

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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Newsletter No. 62

December 2019

CLEARCUTTING COMMENCES IN SELKIRK PARK PROPOSAL

Dear members and supporters,

Our team simply cannot express the depth of our gratitude for your continued support. We have felt such strong camaraderie with our loyal supporters, and we are continually driven by your expressions of encouragement, your donations, your heartwarming envelopes of petition pages, and all of your energy in helping our cause. With this said you can imagine how regretful we feel informing you that our Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park proposal is under attack by BC Timber Sales.

With twenty years of boots on the ground, we have worked to discover the most biodiverse, ancient remaining ecosystems known to BC's rare Inland Rainforest Region. The areas known to have the highest biodiversity have been mapped and their values detailed in a portfolio of three park proposals of the Inland Temperate Rainforest. Our team travelled to Victoria last March to present government with the portfolio that represents 20 years of study in this rare ecosystem region.

In meetings with BC Parks representatives and BC Ministers of Environment and Forests this year, we were told that the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park proposal was a "gold-standard proposal" that was being given some consideration. But instead, the BC government's own logging company has started stripping forest from the west slopes of Duncan Lake on the southern arm of the proposal.

Valhalla's Craig Pettitt and Amber Peters have continued monitoring as a \$4.8 million dollar logging road has been plowed through the beloved proposal that has over a decade of support behind it. Unsightly clearcuts have started infiltrating the proposed park boundaries in what appears to be a race to get the forest without any attention to best practices. Landslides have already started on slopes that could not have

been logged without triggering them, and the ministry has so far failed to address our letter of complaint.

Sadly, the integrity of the west Duncan slopes of the park proposal is being compromised by destroying its connectivity to the lake, and also to areas of ancient forest where uncommon species, bear dens and monumental cedars stand, still with paltry protection.



One of three landslides caused by clearcutting and the construction of a \$4.8 logging road on steep slopes above Duncan lake. Continued road construction means more logging is in store for the park proposal. [Photo: Isaac Carter]

The area under attack is within 1-2 km of known locations of the critically declining Central Selkirk herd of Mountain Caribou, which is now down to only 24 animals. This was one of the largest unroaded tracts of potential caribou recovery habitat south of Prince George, but now about a third of the hundred-year-old second growth has been fragmented by BC Timber Sales (BCTS). Because it slopes down to a low-elevation lake from an area of occupied caribou habitat, this

forest should have been preserved for caribou recovery if the government planned to follow the Species at Risk law. BCTS plans to continue clearcutting, and we must be vigilant in our resistance.

The struggling Central Selkirk herd is obviously being pushed off the face of the Earth, as Craig and Amber have also observed clearcutting in their habitat at Trout Lake this year, and additional cutblocks are still being proposed in old growth habitat at Trout Lake. In May, VWS published a press release revealing BC Timber Sales' plans, and a government panel at a caribou public input meeting in Nelson was confronted with an uproar of locals pleading for an immediate moratorium. The field work has continued in attempts to locate caribou in unprotected habitat areas and expose proposed cutblocks in their habitat, but alarm bells are ringing louder for our team as these caribou are becoming harder to find, and logging permits continue to be granted in critical matrix habitat.

CLEARCUTTING COMMENCES IN SELKIRK PARK PROPOSAL

It's hard to imagine that a climate and biodiversity crisis isn't enough to bring about a meaningful reevaluation of BC's grossly inadequate protected areas before it's too late to preserve any remaining habitat. Our supporters have flooded government offices with letters pleading for ecosystem protection, but your cries for action are being ignored. At least five different public processes for BC forestry and Species at Risk have taken place this year, but the talk-and-log continues, and hardly-regulated forestry practices are driving deep nails in the coffin of BC's many Species at Risk.

We are made to believe that our best interest is being looked out for, when in fact an outrageous conflict of interest is at play with the power to create new protected areas being handed to the Ministry of Forests whose mandate is to continue clearcutting. We are made to feel safe, when in fact the BC government knows, and has reported in detail, that shocking effects of climate change are expected to come over the next decades. But this same government's own logging company, BC's largest timber tenure holder, continues to clearcut critical caribou habitat, violate its own objective of Indigenous reconciliation, and strip away the life support system that is our BC rainforest.

British Columbia, under accelerated attack, still harbours a major safety net of resilient ecosystems, including forests of such antiquity that they have withstood thousands of years of

climatic flux, pests, drought, disease, and all sorts of changes without ever failing as a source of life; providing clean water, clean air, habitat for a profound diversity of species, stabilization of the landscape, regulation of the climate, carbon sequestration, regulation of water flow and refuge for the weary human spirit. But we are watching them disappear at a disturbing rate. We are watching as the science is ignored and the ecosystems are exploited. And, as we continue raising our voice in outreach, touring with our film *Primeval*, making connections, collecting signatures, monitoring, striving - we are now watching as our park proposal is being logged.

The reactive and extractive management of our ecosystems has gone on for too long, and we are now at a point where the science is telling us that continuing on this destructive path of resource exploitation is a death sentence.

