh the short-term economic gains to be had by destroying them. We ask that government recognize the irreplaceable resource that it is and protect what little is left for future generations.

So, the crux of the matter is that while your government works on the consultation process to come up with solutions, we must ensure our old-growth forests and the biodiversity that defines them are protected until this process is complete.

We respectfully ask that the Government of British Columbia place an immediate moratorium on all industrial harvesting and development in old growth forests (as defined in the "Priority Actions" section of the Price, Holt, Daust report "BC's Old Growth Forest: A Last Stand for Biodiversity").

EIS has reaped the benefits from a forest that has been managed to protect its Old Growth attributes over time and now provides educational resources to both students and professionals in the discipline of ecoforestry. As well as hosting international visitors, we have been privileged to host several of your staff and meet with your predecessor, Minister Donaldson, all of whom seemed

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impressed with our philosophy, forest management system and with our magnificent Old Growth trees.

We would be happy to share with you our model for ecological forest management and our new initiative with Stz'uminus, Snuneymuxw and other First Nations to create the "Syeyutsus" or "Walking Together" program which combines western science with Indigenous Knowledge to create a holistic approach to forest management.

We would be pleased to meet with you and ministry staff at your earliest convenience for further discussions. We can be reached at admin@ecoforestry.ca or in response to this email.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kindest regards,

Peter Jungwirth, EIS Co-chair, RPF and Wildwood Ecoforester

Barry Gates, EIS Co-chair, Wildwood Forest Manager and Ecoforester

Kathy Code, EIS Vice-chair and Communications Director, Economic Development Strategist

Sharon Chow, EIS Treasurer and Secretary, Education Committee

Dr. Nancy Turner, EIS Education Co-chair, Professor Emeritus, Indigenous Liaison and Ethnobotanist

Erik Piikkila, EIS Education Co-chair and Ecoforester

Cheryl Bancroft, EIS Architectural Designer and Homestead Manager

Stephanie Johnson, EIS Director and Indigenous Liaison

Chris Walther, EIS Director, RPF and Ecoforester