

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **FOREST COMPANIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS PURSUE UNPRECEDENTED SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE**

**Will jointly sponsor consultation and scientific and technical work on conservation-based ecosystem management for temperate rainforests on the North and Central Coast of BC**

**For Immediate Release**

**Friday, July 28, 2000**

**VANCOUVER** – Four BC coastal forest companies and four environmental groups announced today that they are co-sponsoring work on development of an unprecedented proposal for a conservation-based ecosystem approach to temperate rainforests on the Central and North Coast of BC. Scientific and technical work will be developed in discussion with First Nations and local stakeholders, and the framework will be tabled this fall with coastal Aboriginal Leaders, the Central Coast Land and Resource Managing Planning process (LRMP), government and other decision-making processes. The ecosystem management framework being developed will encompass the range of ecological, cultural and economic values found in the area.

The four environmental groups are Greenpeace, the Sierra Club of BC, the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and the Coastal Rainforest Coalition (CRC). The four forest companies involved in the initiative are Canadian Forest Products, Fletcher Challenge Canada, Western Forest Products and Weyerhaeuser.

In recent years, controversy over logging in parts of the BC coast became an issue in the international marketplace with some major customers of BC forest products announcing preference for certified forest products and adopting purchasing policies aimed at ensuring they are not buying products produced from forests considered endangered at a global level. Both the companies and environmental groups involved in the initiative see it as an effort to reduce immediate conflict between them and create new options for decision makers seeking environmental and economic solutions for coastal B.C.

“The conflict between us had reached the point where we felt it had become institutionalized and we were both prepared to push for a breakthrough. In order to create a meaningful opportunity to explore approaches capable of changing the status quo, we believe it is necessary to establish a conflict-free period during which there can be security that ecological options will be maintained, and there can be security that the social and economic implications of further harvesting deferrals will be addressed”, said Linda Coady, vice president of Weyerhaeuser.

She said the companies and environmental groups sponsoring the initiative have agreed to establish an independent process to identify impacts associated with logging deferrals and

develop options aimed at maintaining employment stability while a proposal on ecosystem planning is developed. The parties have agreed to appoint Robert Friesen to begin facilitation of this process, and will provide additional resources and expertise required to ensure it is effective.

Friesen, principal of Victoria-based Friesen, Rea & Company, is an independent consultant on forestry policy, a former president of the Interior Lumber Manufacturers' Association and a former executive director of the operations division of the B.C. Ministry of Forests.

“There are over 5,000 direct jobs supported by harvesting on the North and Central Coast”, said Bill Dumont, Chief Forester, Western Forest Products. “In the majority of instances, the companies with operations affected by the deferrals have been able to shift them so that there can be no job impact over the course of the next 12 months. Depending on market conditions, there are some 200 logging jobs for which we are still working on identifying alternatives. First Nations, local communities, logging contractors and the IWA have told us that they are not prepared to support this initiative if it creates job loss or economic hardship in coastal communities. We have therefore asked Mr. Friesen to immediately begin consultation with other affected parties to ensure employment issues are properly identified and addressed.”

Friesen said he strongly supports the commitment by companies and environmental groups to a process of consultation with all interested parties. “This is a highly unique dispute resolution process. It represents a commitment by traditional adversaries to work together to find new solutions to old problems.”

“This initiative is potentially a significant and precedent-setting step towards ending many years of conflict over forest management on the coast of B.C.,” said Greenpeace Forests Campaigner Catherine Stewart. “The global market is changing and the future of the B.C. forest industry will depend on the conservation of endangered forests and truly sustainable practices on the remaining land base.”

“The consultation process is to ensure that forest conservation, as required by the marketplace, is addressed in conjunction with the social and economic needs of communities in the region,” said Merran Smith, Senior Forest Campaigner, Sierra Club of B.C. “We have also communicated to First Nations that we are willing to enter into agreements to ensure that this initiative respects aboriginal protocols, rights and title, and moves forward in a way that is supportive of other First Nations initiatives.”

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**Attach: Contacts & Backgrounder**

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**Attach: Backgrounder**

## **MEDIA BACKGROUNDER**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR CONSERVATION-BASED, ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT IN THE CENTRAL AND NORTH COAST REGION OF B.C.**

#### **The Central and North Coast Region:**

The joint initiative to develop a proposal for an ecosystem-based approach to forest management and conservation on the Central and North Coast of British Columbia is sponsored by four companies – Canfor, Fletcher Challenge Canada, Western Forest Products and Weyerhaeuser – and four environmental groups – Coastal Rainforest Coalition, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network and Sierra Club of B.C.

Environmental groups call the region the “Great Bear Rainforest”. It is bounded by Bute Inlet in the south and the Alaska border in the north, an area of approximately 7 million hectares (70,000 square kilometers) of temperate rainforest, fjords, inlets, islands and glacial mountains. The region is predominately public Crown land with unresolved Aboriginal title.

Much of the area is remote. Approximately 10 per cent is operable for commercial forestry. Another 10 per cent is designated parkland. The operable area supports five million cubic meters of Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), which is 25 per cent of the entire B.C. coastal AAC and 7.5 per cent of the provincial AAC.

The region encompasses the traditional territory of several different First Nations and is subject to a variety of different processes to resolve outstanding issues around aboriginal rights and title.

It contains one of the largest areas of intact temperate rainforest remaining in the world and is biologically rich. It includes the largest known population of the white-colour coat Kermode or Spirit bear as well as viable populations of grizzly bears and timber wolves. All five species of Pacific salmon spawn in the region’s numerous rivers and streams.

#### **The Conflict-free Period:**

To create a conflict-free period in which to develop a framework for conservation-based, ecosystem management, the companies involved are prepared to defer harvesting in some areas of the Central Coast, and the environmental groups involved are prepared to stop focusing on the participating companies in international campaigns aimed at highlighting conservation needs and forestry practices in BC’s coastal temperate rainforests.

Areas for harvesting deferrals associated with this initiative include 30 locations in the Central Coast that have been identified by environmental groups, and are within Western Forest Products

and Weyerhaeuser forest tenures. Both companies have been deferring harvesting on a voluntary basis in most of these areas since 1998/99.

**The Independent Process on Jobs:**

The companies and environmental groups recognize that this conflict resolution initiative will only be effective if the social and economic implications of changes to forest planning and harvesting regimes are addressed to the satisfaction of First Nations, labour, and local logging contractors and communities. A facilitator has been retained to consult with affected parties to identify the employment impacts of harvesting deferrals and develop options for maintaining job stability while a new proposal on ecosystem planning is developed. The facilitator will table an initial report with companies, environmental groups and other interested parties by the end of August/00.

**The Conservation-Based, Ecosystem Management Framework:**

The initiative is rooted in growing public and customer interest in the protection of old-growth forests and sustainable forest management. It is based on the following premises:

1. Coastal forests of the Central and North Coast are ecologically significant in a local, regional, and global context.
2. The coastal forests of BC are the traditional territory of First Nations and are culturally, economically, environmentally and socially significant to them.
3. Forests of the Central and North Coast are socially and economically significant in a local and regional context.
4. Strong environmental protection, a strong economy, and a strong social fabric are directly linked.

**The Overall Process:**

The companies and environmental groups are committed to involving First Nations, the provincial government, labour, contractors, local communities and stakeholders in exploring how new approaches to ecosystem and economic planning on the Central and North Coast can address the needs of all groups.

They are prepared to engage scientists and technical experts representing a range of biological, economic and social disciplines to assist in the development of a proposed framework for conservation-based ecosystem management. The proposals and ideas that emerge from collaborative work sponsored by this initiative will reach beyond existing constraints imposed by policy, regulation and institutional arrangements. The information generated will be provided to First Nations, the Central Coast Land and Resource Management Planning process (LRMP) government, decision-making bodies and the public.