

# Great Bear Rainforest Agreement

## Three Years Later...

A Follow-up Report to  
"The Destruction Continues"



Forest  
Action  
Network

# Great Bear Rainforest Agreement... Three Years Later...

Forest Action Network

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## The GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

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The Great Bear Rainforest is the world's largest intact temperate rainforest, seven and a half million hectares



Map courtesy of Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter

(almost twenty million acres) in size.<sup>1</sup> Lying on the west coast of Canada, it is home to grizzly bears, wild salmon, towering Sitka spruce trees, ancient cedars, and First Nations people. The Forest Action Network (FAN) has been campaigning to stop the destruction of this magnificent area since 1995.

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## STATUS

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Since April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001, most of the intact valleys in the Great Bear Rainforest have been under moratorium. Meanwhile, two parallel government-sanctioned land use planning processes covering much of the area have been

tasked with making recommendations to the Provincial government regarding what areas to protect and how to conduct logging and economic activity on the rest of the land-base. These stakeholder recommendations will also be shared with certain First Nation governments. Since this time, some environmental groups<sup>2</sup> have fought long and hard within these processes to get the best possible outcome despite tremendous opposition from logging and mining industries and other sectors. A third parallel land use planning process is underway in Haida Gwaii, home to the largest remaining tracts of temperate rainforest outside of the Great Bear. A fourth land use planning process for the Kalum region, which includes parts of the Great Bear Rainforest, was completed in 2001 with little environmental NGO involvement.

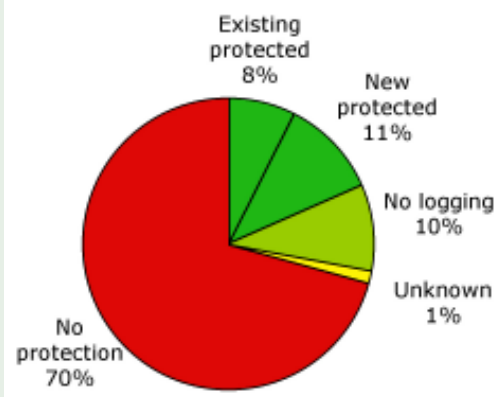
On April 4, 2002, exactly one year after the original "Great Bear Rainforest Agreement" was announced, FAN published a critique of the flaws of the agreement, while also commenting on the slow rate of progress of land-use planning.

Today, three years after the original agreement, the Central and North Coast land use planning processes have come to consensus with their recommendations to the Provincial government and First Nations.

### Great Bear Rainforest:

Existing protected and semi-protected areas <sup>3</sup>	594,000 ha.	8.0%
Proposed new protected areas <sup>4</sup>	850,000 ha.	11.4%
No logging areas (logging prohibited, mining allowed) <sup>5</sup>	779,000 ha.	10.4%
Unknown or disputed areas	108,000 ha.	1.4%
No protection (open to development under EBM)	5,557,000 ha.	68.8%
<b>Total<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>7,467,000 ha.</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Predicted protection in the Great Bear Rainforest



This marks our first glimpse of what the final outcome may look like. FAN estimates that approximately 850,000 hectares (2.1 million acres) in the Great Bear Rainforest have been recommended for full protection, including many of the areas that FAN has fought for, such as Johnston Creek, K'iskwatsta and part of the Takush. This is in addition to 570,000 hectares (1.4 million acres) already protected many years ago. An additional 780,000 hectares (1.9 million acres) are scheduled to be off limits to logging, but still open to mining and potentially other development on a case-by-case basis. Again, many areas that FAN has fought for are also proposed for this category, such as the Skowquiltz (Scw7cwlk), Sutslem and Ickna. In total, including existing protected areas, this represents about 2 million hectares (5 million acres) to be off-limits to logging.

The numbers sound impressive, and there is no doubt that this is a step in the right direction. The question remains, however, is it enough?

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### **WILL ENOUGH BE PROTECTED?**

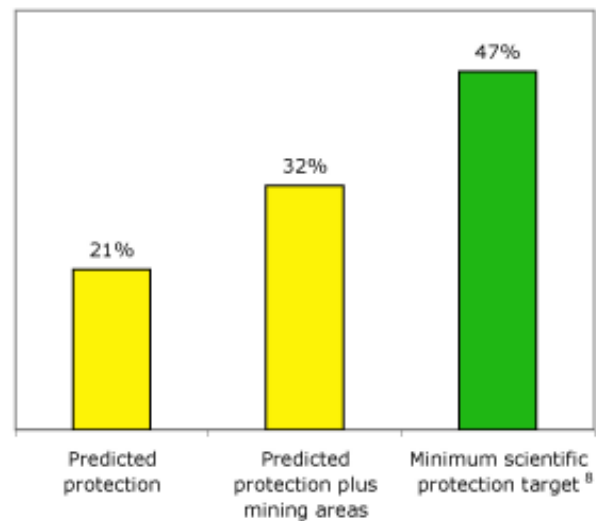
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It is still unclear what the final level of protection will be like, but FAN estimates that approximately 29% of the land base of the Great Bear Rainforest will be protected from logging. This includes an estimated 19% to be fully protected, and 10% to be protected from logging but not mining (see box, previous page).

