



Coast Forest Conservation Initiative

The village of Oweekeno in the Central Coast (at centre of photo). Our goal is a plan that equally supports healthy communities and a healthy environment.



Achievements:

A new collaborative approach creates greater options

Remarkable progress has been made in the three years since environmentalists and forest companies resolved to work collaboratively on a new approach to conservation and management of globally significant forests in the North Coast, Central Coast, and Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands.

Meeting global and local expectations for the region is challenging. The solution process is highly complex and there are many interests involved – First Nations, local communities, forest workers, environmental groups, tourism operators, the provincial government, forest companies – all with differing expectations and desires on the outcome.

Despite these dynamics, all parties are committed to having traditional positions and opinions challenged by the new scientific protocols emerging from the comprehensive scientific analysis underway. Today, while differences of opinion continue to be aired, the debate is less confrontational, more sophisticated and more solutions oriented.

New knowledge, developed by the independent Coast Information Team, is providing more options for resource management and ecosystem protection than has been previously considered.

Agreement that land use decisions should enhance human well being along with natural ecosystems is particularly groundbreaking. Also, for the first time, there is agreement that those who benefit from land use decisions should share the costs borne by those who are negatively affected.

In 1998, First Nations, forest companies, local communities, environmental groups and the provincial government had reached a stalemate in land use planning for the region. Today, as the public planning tables have resumed, agreements have been reached on:

- x a definition, principles and goals of ecosystem-based management;
- x the belief that economics and social impacts of conservation must be considered

equally with environmental concerns and that;

- x longstanding, interest-based positions on economic, social and ecological impacts will be tested and “live or die by independent science.”

Other achievements of the new, collaborative approach:

Ecosystem-based conservation and management

Agreement to develop an EBM framework for the region is fundamental to the land use resolution process. An ecosystem-based approach seeks to ensure the co-existence of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems and human communities.

Independent science

Joint funding of an independent team of scientists has resulted in the most comprehensive analysis of natural and socio-economic ecosystems ever undertaken anywhere in the world. This work brings together the best available scientific, technical, traditional and local knowledge. It will inform decision making in the government and First Nations' land use planning processes.

Protection with compensation

An interim land use plan supported by all stakeholders has provided protection areas, “option areas” for harvesting deferrals while an ecosystem-based plan is developed, and support for forest dependent economies and workers impacted by the transition.

- x Almost 10,000 square kilometers have been set aside from development on the Central Coast (534,000 hectares in option areas, 441,000 hectares in new protection areas).
- x The provincial government has established a \$35 million fund to compensate those affected by the protection areas and ongoing deferrals.
- x A working group has been set up to explore opportunities for market-based investment and incentive mechanisms to support conservation and ecosystem-based management in the region.

New forestry methods

In preparation for EBM, forestry companies have made fundamental changes to how they operate in the region. Large harvest areas have been replaced by smaller openings to fit the landscape. Variable retention harvesting leaves trees in blocks for wildlife habitat. Retention patches also promote biological diversity and old-forest attributes. EBM protects cultural and scenic values, while ensuring economic and ecologically sustainable forest management.

Rights of First Nations incorporated

An EBM framework recognizes and accommodates First Nations' rights and title to the lands and resources within their traditional territories. The interim land use plan for the Central Coast announced in April 2001 includes a special Protocol Agreement between the BC Government and First Nations on the Central Coast, North Coast and Haida Gwaii, recognizing



Companies have adopted ecosystem-based forestry in the region. Clearcuts are replaced by small openings to fit the landscape.

ing their joint mandate for completion of land use planning in these areas. In addition, support for First Nations to develop forest resources is well underway, including EBM operational trials under the supervision of the Gitga'at and Kitsoo First Nations.

Support in the marketplace

The collaborative, science-based approach to conservation and management of globally significant coastal forests has received broad endorsement by the marketplace. The goal is an EBM approach for the Central Coast, North Coast and Haida Gwaii region that fully integrates ecological protection with economically viable resource use — a plan that is well supported both locally and globally.

CONTACTS



NEW THINKING ABOUT FOREST CONSERVATION

Coast Forest
Conservation Initiative

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