

The Problem

The Bella Coola valley is now faced with the same economic and environmental instability that faced communities further south twenty years. Large corporations moved in, lied and moved on preserving only corporate profits; a succession of governments left only a string of broken promises.

We have identified three key problems with current forest management:

I - Aggressive outside corporations

There is no long-term commitment by corporations to local communities in the Bella Coola region. Crown Zellerbach, Fletcher Challenge, and now Interfor - each successive outside corporation has moved into the area, creamed out the most valuable old-growth, and moved on.

Consider the figures:

- Over 50% of the population of the Bella Coola valley is unemployed.
- over 80% of loggers working in the region are from elsewhere.
- over 90% of the raw logs harvested are shipped 500 kilometers south for processing, leaving few opportunities for local employment by secondary manufacturing.

II - Unsustainable - by anyone's standards

Current industrial logging methods are not sustainable, even by the Ministry of Forests (MoF) own standards. Even the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), a figure based more on calculations than on experience, is currently 47% above the ministry's own definition of sustainable.

III - Loss of ecological integrity upon which we all depend

The government's current Protected Area Strategy (PAS) has been successful in protecting less than 6% of low elevation coastal temperate rainforest. Yet conservation biologist Reed Noss argues that we need 40 - 70% of natural ecosystems to protect biodiversity. Clearly the diversity of life in BC is endangered by current planning policy.

The Forest Action Network is not anti-logging. We understand the way to achieve a healthy local economy and biodiversity through a fundamental change in the way logging is done. Only way that we can achieve both a healthy local economy and biodiversity is through a fundamental change in the way we log.

Outlined in this brochure is a long-term strategy that will not only preserve the unique biodiversity of this province, but will also ensure a stable local economy with full, meaningful employment.

Securing a Land Base

In order to conserve the delicate web of life, while providing a healthy and stable local economy, a conservation biology framework must first be adopted for the province.

Conservation biology is a new approach to the management of our natural resources. A true conservation biologist will assess the area and make ecological decisions based on human demands for resources with respect to sustaining all forms of life. Currently, government resource managers plan the logging of this province and make assessments based on political and economical decisions not ecological decisions. Historically, government resources managers make promises to logging corporations whose main concern is to provide extra dollars rather than to consider sustaining the ecosystem on which we all depend. Corporations and providing export dollars, rather than considering sustaining the ecosystems on which all life depends.

Such planning is undertaken by identifying massive core reserves and interlinking wildlife corridors where absolutely no resource extraction of any kind is permitted.

Core areas must be large enough both to protect evolutionary viable populations of all species, and be able to handle any natural disturbances within them such as fires. This will ensure the full range of successional stages of an ecosystem. Buffer zones surrounding cores can be subjected to subsistence forestry and other low-impact uses. Within this context, ecoforestry would take place in remaining areas of the province.

This approach could be adopted in BC, by assigning all undisturbed areas as core reserves, then identifying wildlife corridors and buffer zones, leaving all other areas open for resource extraction.

But doesn't this mean a big reduction in the amount we cut, leading to job losses?

A massive reduction in the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) is necessary to protect the diversity and balance of species in BC, but this does not mean a reduction in employment levels. Instead of leaving unprotected areas for capital intensive, low employment clearcut harvesting, ecoforestry should be adopted as the only harvesting method. Ecoforestry requires much more labor intensive methods of harvesting. According to Registered Professional Forester Herb Hammond we could provide five to six times the number of jobs currently provided by timber companies simply by decreasing mechanization. This can allow us to maintain current employment levels, allowing us to preserve ALL intact old-growth forest ecosystems left in B.C. in core reserves. With ecoforestry principles applied to impoverished second-growth tree farms, they can be restored over time to a mature, more stable state to produce quality forest products in a truly sustainable manner. In such areas, the existing road infrastructure is ideally suited to access timber, which can be harvested in low impact, low capital intensive methods such as by horse or skidder.

Other benefits of ecoforestry include more stable employment. Also, the skills needed to select and harvest in a manner that takes into account all forest values makes the work more meaningful. This brings one closer to the ecosystem on which we depend and therefore promotes more respect and reverence for it.

Industry continues with its scare-tactics of spurious claims as to the dangers of selective logging. They claim that it is only possible in valley bottom areas (The Cariboo Horse Logging association has logged on up to a 65% slope in the interior), but this is simply industries' way to justify business as usual.

Tenure Reform

The current land tenure system is such that only a handful of large corporations hold the logging rights to most of BC. This has to change. The Tree Farm License and Timber Supply Area system should be scraped, and replaced with small-scale, long-term inter-generational tenure where families or local community consortiums can make a lifetime commitment to a given area.

Checks and balances to harvesting can be incorporated at the community level. It must be a right of the public to appeal on all proposed logging blocks that don't meet ecologically sustainable standards. Community sanctions such as the revoking of cutting rights should be applied where poor forest management is taking place.

Local economies could be further diversified by converting marginal agricultural lands to crops such as hemp and cereal straw to produce more pulp and paper products on a smaller land base. Research and development of renewable, local alternatives to trees for various wood products could also be undertaken.

Value-Added - the key to a sustainable local economy

Even the present government acknowledges that more jobs can be squeezed out of harvested timber by secondary manufacturing of timber before it leaves the local community. But what is needed to reach this goal is legislation that will force full value to be added locally. This means that instead of shipping raw logs out of the local community, finished products such as window frames, furniture and even whole log homes can be produced. The growing demand for eco-certified products worldwide can be met.. Corporate greed is the only reason for B.C. being a primary economy, and diversification to secondary manufacturing is the only solution.

It's Time to Face the Challenge - Retraining and Incentives

An end to the crisis in our forests and a return to truly sustainable living in B.C. is not going to be easy. There is no room for large multi-national companies to practice their cut and run policies in this province. Their

prime objective is short term profit maximization for shareholders, not local economies or the biodiversity upon which all life depends.

When one considers the rather conservative estimate of \$630 million annually the government gives to industry every year (Mascall, 1994), and the possibility of litigation for the countless degraded ecosystems and devastated local economies from cut and run logging, then funding for a massive retraining program for workers can become a reality.

At the present rate of destruction, not only ecological integrity will collapse in the near future, but also economic stability. The question is will the forest industry be transformed before the liquidation of old-growth, when ecological and community stability is still possible? Or after the collapse, with the resulting impoverishment as with the East Coast cod fisheries?

We Need Your Help

The Ecoforestry Solution is one of many FAN campaigns. Our goal is to protect forest ecosystems for all life. Any financial help is much appreciated.

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The Ecoforestry Solution

eco-forest-ry *noun* 1. To log in a truly sustainable manner, with respect for all life.

2. To take only a small amount of timber from a given area, using natural selection methods.

3. To leave enough forest behind to maintain the structural characteristics of an old-growth forest.

3. To log in a way that can provide a stable local economy and full employment.

4. To log only with the consent of both native & non-native communities.

Forest Action Network

The Forest Action Network is concerned about the speed with which old-growth forests are disappearing, as well as *how and where* logging takes place.

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