



Coast Forest Conservation Initiative

Photo: Weyerhaeuser vice-president of environmental enterprise Linda Coady addresses participants in the historic agreement.



Highlights of the Central Coast agreement

- x An independent scientific panel will be appointed to develop new forestry and ecological models.
- x Forestry companies agree to modify logging practices to incorporate ecosystem-based management.
- x Environmental groups agree to end market campaigns against BC forest products.
- x Protection areas will be established to address the expectations of stakeholders.
- x Most of Princess Royal Island will be protected as home range for the Kermode bear, also known as the "Spirit Bear".
- x Deferred areas (option areas) will allow time for an ecosystem-based forest management plan to be developed.
- x First Nations will have more control over land-use planning.
- x The provincial government will contribute up to \$40 million to help workers deal with long term reduction of timber producing land.

What are the next steps?

- x The LRMP work will continue.
- x An independent study team will be formed.
- x Recommendations to government will be made by March 1, 2002.
- x Transition funding/impacts will be addressed.

Preliminary agreement reached

Forest companies, environmental groups, communities, logging contractors, the provincial government, and other local interests in BC have reached an agreement that will put BC at the forefront of conservation and environmental responsibility.

The preliminary agreement, signed April 4, comes after three years of work by the Central Coast Land and Resource Management Planning process (CCLRMP), and more than 16 months of work by the Coast Forest Conservation Initiative (CFCI).

The CFCI, a voluntary initiative involving four BC forestry companies, has held consultations and workshops aimed at developing an ecosystem-based management plan for the Central and North Coast of BC – an area often referred to as the "Great Bear Rainforest" by environmental groups.

Taking a collaborative approach required a spirit of cooperation among groups with divergent points of view. The Central Coast agreement is the result of 20 groups coming together in that spirit of cooperation. But it hasn't been easy, and it hasn't come without cost.

Forest companies support the agreement because it sends a strong message to the international marketplace. That message can be seen in Greenpeace's decision to halt its cam-

paign against BC coastal forest companies.

The decision of environmental groups to end the market campaign and to support the agreement is a significant gain for the forest industry. But the forest companies recognize that this gain will be offset by job losses in the industry.

"A transition strategy has to be put in place for workers," says Weyerhaeuser Co. vice-president Linda Coady. "The provincial government is contributing up to \$40 million for such a strategy."

Western Forest Products has forest tenures in some of the areas that will be designated as protected. The company's chief forester Bill Dumont says that the agreement means a drop of 15 per cent of the company's Central Coast harvest, and possible impacts covering up to 40 per cent in the long term.

Companies had to weigh these impacts against the need to do business internationally, and to be respected members of the global community. The agreement, like any agreement forged by divergent groups, may not completely satisfy every stakeholder, but taken as a whole, it is the key to moving forward and developing creative solutions for the challenges in this globally significant region.



Research solves mystery of Kermode bears' white fur

Researchers working with Western Forest Products in BC's Central Coast have discovered the gene responsible for the development of white fur in Kermode bears (pictured at left). A single nucleotide difference, causing an amino acid change, is responsible. A bear must have both copies of the gene for white fur to develop, confirming recessive inheritance. The same gene is found in other mammals and is known to cause coat colour variation in Labrador retrievers, as well as red hair in humans. Interestingly, the Kermode bear is the first example of variation for white hair at this gene.

First Nations land use plan acts as catalyst

A month before the April 4 land use agreement was completed, an agreement was developed between the 400-member Kitasoo/Xaixais First Nation, loggers and environmentalists. The Kitasoo land use plan was the basis for how the larger agreement dealt with areas in the northern part of the Central Coast. In fact, without the Kitasoo plan, which sets aside 40 per cent of their territory as protected, it may well have been impossible to reach agreement in the Central Coast.

Created independently of the Central Coast Land and Resource Management Planning process (CCLRMP), the Kitasoo land use plan was compatible with the CCLRMP objectives. It identified new parks and protected areas, as well as areas where development will take place.

Striking a careful balance between conservation and development, the plan was developed to protect fish and bear habitats, cultural values, and to weigh those against the rights and needs of the community for economic and social development. The Kitasoo/Xaixais people have shown strong leadership in moving forward with strategies to develop their 500,000 hectare traditional territory.

First Nations sign historic protocol with BC government

At the same time as the agreement was reached on the Central Coast land use plan, a protocol was signed between the provincial government and eight First Nations: the Gitga'at, Haida, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xaixais and Metlakata, as well as the Old Massett Village and Skidegate Band Councils.

The agreement enables coastal bands to work with other stakeholders to establish their own land-use plans for their territories, then negotiate directly with the province on a government-to-government level.

As well, the parties agreed to set up interim measures for land use while treaty negotiations and land claims are settled. Interim measures agreements between government and First Nations are designed to bring some certainty to land and resource issues. Such agreements are customized to the particular situation – they range from formal agreements to less formal day-to-day arrangements.

