



## Valhalla Wilderness Society – Voices for Good Air

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PRESS RELEASE

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### **IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM OF OLD GROWTH CLEARCUTTING A NECESSARY STEP TO AVOIDING CLIMATE DISASTER**

British Columbia's greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions is not accounted for in Canada's emissions reports as revealed in a recent report.

Under international agreements such as the Paris Accord, Canada reports its total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by combining all emission totals recorded by the provinces. However, Canada neglects to include the massive emissions caused by B.C. logging operations, particularly the conversion of old growth forests into plantation forests and the slash-burning of logging waste.

A report by Dr. Jim Pojar exposes B.C.'s role in accelerating climate change, with just the logging and slash-burning practices of forestry alone producing higher gross carbon emissions than any other sector in B.C. In 2007 these logging practices produced 80.9 megatons of CO<sub>2</sub>, almost 50% greater emissions than B.C.'s energy sector including transportation, mining, oil and gas, and stationary combustion emissions combined<sup>1</sup>.

Though forestry emissions have increased substantially due to reduced logging waste assessments and minimal penalties, they are still shockingly not subjected to a carbon tax. In fact, Canada and its provinces deliberately ignore the inconvenient truth of their existence.

BC and Canada have been operating on a widespread myth that the carbon stored in forests continues to be stored in wood products after the forest is logged. But a growing body of research has been proving this is not true. As early as 2008 it was estimated that 18 billion tonnes of carbon, almost 1000 times the annual GHG emissions in B.C., are stored in B.C.'s forest ecosystems<sup>2</sup>. Even when factoring in the carbon stored in building products, the replacement of old forests with young plantations reduces this carbon storage by 40-50% or more<sup>3</sup>.

What is truly disturbing about the decimation of B.C.'s old growth is just how much logging waste is created in the process. Old growth forests continue to be destroyed to make space for plantation forests. Between 2003 and 2007, coastal logging companies logged 107.4 million cubic metres of timber and left behind approximately 11.8 million cubic metres of usable wood waste. Corresponding figures for the interior were 285.7 million and 5.7 million cubic metres respectively<sup>4</sup>.

Most of this logging waste is slash-burned, pumping massive volumes of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the earth's atmosphere. Amidst a climate crisis, this substantial source of GHG emissions is allowed

to disgracefully slide under the radar of Canada and its provinces.

Less concealed are the consequences that B.C. people must face as the last of their resilient forests are liquidated. Residents not forced to evacuate from floods and fires will at best breathe the waste pile smoke of ancient forests that are essential to flood and fire reduction and global climate regulation.

In a race towards massive planetary changes, the province of B.C. continues to convert its only safety net, its remaining old growth forests, to managed plantation forests. Ancient trees with upwards of a hundred branches, each the size of a 20 year old plantation tree, are burned in slash piles that instantly release many tons of stored carbon into the atmosphere as a GHG. Looking to a future of climate uncertainty, the people of B.C. are ultimately being stripped of their life support system for short-term industrial gain.

If thousands of people fleeing fires and floods that destroy their homes is not enough to demand a reform of old growth logging practices, then perhaps the contribution to B.C.'s huge list of endangered and declining species is reason to reconsider. B.C.'s old growth forests are noted for their richness in biodiversity and ecosystem functionality, but are not given the respect they deserve.

It is not known just how quickly these cumulative effects could amount to complete catastrophe, but for those already affected it is clear that time has run out to confront B.C.'s unsustainable forestry practices, to safeguard the remaining old growth that is its greatest carbon bank, and to consider future climate uncertainty in its carbon budget calculations.



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**References:**

<sup>1</sup> BC government. Ministry of Environment. 2009. B.C. Provincial Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2007.  
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<sup>2</sup> Wilson SJ, Hebda RJ. 2008. Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change Through the Conservation of Nature. The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia, Saltspring Island, BC.

<sup>3</sup> Matsuzaki E, Sanborn P, Fredeen AL, Shaw CH, Hawkins C. 2013. Carbon stocks in managed and unmanaged oldgrowth western redcedar and western hemlock stands of Canada's inland temperate rainforests. *Forest Ecology & Management*.  
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<sup>4</sup> Parfitt, B. 2009. Shortchanged: Tallying the Legacy of Waste in BC's Logging Industry. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC.