

**MORE PROTECTION FOR THE GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST!**  
**Final announcement February 1, 2016.**

On February 1, 2016, the province and coastal First Nations announced the “final” protection agreement for the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) on the BC coast. Since 1/3 of the GBR was protected in 2006, ten years of negotiations between the larger environmental groups, forest companies and coastal First Nations finally resulted in a GBR conservation agreement. Part of this can be found at:  
[https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/TASB/SLRP/LRMP/Nanaimo/CLUDI/GBR/Orders/GBR\\_LUO\\_Signed\\_29Jan2016.pdf](https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/TASB/SLRP/LRMP/Nanaimo/CLUDI/GBR/Orders/GBR_LUO_Signed_29Jan2016.pdf)

There is some cause for celebration since noteworthy improvements have been made in coastal logging guidelines and in adding 10 new partially protected areas which brings the grand total of parks, conservancies and partial protection designations to 38% overall. This is near to the minimum of 40-50% full protection agreed to in 2004 in a landmark GBR-ENGO protocol.

We wish to thank everyone, including our friends amongst the coastal First Nations, for the progress made. Green Inlet-Watershed, one of the VWS focus core areas not protected in the previous 2006 GBR agreement - when ½ million acres of our Spirit Bear Conservancy Proposal were fully protected - will now be one of the new coastal protected areas to be added, thanks to the Kitsoo Xai'xais First Nation. A formal agreement for the legislated Green Tribal Park has yet to be completed. Unfortunately, Gribbell Island, mother island of the white bears and considered Canada's “bear Galapagos”, did not make the protection list despite recent VWS efforts to convince the Gitga'at First Nation and province, including a sign-on petition by 88 scientists from around the world, asking for full protection.

New ecosystem-based management (EBM) logging guidelines offer some increased protection such as for critical bear habitats including ancient trees used for winter dens; not to mention increased protection of red- and blue-listed forest type “site series”. However, a recent independent, sufficiency analysis by biologist Wayne McCrory showed that the EBM guidelines would still not adequately protect the ecological integrity of grizzly bear-salmon ecosystems.

The announcement by the Premier that “commercial” trophy hunt for grizzlies on the coast will end was somewhat misleading. In reality, this will only apply to First Nations territories and the province will only cancel the hunt for foreign hunters after First Nations buy out the guide/outfitters. The trophy hunt for grizzlies by resident hunters will still be allowed. Please continue to protest hunting of grizzly bears throughout BC.

VWS will continue to up-date you on the final GBR Order and continue to work to build on these stepping-stones that are helping to set a better conservation model for the province.

GBR Review: See 2015 VWS newsletter (See p. 6): Final 20Nov2015 VWS Newsltr-colour.pdf

VWS-Biologists ask for white bear Gribbell Island Protection:

[http://www.vancouver.sun.com/technology/scientists+government+preserve+spirit+bear+habitat/11678012/story.html?\\_lsa=09a6-cc34](http://www.vancouver.sun.com/technology/scientists+government+preserve+spirit+bear+habitat/11678012/story.html?_lsa=09a6-cc34)

VWS Gribbell Island Conservation Report: SpiritBear-GribbellProtectionVWSFINJan8-12.pdf