One quarter of the land base saved from the chainsaw may seem like a lot compared to some other jurisdictions, but let's put this in perspective: these temperate rainforests once stretched from northern California, through British Columbia, into Alaska. Severely fragmented through a century of logging and development, the Great Bear Rainforest is the last great vestige of a once vast ecosystem. A purist would say we need all of it protected.

What do scientists say? Seventeen scientists under the Coast Information Team (CIT), appointed jointly by government, industry and environmental groups, concluded after three years of study, that a minimum of 44-50% protection is required in their study area in order to guarantee species survival. This is in order to ensure that at least 30% of the habitat of all focal species and other ecosystem values will be protected. In the Cen-

**Proposed Protection vs. Minimum Scientific Target in the Central Coast LRMP <sup>7</sup>**



tral Coast LRMP region, 21% will be fully protected and an additional 11% will be protected from logging but not mining – far below the minimum target (see graph above). Although not exactly the same boundaries as discussed in this report (for example, it includes existing Tweedsmuir Provincial Park in their analysis, which is not in the Great Bear Rainforest), it suffices for comparison purposes. The conclusion: the current level of protection is below what scientists call the minimum.

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### **ARE THE RIGHT AREAS BEING PROTECTED?**

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The David Suzuki Foundation conducted an analysis of the Central Coast LRMP recommendations. As noted earlier, the boundaries are different from those discussed in this report, but it suffices for comparison. Here are some conclusions taken from the Foundation's report:<sup>9</sup>

- 60% of prime grizzly habitat is unprotected;
- 83% of the best nesting areas for the threatened Northern Goshawk are unprotected;
- 74% of the nesting habitat for the threatened Marbled Murrelet are unprotected;
- 73% of mountain goat winter range is unprotected;
- 71% of deer winter range is unprotected;
- 66% of key salmon habitat is unprotected.

It should be duly noted that some of the unprotected prime habitats happen to be in areas already highly impacted by logging. This is partly a result of the fact that protection was favoured in intact forest landscapes over disturbed ones. Furthermore, exact percentages listed above can vary depending on scientific interpretation, but the fact remains that not all species' habitats are sufficiently represented.



*Goshawk chicks nest in the Scw7cwlk valley. Is enough protected to ensure their survival?*

What about the size of proposed protected areas – are they large enough? Not according to leading international bear biologists who found that local extinction of mammals was prevented in only exceptionally large parks 1,000-10,000 km<sup>2</sup> in size. They conclude that only five of the proposed and existing protected areas in the Central Coast (including Biodiversity Areas) are large enough to guarantee a “no-net-loss” of grizzly bears in the region. Although some people downplay the danger, it is widely acknowledged that more protection is certainly preferable. In order to mitigate the risk, the David Suzuki Foundation recommends the “identification and protection of corridors between the protected areas, designed according to EBM” and the “expansion of protected areas that are currently too small to maintain viable populations of wide-ranging predators such as grizzly bears or coastal wolves.”<sup>10</sup>

### HOW DOES THIS PROTECTION COMPARE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Despite the deficiencies outlined in this report, the protection package for the Great Bear Rainforest brings it close to the level of protection found in some other parts of the world, but it is not the best. For international comparison, IUCN<sup>11</sup> guidelines are used. IUCN Protected Area Management Categories I to IV preclude mining and are obviously the preferred protection systems. They include strict nature reserves, wilderness areas, national parks, natural monuments, and habitat/species management areas. Categories V and VI on the other hand are considered weaker systems which allow mining<sup>12</sup>, as is the case with the so-called “Biodiversity Areas”, “Restoration Areas” or the upper Kliniklini in the Great Bear. The following table compares the Great Bear Rainforest with some other jurisdictions.

#### Great Bear Rainforest and the World

Region	Protection (IUCN I-IV)	Mining allowed (IUCN V-VI)
Brazilian Amazon <sup>13</sup>	29%	unknown
Chilean frontier forests <sup>14</sup>	29%	unknown
Alaska <sup>15</sup>	under 25%	10%
New Zealand <sup>16</sup>	20%	unknown
<b>Great Bear Rainforest</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Venezuela <sup>17</sup>	15%	29%
Costa Rica <sup>18</sup>	11%	10%

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## WHAT WILL LOGGING LOOK LIKE IN THE UNPROTECTED AREAS?

