



CUSTOMER ADVISORY

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New land use plans for BC Coast will make BC global leader in forest conservation and management

BC coastal forest companies welcome today's announcement by BC Sustainable Resource Management Minister Stan Hagen that the government intends to complete the interim land use plan for the province's Central Coast and develop plans for the North Coast and the Queen Charlottes/ Haida Gwaii. A spokesperson representing the four coastal forest companies involved in the Coast Forest Conservation Initiative* (Norske Canada, Weyerhaeuser, Western Forest Products and Canadian Forest Products) said the companies support the new direction being charted by the government.

The interim plan for the Central Coast was adopted by the BC government just before the provincial election in the spring of 2001. The new government has been reviewing the decision and the overall process for land use planning on the coast. Today's announcement signals the government's intention to have BC's new Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management take a leadership role in completing land use planning on the BC coast based on collaborative processes involving First Nations and a variety of different forest stakeholders.

Land use planning has already been completed in most of British Columbia, but forest planning on the province's Central and North Coast has been the subject of controversy since 1995 when environmentalists called the area the "Great Bear Rainforest" and launched an international market campaign to protect it. The Central and North Coast contain over 100 pristine watersheds that environmentalists say are key to maintaining the fish, wildlife and biodiversity values associated with coastal old growth rainforests.

In the spring of 2001 the environmental market campaign against BC coastal forest products came to a halt when the BC government accepted the recommendations put forward by a multi-stakeholder planning process involving input from forest companies, environmentalists, logging contractors, forest workers, local communities and First Nations. (See attached *Backgrounder* for additional information.)

"Successful conclusion of land use planning processes for the Central Coast, the North Coast and Haida Gwaii/ Queen Charlottes will reposition BC forest products both at home and abroad on issues involving the conservation and management of remaining large tracts of pristine old growth rainforest", said Linda Coady, Vice President, BC Coastal Group of Weyerhaeuser.

"Achieving credible and workable outcomes from these planning processes is an important element in the restructuring and revitalization of the BC coastal forest sector. The future of the BC coastal forest sector now depends on the ability of all the different



Coast Forest Conservation Initiative

parties involved to support the emergence of an industry that is productive, competitive and also widely recognized as an environmental leader.” She said the framework that has been developed for completion of outstanding land use plans on the BC coast represents a new approach to conservation and sustainable management, both in BC and elsewhere in the world.

“While parks and protected areas have long been considered a cornerstone for conserving important environmental values, there is mounting evidence that protecting discreet areas does not always produce the best outcomes from a conservation perspective,” she said. “A recent report on the state of world’s forests by the United Nations recommends forest conservation programs focus more on ecosystem management at a regional level and on doing a better job of integrating conservation with economic development needs at the local community level. This is precisely what the planning processes for the Central Coast, the North Coast and Haida Gwaii/ Queen Charlottes now aim to do.”

The establishment of an information team of scientists and specialists with local and traditional knowledge to provide economic and ecological options for all three planning tables is another new feature of the planning processes moving forwards. The Coast Information Team (CIT) will be providing information and analysis to all three land use planning tables. In what will be another “first” for British Columbia the new team will be jointly funded by the BC government and interested forest companies and environmental groups.

Coady said that coastal forest companies would also be working with government and other interests to ensure that public investment in the transition to a different model for forest conservation and management in remaining undeveloped areas of the BC coast would be matched by the private sector. “This is a complex initiative involving a number of parties that will occur over a period of time. It is therefore important that it be framed from the outset as a public-private partnership.”

Attach.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Coast Forest Conservation Initiative and the Joint Solutions Project

The Coast Forest Conservation Initiative (CFCI) is an initiative by a group of coastal BC forest companies committed to new approaches to forest conservation issues on the BC coast. The objective of the initiative is to support development of plans for conservation and management of coastal forests still containing large areas of pristine old growth that can be credible both locally and globally.

The companies involved in the CFCI are Norske Canada, Western Forest Products, Weyerhaeuser and Canadian Forest Products. CFCI companies are working with environmental groups in a special project known as the Joint Solutions Project aimed at reducing conflict over coastal forests by introducing new ideas on forest conservation and management issues. The environmental groups involved with the Joint Solutions Project are Greenpeace Canada, the Sierra Club of BC, ForestEthics and the Rainforest Action Network.

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Funding for Coast Information Team (CIT)

The four CFCI companies and the four environmental groups involved in the Joint Solutions Project will be providing \$500,000 in funding for the new Coast Information Team in 2002. The BC government will provide an additional \$500,000 for a total of \$1 million in funding for the new Team.

Land Use Planning in BC

The development of land use plans for all the different regions of British Columbia has been underway for the past ten years. The plans designate protected areas, identify special values and provide direction for all levels of government in the management, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Locally-based collaborative processes involving different groups and perspectives make recommendations to the provincial government. The provincial government considers those recommendations when finalizing the plans.

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contain over 100 pristine watersheds that environmentalists say are key to maintaining the fish, wildlife and biodiversity values associated with old growth forests.

Interim Land Use Plan for the BC Central Coast

In the spring of 2001 environmental groups suspended all of their market campaigns against coastal BC forest products when a multi-stakeholder planning process involving forest companies, environmentalists, logging contractors, forest workers, local communities and First Nations made a series of recommendations to the BC government regarding adoption of an Interim Land Use Plan for the province's Central Coast area.

Key aspects of the Interim Land Use Plan for the Central Coast included:

- creation over 20 large protected areas bringing the total area protected for the region to approximately one million hectares or 20 percent of the region;
- harvesting deferrals for 12 to 24 months in a further 11 percent of the region pending implementation of ecosystem-based management framework and completion of the plan;
- a commitment by all parties to ecosystem-based planning and management at the regional level, including the creation of a team of scientists and specialists with local and traditional knowledge to provide information to future land use planning processes on the Central Coast, the North Coast and Haida Gwaii/ Queen Charlottes;
- a special Protocol Agreement between the BC government and First Nations on the Central and North Coast and Haida Gwaii/ Queen Charlottes that means that processes for completion of land use plans in all three areas are jointly mandated by the BC government and local First Nations.

Impact Mitigation

Western Forest Products, Weyerhaeuser and International Forest Products all hold forest harvesting tenures on the Central Coast that were affected by the Interim Land Use plan. The companies have estimated that the short-term impact of the interim plan is a 646,000 m³ reduction in harvesting in the area. At the time the plan was first announced the BC government pledged \$25 million to help mitigate the impact of the initial harvesting reduction on forest workers and contractors.

The BC government has announced that funding for mitigating the impact of the interim land use decision on workers and contractors will still be available. Companies will have to apply for the funding within the context of the broader restructuring now occurring in the coastal forest industry and the need to create an industry that is more efficient and competitive. All of the companies involved will be working with affected contractors and workers to develop and submit applications before the end of the year.