

Critical report shows current BC logging practices increase climate disaster risks for BC communities

Forest conservation, forestry reforms, and Indigenous expertise and knowledge are urgently needed to mitigate climate disaster risks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2021

Unceded Coast Salish Territories (VANCOUVER, BC) — A new independent report commissioned by Sierra Club BC looks at the relationship between forest management and severe climate impacts expected across B.C. It shows that governments can mitigate climate related disasters like flooding, droughts, fires and heatwaves by swiftly reforming B.C.'s forestry practices, applying Indigenous knowledge to forest-related decisions, and protecting and restoring intact forests, before the climate crisis worsens.

Written by Dr. Peter Wood, the [‘Intact forests, safe communities’ report](#) found that industrial logging has a significant impact on the severity and frequency of climate risks for B.C. communities. Of the 15 climate risks identified in B.C.'s 2019 Strategic Climate Risk Assessment, the majority are influenced by logging. The BC Climate Risk Assessment outlined how several of these risks have the potential to create catastrophic impacts.

B.C.'s assessment did not consider the ways that logging worsens climate risks, presenting a major blind spot that could undermine the effectiveness of the Province's response to global heating. In order to support the health and safety of B.C. communities, it is critical that the BC Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, now under development, include measures to protect intact forests and reform forestry practices. The best way to accomplish this is by implementing all of the recommendations from the 2020 Old Growth Strategic Review.

“The science is clear that clearcutting increases the frequency and intensity of forest fires. We also know it increases both the risk of flooding and periods of drought, as well as erosion and slope instability, which increase the likelihood of landslides,” explained Dr. Peter Wood, the author of the report. “In contrast, old intact forests act as a moderating influence on the landscape, supporting ecosystem function and resilience, and lowering risk to surrounding communities.”

“The climate crisis impacts us all, but it particularly has devastating repercussions for vulnerable and marginalized people, including First Nations across the province, many who have limited

capacity and resources to respond to climate disasters and whose territories are high-risk areas that corporations and governments seek to develop,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

“UBCIC endorsed Resolution 2020-23 to call on the government to involve Indigenous people in decisions related to forestry management, including the protection of old-growth forests, as they not only have a vested interest in protecting and stewarding the land that they have maintained spiritual and cultural ties to since time immemorial, but many Nations depend on forestry for their livelihoods and must be able to help guide BC’s transition to more sustainable and conservation-based practices,” added Phillip.

“The climate crisis puts the health and safety of communities in danger, and clearcut logging is making things worse,” said Sierra Club BC’s Senior Forest and Climate Campaigner Jens Wieting. “It doesn’t need to be this way. Immediately deferring logging in at-risk old-growth forests and implementing the promised paradigm shift to forest management can reduce climate risks, if we move quickly. Remaining old-growth must be protected, and forest that has already been degraded by logging can be restored to increase resiliency,” added Wieting.

Premier John Horgan has committed to implementing all of the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review; however, the B.C. government has yet to implement interim protection for all at-risk forests, provide the necessary funding, and disclose a timetable for how they will live up to this commitment.

The *‘Intact forests, safe communities’* report emphasized that the provincial government must work with Indigenous decision-makers to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, cultural values, and knowledge into forest management decisions to mitigate risks.

“First Nations have long been lobbying the B.C. government to recognize their right to manage the forest in their territories and to protect their sacred sites, old-growth ecosystems that support medicinal plants, and habitat for wildlife and birds. Through management of their forests, they would keep healthy forests with high environmental standards. This report reflects what First Nations have always known, that the provincial governments must change the way they manage forests immediately,” stated Kekinusuqs, Dr. Judith Sayers, President of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

“We are entering a new era of climate emergency and forest management must be adapted to mitigate many of the risks,” said Wieting.

“This is an opportunity to transition to a more sustainable model of forestry that is jointly designed with First Nations and build more resilient communities. However, time is running out, as these threats will only increase in magnitude with further warming and logging of intact forest.”

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- [Download the ‘Intact forests, safe communities’ report here](#)
- [Download photos and infographics related to the report here](#)

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