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FAN supports a transition from corporate-controlled logging to community-based ecoforestry. Sadly, this vision is not yet reality in the Great Bear Rainforest. Logging corporations are planning to stay, maintaining corporate control over almost 70% of the Great Bear Rainforest which remains unprotected. If the companies receive their well-sought after government compensation for tenures lost to protection, this will only help to entrench their continued presence in the region.

FAN believes that the “log and run” mentality of multinational corporations, and their predicted resistance to implementing the Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Handbook will, in the long run, turn most of the Great Bear Rainforest into an industrial zone. Only community-based forestry following or exceeding the full spirit and intent of the EBM handbook will guarantee the survival of ecosystems and communities in the Great Bear Rainforest.

If the status of logging in the past year is any indication of what is to come, then this is what we can expect:

- Continued high-grading of cedar
- Continued clearcutting (defined as logging with only 15% stand retention)
- More areas traditionally considered uneconomical to access being opened up to logging
- Inadequate protection for salmon spawning habitat
- Inadequate protection for threatened species

Unless the Ecosystem Based Management Handbook is fully implemented, there is no way we can be sure that future logging in the Great Bear Rainforest will maintain ecosystem values. FAN considers full adherence to both



*Princess Royal Island, Great Bear Rainforest. Ancient trees marked for logging by Interfor*

the EBM Handbook as well as FSC<sup>19</sup> to be the bare minimum requirements for logging to be considered sustainable in the Great Bear Rainforest.

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## OTHER THREATS TO THE GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

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Many other problems continue to loom over the Great Bear Rainforest:

- Unresolved First Nations land rights
- Mining will still be allowed over roughly 80% of the land base
- Offshore oil and gas development
- Industrial salmon farming with its associated chemicals, diseases and parasites
- Trophy hunting is allowed in most parks in BC, including in the Great Bear Rainforest
- Road building will be allowed in protected areas
- Climate change
- Proposed working forest legislation would obstruct the creation of any new protected areas

### Mining the heart out of the Great Bear Rainforest

The threat of Mining has increased dramatically. Eighty percent of the Great Bear Rainforest will still be open to mining. There are many existing mineral claims, in particular in the northern regions, and the mining industry has been adamantly opposing any protection that may hinder their future business.

The 80,000-hectare Ecstall River, for example, is the largest intact rainforest valley in Canada after the

Kitlope<sup>20</sup>. The Ecstall's low elevation Sitka spruce floodplain and gently flowing waters are home to grizzly bears, moose, mountain goat, trumpeter swans, and fourteen species of fish. Regrettably, it is 'protected' only from logging, but not mining. Numerous other critical valleys share the same fate.

Unless mining and all other threats to the Great Bear Rainforest are eliminated, the battle to save the rainforests will not be over.



*Dean Channel, Great Bear Rainforest. The fiordside in the background is unprotected. What will this area look like in ten years?*

#### **FAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Protect far more of the Great Bear Rainforest**
- **Immediately end clearcutting and fully implement the Ecosystem Based Management Handbook**
- **Eliminate all other indirect and potential threats to the Great Bear Rainforest**



*Will the Great Bear Rainforest be saved, or will protests like this one happen again? (log barge blockade, South Bentinck Arm fiord, 1996)*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> There is dispute as to the exact boundaries of the Great Bear Rainforest. FAN describes the Great Bear Rainforest as the coastal rainforest regions north of Knight Inlet on the mainland coast of British Columbia, the boundaries of which are shown on the map in this report. More precisely, the boundaries correspond to the “Coastal Gap Ecoregion” plus the portion of the “Pacific Ranges Ecoregion” lying north of Knight Inlet, as well as the rather small “Alaska Panhandle Mountains Ecoregion” on Portland Canal and Observatory Inlet. (see Demarchi et al., 1990, and Meidinger and Pojar, 1991; also <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/ecology/ecoregions>). This is equivalent to the general area encompassing the intact regions of the Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH) biogeoclimatic zone and associated zones (ATc, MHmm) on the mainland coast of British Columbia. Most of Tweedsmuir Park is not coastal temperate rainforest, and similarly not in the zones described above. It is not in the Great Bear Rainforest, even though the BC Government and some environmental groups mistakenly include it. Much of the Kalum region is also within the Great Bear Rainforest, or the areas to the west and south of Terrace. Finally, the western portion of Nisga’a core lands also lies in the Great Bear Rainforest.

<sup>2</sup> These environmental groups include Greenpeace, Sierra Club of Canada BC Chapter, ForestEthics and Rainforest Action Network (RAN). Other groups outside the process include Forest Action Network (FAN), Raincoast Conservation Society, David Suzuki Foundation, Valhalla Wilderness Society, and Spirit Bear Youth Coalition. Some First Nations also did not participate.

