

Deforestation



Indigenous Wisdom

"We must protect the forest for 'our' children, 'our' grandchildren and 'our' great grandchildren not yet born. We must also protect it for those who cannot speak for themselves: the birds, the animals, the trees and bushes, the fish. We must act on their behalf."

-Dene teaching



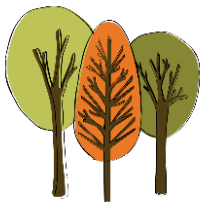
Background



- Despite covering **less than 10%** of Earth's land surface, tropical forests support **at least two-thirds** of the world's **biodiversity**.
- British Columbia (B.C.) contains the world's largest remaining areas of intact coastal temperate rainforests.
- In B.C., **41%** (22.6 million hectares) of forests are **over 140 years old** and **13%** (7.1 million hectares) are **over 250 years old**.

Old Growth Forests and the Environment

B.C.'s coastal forests are considered old growth, if trees are more than 250 years old, have remained intact and have not been altered by human activities.



Old growth forests:

- are an important part of many Indigenous cultures
- counteract climate change by storing atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂)
- provide clean water for people, spawning salmon and other wildlife
- provide a home for a wide variety of wildlife

Deforestation

Deforestation, the cutting down of forests, is a major issue in B.C. and around the world.

The drivers of old growth deforestation in B.C. are:

- agricultural expansion (i.e. cutting down trees to grow food)
- urban expansion and settlement (i.e. cutting down trees for new towns and cities)
- oil, gas and mineral extraction (i.e. cutting down trees for fossil fuels and minerals)
- logging and timber extraction (i.e. cutting down trees for wood and paper products)



Some of the Environmental Impacts of Deforestation

- **Soil erosion.** A tree's roots act as the 'glue' that holds soil together. Removing trees leaves the soil vulnerable to erosion due to varying weather conditions.
- **Reduced biodiversity.** When trees are removed, wildlife are deprived of their habitat and become vulnerable to hunting and extinction.
- **Climate change.** Forests, considered the "Earth's lungs," are **carbon sinks** that counteract climate change by absorbing CO₂ and producing oxygen through **photosynthesis**. Having fewer trees means more CO₂ will stay in the atmosphere adding to the effects of climate change.

Glossary

Carbon sink. A carbon sink is anything that absorbs more carbon than it releases. Natural carbon sinks found in the environment include forest, plants, oceans and the atmosphere.

Biodiversity (or Biological Diversity). It is the variety of and differences between all life on Earth.

Photosynthesis. It is the process by which plants use sunlight and CO₂ to make their own food and oxygen. This process directly adds oxygen back into the atmosphere.

Learn More and Take Action

Learn about everyday steps you can take to prevent and reduce deforestation:

- **Greenpeace's Solutions to Deforestation** (<https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/forests/solutions-to-deforestation/>)
- **Hey Mr. Green! How Can an Average Citizen Stop Deforestation?** (<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/ask-mr-green/hey-mr-green-how-can-average-citizen-stop-deforestation>)



Have your voice heard and join a network of youth from around the world, working to protect our environment and nature:

- **Youth4Nature** (<https://www.youth4nature.org>)



Learn more about and support First Nations' rights and initiatives that are protecting BC forests:

- **Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative** (<https://coastalfirstnations.ca>)

Follow, support and volunteer at local organizations that are protecting BC forests:

- **Ancient Forest Alliance** (www.ancientforestalliance.org)
- **Stand.Earth** (<https://www.stand.earth>)
- **Canopy** (<https://canopyplanet.org>)
- **Sierra Club of BC** (<https://sierraclub.bc.ca>)



References

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