



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Coastal Forest Companies Believe Major Breakthrough on Forest & Environmental Issues is At Hand**

#### **British Columbia companies call upon Greenpeace to stand-down from campaign against BC forest products for 60 days while critical talks conclude**

A group of BC forest companies is calling upon Greenpeace to stand down from its campaign against BC forest products to help facilitate an extraordinary effort now underway in the province to develop new solutions to old conflicts surrounding coastal rainforests. The call follows recent Greenpeace protest actions in Italy against a ship carrying BC pulp.

“This is a critical time in the history of forest issues on the coast of BC”, said Linda Coady, Vice President, Environmental Enterprise, Weyerhaeuser, and spokesperson for a group of coastal companies that includes Western Forest Products, Canadian Forest Products and Norske Skog. For the past year, the four companies have been working with a coalition of environmental groups to promote new approaches to forest conservation and management issues on the Central and North Coast of BC, an area environmentalists call the Great Bear Rainforest.

Companies and environmental organizations participating in this special project have raised an initial \$2 million to be applied to ecosystem research in the area. The BC government is on record as saying it will set aside parts of the Central Coast for protection by March 31, 2001.

“A package of proposals aimed at achieving a framework for resolve on forest issues is now being discussed with First Nations, the BC government and all of the different interests participating in a multi-stakeholder land use planning process for the Central Coast, including communities, labour, contractors, various resource users and environmental groups,” said Coady. She said the proposals contain the following key elements:

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- (1) designation of new protection areas;
- (2) introduction of an ecosystem-based approach to forest planning in the area that will be regarded as credible, both locally and internationally;
- (3) agreement among affected parties on areas where logging will be withheld until the ecosystem-based plan is completed;
- (4) establishment of agreements with First Nations that will facilitate development of economic benefits for local aboriginal communities as a consequence of aboriginal title; and
- (5) agreement on how to deal equitably with the cost of the change.

Coady predicted the decisions that emerge from current discussions in BC will be groundbreaking and will help shift the province's reputation internationally from a centre for conflict over forests to a centre for innovation in the application of conservation biology to timber harvesting and management in coastal old growth forests.

She urged Greenpeace to put aside its international protest campaign in order to allow time for groups in BC to focus on the opportunity at hand. "Given where things are at it is time for all parties in this debate to depart from traditional tactics and achieve a negotiated solution that will allow something new to happen."

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