

LAND USE PLANNING AND FOREST PRACTICES

Issue	West Coast Environmental Law	BC Liberals	BC NDP	BC Greens
<p>Land use planning and protection</p>	<p>Ecosystem-based planning at all scales that focuses first on what to leave behind on the land to sustain ecological integrity and First Nations cultures before determining appropriate levels and locations of resource extraction.</p>	<p>"In the Great Bear Rainforest a new ecosystem based management regime will ensure all permitted activities within the area are environmentally sustainable and scientifically sound." (p. 31)</p>	<p>"Strategic planning to help ensure that BC mining and exploration sectors are well-positioned to resume a world-leading role as mineral suppliers when demand returns." (p. 13)</p>	<p>"Institute watershed-by-watershed ecosystem-based management plans and rate of cut determinations based on ecologically sustainable forestry principles that enhance and protect all timber and non-timber forest values, including, cultural, environmental, tourism, recreational, and fishery values." (p. 60)</p> <p>"[I]ncrease BC's parks and protected areas system, including marine environments, to 20% of the land base over the next 100 years." (p. 42)</p> <p>"Expand the Ecological Reserve System to encompass one percent of BC's land base." (p. 44)</p>

<p>Forest practices (Provincial forests)</p>	<p>Taking an ecosystem-based approach means, among other things, ensuring that the forest left behind after logging has characteristics similar to conditions resulting from indigenous management systems and natural disturbances typical of that ecosystem (e.g., fire). For example, the amount and distribution of old growth or wildlife trees left behind.</p>	<p>"In the Great Bear Rainforest a new ecosystem based management regime will ensure all permitted activities within the area are environmentally sustainable and scientifically sound." (p. 31)</p>	<p>"An updated old growth strategy for coast and interior old growth forests." (p. 13)</p>	<p>"Place a moratorium on logging, road building, and industrial development in critically endangered species habitat."</p> <p>"Bring old-growth logging to a halt" (p. 42)</p> <p>"Maintain natural (fire, wind, insects, etc.) and human (logging) disturbances within the historic range of natural variability. Phase out clear cutting in second-growth stands replacing this practice with frequent light commercial thinning and longer rotations to produce high quality wood resulting in more revenue from less wood and sustainable, continuous forest harvesting. Designate as off-limits to logging our remaining intact watersheds, domestic drinking water watersheds, endangered ecosystems, habitats of endangered species, and First Nations lands on which approval to log has not been granted. Ban the use of pesticides and synthetic chemical fertilizers in publicly owned forests. Eliminate coastal old-growth logging. Maintain the ecological integrity and resilience of forests to reduce vulnerability to natural and human caused stresses." (p. 61)</p>
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<p>Private forest lands and conversion of forests to other uses (e.g., residential development)</p>	<p>Forestry regulations that meet or exceed those that apply in Provincial Forests should also apply to private managed forest lands. Historically, companies received logging rights for little or no money in exchange for taking on certain responsibilities, including managing their private lands according to the same rules. Removal of private lands from tree farm licences violates this historic 'social contract' with the people of BC.</p>	<p>"We are the first jurisdiction in Canada to adopt a ground-breaking Zero Net Deforestation policy." (p. 42)</p>	<p>"Carole James and the NDP will stop the sell-off of BC's public resources by:"Keeping our forest lands in public hands." (p. 25)</p> <p>"A strengthened Private Managed Forest Land Act to improve protection and management of watersheds, wildlife and public resources." (p. 13)</p>	<p>"Set the same standards of environmental protection for logging on private lands over five hectares, as established for public lands." (p. 61)</p>
<p>Mountain Pine Beetle</p>	<p>Biodiversity protection and restoration deserve greater priority in BC's MPB policies, which presently emphasize salvage logging in order to maximize economic benefit from impacted areas, often at the expense of other values.</p>	<p>"We will continue to invest in our multi-million dollar Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan." (p. 42)</p>	<p>"Expanded reforestation to address the massive "die-back" resulting from the pine beetle outbreak and the reforestation backlog created by the neglect of the Campbell government." (p. 13)</p>	<p>"Maintain the ecological integrity and resilience of forests to reduce vulnerability to nature and human caused stresses." (p. 61)</p> <p>"Establish a reserve fund to enable increased forest restoration activities during times when the forest economy experiences a downturn." (p. 61)</p>

Analysis:

Land use planning and protection: Strategic land use plans like Land and Resource Management Plans have been completed for much of the province since 1992; however, only in limited areas was an ecosystem-based approach taken, resulting in levels of conservation that are not likely to sustain species and ecosystems into the future in most regions of the province, particularly in the face of climate change. In its platform, the Green Party has made a comprehensive commitment to ecosystem-based management planning. The Liberals have championed ecosystem-based management, but only in one region (the central and north coasts and Haida Gwaii, i.e., the Great Bear Rainforest). The NDP platform does not reference strategic planning outside of the mining context, although they indicated in follow-up correspondence that: “The NDP feel that we need to do a full review of land-use planning in BC. There needs to be a comprehensive and cumulative study of land-use issues that would cover all resource sectors.”

Forest practices (Provincial forests): In 2002, the provincial government enacted the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, which applies to all forests managed under timber tenures, and was intended to make a shift from a ‘planning-based’ regime that attempted to prevent environmental harm before the fact through more detailed planning and approvals, to a more ‘results-based’ approach that relies on enforcement after the fact to deter harmful practices. The FRPA framework contains no bottom line protections for the environment – all of the ecological objectives in the act apply only to the extent they can be met “without unduly reducing the supply of timber from British Columbia’s forests,” while minimal content requirements in the one operational plan that now requires approval make First Nations consultation and public engagement extremely difficult. Neither the Liberals nor the NDP have indicated what they will do to remedy this situation, although the NDP indicates that they will “update” strategies regarding old growth. The Green Party platform makes strong commitments on this issue.

Private forest lands. Both the NDP and the Greens would strengthen regulation of private land logging, although the Green Party Commitment is more specific. The NDP platform is strong on avoiding forestry privatization and tree farm licence removals. For example, Carole James has committed to negotiations with Western Forest Products to attempt to purchase 12,000 hectares of forest TFL lands within the Capital Region District that were removed for real estate development. The Liberals do not address the public-private issue, but do make a strong commitment to ensure that the total amount of forest land is increased commensurately (i.e., by planting other areas) if land is cleared and converted to other uses.

Mountain Pine Beetle: On the mountain pine beetle front, the Liberals seem inclined to stay the course with current policies, but the NDP doesn't go a lot further, except committing to expanded tree-planting after the fact in affected areas. In follow up correspondence the NDP elaborated as follows: “Reforestation efforts to deal with the mountain pine beetle need to be done with a view for mid-term and long-term timber supply, with a greater emphasis on biodiversity in order to maintain a sustainable forest inventory.”

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