



Protect Nature to Protect Us: Landmark Report Urges British Columbia To Conserve At Least 50% of Its Land Base As Part of Expanded Climate Change Strategy

New report and accompanying letter signed by top international scientists and environmental thinkers urges government to integrate nature conservation into provincial climate action strategy.

VANCOUVER, Jan. 28 – British Columbia's fight against climate change should focus on conserving at least 50% of its land base using new strategies for nature conservation and carbon storage, says a new peer-reviewed report by senior ecologist Dr. Jim Pojar.

“Our survival is intertwined with nature's survival, and climate change is forcing us to re-evaluate the way we protect nature,” said Dr. Pojar. “A minimum conservation target of 50% is what's necessary to give our plants and animals a fighting chance to adapt, while also keeping and drawing more carbon out of the atmosphere so that over time we can slow and reduce climate change.”

The 50% figure emphasizes expansion and connection of existing protected areas plus development of new buffer zones and restoration areas, allowing sustainable resource development while providing refuge for species and ecosystems across a changing landscape. Additionally, because forestry economics are changing dramatically, BC should look to opportunities opening for conservation as a means of re-inventing the industry of the future.

There are precedents for large-scale conservation in Canada. Ontario and Quebec have made commitments to protect more than 50% of their Northern Boreal regions, and BC has its own successful examples to build on, including Haida Gwaii and the Great Bear Rainforest. Benefits of large-scale conservation include greater clarity for where and how resource development occurs, as well as economic and social benefits like ecosystem services (e.g. clean air and water) and new markets for carbon and conservation.

Accompanied by a letter signed by several of the world's top environmental thinkers, including Dr. James Hansen, Dr. Michael Soulé and Bill McKibben, and released to coincide with the UN's International Year of Biodiversity, the report is the second in less than a month to suggest that BC needs to change the way it manages its environment in response to climate change.

“There's a small price for being too early, but a huge penalty for being too late when it comes to fighting climate change,” said Dr. James Hansen, world-renowned climatologist and adjunct professor at Columbia University. “Our efforts for mitigation and adaptation will be meaningless unless they include immediate and substantial protection of the natural systems that sustain us.”

The report and media backgrounder, as well as a list of letter endorsers is available for download at: <http://www.wcel.org/media-centre/media-releases/protect-nature-protect-us-landmark-report-urges-british-columbia-conserv>

For more information:

Dr. Faisal Moola, Science Director, David Suzuki Foundation - (647) 993-5788

Dr. Jim Pojar, Report author and senior ecologist - (250) 847-9429