

**For Release
MEDIA INFORMATION
October 24, 2000**

**Contact: Tzeporah Berman, CRC (604) 603-5110
Linda Coady, WY (604) 661-8169
Merran Smith, SCBC (604) 816-5636**

**Forest Companies and Environmental Groups Endorse Premier's Call
for new BC Strategy to Gain Support in International Markets**

Forest companies and environmental groups co-sponsoring a joint solutions project welcome Premier Dosanjh's call on Monday of this week for a coordinated strategy to address international concerns regarding BC forest practices and products.

"We have been urging government to take a more collaborative approach to these issues and are encouraged to see them take action," said Merran Smith, Senior Forests Campaigner, Sierra Club of BC.

"The initiative we are working on represents the first attempt in BC by forest companies and environmental groups to develop a model for forest conservation and management that fully integrates social, economic and ecological needs. We believe it is therefore critical that this initiative be an integral part of the marketing strategy now being promoted by the Premier," said Linda Coady, Vice President, Weyerhaeuser.

"A marketing strategy for BC forest products that does not address the need for change on the ground in controversial areas such as the Central and North Coast will not be seen as credible in the marketplace," said Tzeporah Berman, BC Program Director, Coastal Rainforest Coalition. "British Columbia has a major opportunity to break through the polarization that has come to characterize forest issues in this province by supporting new approaches to conservation that can work both in the forest and in the international marketplace."

Berman and Coady said the companies and environmental groups participating in the joint solutions process are requesting a meeting with the Premier and other interested parties to discuss how their joint project can benefit the government's plan to address challenges posed by international buyers of BC forest products. In the spring of this year a group of coastal BC forest companies reached an agreement with four environmental groups that saw an 18-month standstill in harvesting in contentious areas on the Central and North Coast of British Columbia in return for an 18-month standstill in market campaigns against the companies involved in the initiative.

The purpose of the peace accord was to create a conflict-free period in which both sides could work towards new solutions to the controversy over harvesting on the Central and North Coast of BC, an area that has been called the Great Bear Rainforest by environmentalists. Unconstrained by existing government policies, participating companies and environmental groups are now working to develop information, analysis, options and ideas that can be tabled with formal land use decision making processes, such as the Central Coast LRMP, and with other interested parties.

It is estimated the solutions project will require approximately \$4 million in funding for analysis of the ecosystem and social and economic issues that both the companies and environmental groups agree are key to the future of the region's old growth forests. Environmental groups have raised an initial \$1 million for the project and the companies have agreed to match it.