



WEST COAST
Environmental Law



Legislation to Protect Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Health

BC is Canada's most biodiverse province. Although BC occupies only 10% of Canada's land area, the province contains more than half of the country's vertebrates and vascular plants and about 75% of its bird and mammal species.

Right now, BC is facing both a biodiversity and a climate crisis – presenting major challenges that our current laws are not equipped to handle. Instead of relying on outdated laws and regulations centred on resource extraction, BC needs an overarching provincial law, co-developed with Indigenous nations, to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health. →



Things to know

In 2020, BC committed to implementing all 14 recommendations of the Province's independent Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) panel to affect a paradigm shift in how we manage forests.

The second recommendation called on the government to enact legislation that establishes ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation as an overarching priority for all sectors.

Such a law would give BC species and ecosystems a fighting chance to adapt to the detrimental impacts of climate change and turn the tide on decades of harmful cumulative impacts. Caring for ecosystems benefits humans, too, by preserving critical ecosystem 'life-support' services such as carbon storage, clean air and water, food security, and mitigation of floods and landslide risks.

A biodiversity and ecosystem health law co-developed with First Nations would contribute to restoring healthy relationships between humans and the natural world, grounded in recognition and respect for the inherent jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples to care for their territories.

Communities across British Columbia grapple with the consequences of a provincial legislative framework that prioritizes resource development over ecosystem health. Under the current framework, local communities' long-term health depends significantly on the decisions of provincial officials and resource companies. Local governments often lack the ability to prevent or limit resource development that affects them.

A new provincial statutory framework would benefit local communities by:

- Placing the long-term health of ecosystems at the centre of decision-making for clean water and air, sustainable economies, and safe communities
- Supporting long-term community and ecological resilience
- Reducing infrastructure and emergency management costs for local communities by working with nature (nature-based solutions)

There are currently two Resolutions up for a vote at the 2022 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference.

We ask that you vote for NR38 and NR39 and advocate for Legislation to Protect and Restore Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Health.

NR39: Advocacy for Legislation to Protect Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Health

Whereas a healthy environment is essential for the wellbeing of residents, local communities and local economies, and the cumulative impacts of inadequate provincial environmental regulations impose costs and risks on local communities, including risks associated with climate change, drinking water supply, wildfire hazard, flooding, and security of municipal infrastructure, and may undermine local government planning;

And whereas in order to protect and restore biological diversity and ecosystem health, and advance the objective of reconciliation, the provincial government has committed to fully implement the recommendations of the 2020 Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR), including recommendation 2: “Declare conservation of ecosystem health and biodiversity of British Columbia’s forests as an overarching priority and enact legislation that legally establishes this priority for all sectors”:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM call on the Province of British Columbia to work with Indigenous leadership to, in a timely way, develop the process and timelines through which they will develop new legislation to protect and restore biological diversity and ecosystem health, in a manner consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and with the involvement of local governments, civil society groups, Indigenous and western scientific experts, and the concerned public.

** See also Resolution NR38: New Legislation to Protect and Restore Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Health, submitted by Islands Trust.*

Submitted by Port Moody

Show your support for biodiversity in BC!

Please vote for NR38 and NR39 and advocate for Legislation to Protect and Restore Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Health.

For more information, see West Coast Environmental Law's paper, *Action for Healthy Communities: Benefits of a Provincial Law for Ecosystem Health*. Available at www.wcel.org/action-for-healthy-communities OR scan:



West Coast Environmental Law harnesses the power of law to solve complex environmental challenges, transforming environmental decision-making and strengthening legal protection for the environment through collaborative strategies that bridge Indigenous and Canadian law.

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