<sup>3</sup> ‘semi-protected areas’ include Recreation Areas such as Hakai, Fiordlands, and Gitnadoix. Designated under the BC Park Act, natural resources in recreation areas generally must not be removed or disturbed “except as may be approved by the minister” under a resource use permit. Recreation Areas were generally designed to be turned into full protection areas after ten years. As a result of land use planning, Hakai, Fiordlands and Gitnadoix will all be upgraded to full protection, most likely Class A Provincial Park status. Note that most of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, established in 1938, is excluded as an “existing protected area” because it lies outside the Great Bear Rainforest.

<sup>4</sup> ‘protected areas’ does not include the 39,000-hectare upper Kliniklini “protected area” because mining exploration is allowed for the next 15 years to determine whether or not the area will be fully protected. “Kliniklini will be protected through the Environment and Land Use Act for a period of 15 years to allow for mineral exploration and for access to mineral resources. If no development is feasible then this area will be designated as a protection area.” [Government of British Columbia, News Release, April 4, 2001]. This is similar to the methodology behind Recreation Areas. The upper Kliniklini is classified as a ‘no logging area’ instead.

<sup>5</sup> ‘no logging areas’ includes areas where mining will still be allowed, namely “Biodiversity Areas” as well as 130,000 hectares of “Restoration to Protection” areas. It also includes the 39,000 hectare upper Kliniklini.

<sup>6</sup> The size of the Great Bear Rainforest is calculated as follows: Central Coast (CCLRMP excluding interior forest portion of Tweedsmuir at 4,438,486 hectares) + North Coast (NCLRMP at 1,703,636 hectares) + southwest Kalum (areas to the south of

Terrace including TFL 41, Kitlope and Gitnadoix PAs, and areas to the west of Terrace including Kasiks, Exchamsiks and Exstew at approximately 1.2 million hectares) + other (Nisga’a core lands within the Great Bear at approximately 125,000 hectares). Detailed calculations available upon request.

<sup>7</sup> The scientific target has only been calculated for the entire Central Coast planning area, which includes areas outside the Great Bear Rainforest. Thus the “predicted protection” include such areas outside the Great Bear Rainforest that are already protected, namely Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.

<sup>8</sup> The minimum scientific protection target is actually 44-50%. Here, a median of 47% was used for comparison purposes only.

<sup>9</sup> David Suzuki Foundation, *Canada’s Rainforest: Status Report 2004*, April 2004, [www.canadianrainforests.org](http://www.canadianrainforests.org)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> IUCN - The World Conservation Union

<sup>12</sup> “Exploration and extraction of mineral resources are incompatible with the purposes of protected areas corresponding to IUCN Protected Area Management Categories I to IV, and should therefore be prohibited by law or other effective means.” WCPA Position Statement on Mining and Associated Activities in Relation to Protected Areas, welcomed by IUCN Council April 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Global Forest Watch, [www.globalforestwatch.org](http://www.globalforestwatch.org) [note figure includes extractive reserves and indigenous lands. The government of Brazil has committed to an additional 10% protection]

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. [note ‘frontier forests’ are large areas of intact forests, such as much of the Great Bear Rainforest]

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, [www.cpaws.org](http://www.cpaws.org) [note also that in April 1999, 13.7 million acres (79%) of the Alaskan Tongass rainforest was protected as non-development Land Use Designations, however the Bush administration has rolled back on this agreement]

<sup>16</sup> Source: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Database on Protected Areas, <http://sea.unep-wcmc.org/wdbpa> [note that about 10% is a temperate rainforest region, and 10% is in a mountainous region]

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is the only international third party forestry certification system that comes closest to what environmental groups worldwide can support.

<sup>20</sup> Keith Moore, *Coastal Watersheds: An Inventory of Watersheds in the Coastal Temperate Forests of British Columbia*, 1991; also Sierra Club, *Canada’s Rainforest: British Columbia’s Mid and North Coast*, map, 1997; also Greenpeace, *The Great Bear Rainforest: A Report on the Ecology and the Global Importance of Canada’s Temperate Rainforest*, Second Edition, January, 1999, p.15. Environmental groups, as well as the Provincial Government and the North Coast LRMP table, have distinguished between the 83,874 Ecstall proper and the nearby Madeline, Brown and Unnamed watersheds which drain into the tidal waters of the inlet. Intact (i.e. ‘pristine’ or ‘modified’) valleys are defined as subsets of primary watershed which “include all the land area draining into a stream system that has its terminus in salt water.” (Moore, 1991) Brown in particular has been heavily hit by logging in the past.



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