In the Central and North Coast and Haida Gwaii, the Turning Point Interim

Measures Initiative is a forum designed to address aboriginal rights and title. The initiative was created by First Nations, together with the David Suzuki Foundation. Also involved are mayors and communities in the region, IWA-Canada, and the tourism sector.

The Turning Point initiative's main objectives are:

- x to ensure that there is an ecologically sustainable land and marine use plan;
- x to provide greater stability over the land and marine resources;
- x to ensure dynamic and sustainable forestry operations and fisheries on the coast;
- x to provide First Nations with economic and social development opportunities;
- x to ensure there are mitigation strategies for parties impacted by change; and
- x to provide for economic diversification for communities.



The Bella Coola Valley and town of Bella Coola, as seen from North Bentinck Arm.

Central Coast community profile: The town of Bella Coola

The Central Coast has a population of about 4500 people, over half of whom belong to the Heiltsuk Nation, the Kitasoo/Xaixais Nation, the Oweekeno Nation and the Nuxalk Nation.

Towns with more than 1000 people are Bella Coola and Waglisla (commonly known as Bella Bella); smaller communities include Shearwater, Ocean Falls, Klemtu, Oweekeno, Namu and Dawson Landing. At the end of a long fjord, and at the mouth of the Bella Coola River, lies the town of Bella Coola.

Typical of the Central Coast, Bella Coola has a strong community spirit. In the 50s, for example, when the provincial government was unable to build a much-needed road out of the Bella Coola Valley, residents took matters into their own hands.

Despite difficult terrain that included grades of up to 18 per cent, the volunteer road builders were successful. On Sept. 26, 1953, two bulldozers – one pushing east, the other pushing west – met and connected the valley with the Chilcotin, Cariboo and beyond.

That community spirit continues as area residents look for ways to combat the 45 per cent unemployment rate and identify new ways to add value to their natural resources. “The area’s resource-based economy was hit hard when both the forestry and commercial fishing markets began to decline at once,” says Graem Wells, Chair of the regional district. “No one thought that would happen. We have to work together to find alternative opportunities for economic success now. Whatever the product might be, it can’t be subsidized; it has to be viable and sustainable.”

The area’s rugged beauty and recreational opportunities make tourism one good fit for a potential growth industry. Campgrounds, hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts are available, as well as guided tours by land, river and ocean.

An interesting tourist destination is the Tallheo Cannery Inn – a restored 1900’s cannery village. Transforming a defunct cannery into an economic opportunity shows how the community builds on its past, and is willing to reshape itself for the future.

Another example is a \$10-million value-added sawmill, Little Valley Forest Products Ltd., that was constructed over a six-year period. “The mill’s parent company, C&C Wood Products, from Quesnel, used cash-flow from their operations to purchase an old sawmill and get the new enterprise started,” says Wells. It operates through the Ministry of Forests Small Business Forest Enterprise Program.”

To move forward, Central Coast residents recognize that they need to work together. The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), is helping facilitate that work by developing forums and examining economic development in the area.

There is much work to be done, but in an area with a tradition of determination and creative problem solving, there can also be optimism. “That’s where our future lies – in coming together with a common goal,” says Wells.

Central Coast zones

The Central Coast region of BC is an area of about 5 million hectares of temperate rain-forest, fjords, inlets, islands, mountains and glaciers. Its boundaries are Bute Inlet in the south and Butedale in the north.

The April 4 land use agreement designates three types of zones in the Central Coast. The type and amount of development in these areas is subject to further discussions, and must take into account First Nations views and needs.

Protection areas (603,000 hectares):

The new agreement sets aside new protection areas in which industrial development such as logging and mining will not be allowed. These are in addition to the existing 393,000 hectares that are currently designated protection areas. One of the most recog-





nized of the new protection areas is Princess Royal Island, which will be known as the Spirit Bear Protection Area. The area offers 1,000 square kilometres of habitat for the Kermode bear.

Option areas (537,000 hectares):

In these areas logging operations are deferred for 12 to 24 months while an ecosystem-based plan for the region is developed. Future agreements will spell out the nature and location of commercial enterprises.

Special management zones:

These are areas that have tourism value. Commercial activities such as sustainable forestry will be carried out in ways that protect the visual quality of the area.

-  Special management zones
-  Option areas
-  Existing protected areas
-  Proposed protection areas



The independent information team

The team is expected to provide independent, credible information and analysis based on the best available expertise and experience in science, as well as in traditional and local knowledge. It will be composed of:

- X First Nations specialists
- X Local, regional and international advisors
- X Ecological specialists
- X Social scientists
- X Economists
- X Planning specialists
- X Innovative forestry specialists



Coast Forest Conservation Initiative

For more information on the coast Forest Conservation Initiative, please contact the CFCI at:

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