If you are shocked by this betrayal, please let the government know. Our team has and will continue to stand up and fight for what is right. Please stand with us and know that our efforts could not continue without you. Our most important resource in this time of rapid change is our intact ecosystems. Please read on to learn about some of our major efforts this year, and what we have planned to come together as a collective voice. With scientists predicting a decade left to take action, the time is truly now or never for great change.

VWS SUPPORTS EXPANSION OF THE PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY



The Argenta-Johnson's Landing Face of Kootenay Lake should have been included in the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy. [Photo: Jemma Cholawo]

This year, Valhalla Wilderness Society provided a letter of support for a crucial proposal to include the Argenta-Johnson's Landing Face of Kootenay Lake, also known as the Mt. Willet Wilderness, in the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy. We are urging the BC Government to consider the 6200 hectare addition to maintain the eco-

logical integrity of the Conservancy (PWC) into the future, and to preserve notable features such as karst deposits, rare old growth Western Larch and other old forest types, and habitat for a diversity of At Risk species. The expansion would encompass almost the entire low-elevation, lakefront habitat adjacent to the PWC, adding over 6 km of the Kootenay Lake shoreline to the 5.2% that is presently protected.

Valhalla's Craig Pettitt and Amber Peters surveyed the proposal this year after multiple local reports of caribou sign present on the Mt. Willet face. The two found high habitat suitability values for Mountain Caribou in an old growth interior rainforest ecosystem with dense loading of *Alectoria* and *Bryoria* lichen species that are critical winter foods for the caribou. A local biologist has also reported on the presence of at least 2-3 different sets of caribou tracks in the proposal area. With the caribou in such dire straits, locals are desperately opposing the logging of this wilderness while further investigation can take place. Please visit www.willetwildernessforever.ca and write a letter to help support the proposal.

THE BATTLE TO PROTECT THE MOUNTAIN CARIBOU

In late 2017 VWS and three other parties filed separate legal petitions to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), under the *Species at Risk Act*, providing scientific evidence that the Deep-snow Mountain Caribou of the Interior Wetbelt faced imminent threat to their survival.

In mid-2018 the Minister declared imminent threat to their recovery. By law, the Minister should have made a recommendation to Cabinet for an Order requiring BC to increase habitat protection. Instead the two governments collaborated on a plan for two years of public processes — *while the habitat continues to be logged and the caribou continue to decline*.

Federal intervention brought reports, meetings, negotiations, agreements and public comment engagements. VWS attended or made submissions to them all, and rallied members and supporters — all the while sending staff into the field to monitor logging of caribou habitat.

Fortunately, some caribou angel made a very large anonymous contribution earmarked for caribou. It helped VWS hire a lawyer, with additional funding from West Coast Environmental Law. The anonymous donation also funded newspaper ads, travel to government meetings and many other things. And there was more than one angel, the other three being expert scientific consultants. (Thank you, angels).

Misinformation Capsizes Public Meetings

The timber industry fired up its predictable misinformation campaign well before the public meetings. In Revelstoke, 800 angry people hurled abuse at the government panel and tried to shout down anyone who spoke for caribou protection. VWS representatives Craig Pettitt and Anne Sherrod were amongst only five people who dared to speak for protection. Fortunately, not all the meetings were that way. At the meeting in Nelson, virtually every one of many speakers urged expanded habitat protection and snowmobile closures. Shortly afterward, a government representative told VWS that the government cannot oppose interests that can use social media to bring 800 people to a meeting. VWS was advised to join a “Caribou Society” organized by logging and snowmobiling interests to avoid habitat protection by killing predators and setting up a maternity pen for caribou cows. Otherwise, government would no longer listen to us. VWS replied that it has a couple of thousand members and supporters, and that other environmental groups want habitat protection too. We asked why the people of Nelson, and all those who wrote letters for caribou protection, were being ignored.

People wanting environmental protection are going to have get a lot more vocal to be heard through this wall of substantial government bias.



Gary Kramer



Jim Lawrence

No new habitat protection for Deep-snow Caribou

On September 18, 2019, BC Forests Minister Doug Donaldson announced that the only caribou getting new habitat protection were those of the South Peace region. The herds of the Interior Wetbelt, along with those in the Chilcotin, were simply scuttled as far as habitat protection was concerned.

What is happening instead is expanded predator slaughter, which creates the usual scapegoat while the actual culprits, logging and mechanized recreation, continue to decimate the caribou. Twenty-three environmental groups, biologists and conservationists joined VWS in a protest letter to Premier Horgan. The sham public process and betrayals of this year took up a large swathe of VWS's time. There isn't space here to tell half of it, but you can find more details on our website and Facebook page.

Despite the decline of the Central Selkirk herd, we have to continue this battle for other caribou herds further north. Also, someone has to fight for enforcement of Canada's *Species at Risk Act*.

Environment Canada report debunks theory that caribou can be saved by wolf culls alone

It is unfortunate but true that both our provincial and federal governments prescribe wolf culls for any and all caribou decline, sometimes without scientific evidence that wolf predation was the cause. However, the federal Imminent Threat Assessment report for Southern Mountain Caribou firmly stated that numerous studies have shown that caribou populations declined commensurately with the decline of the condition of their habitat. Wolf culls and penning pregnant caribou cows, without sufficient habitat protection, will result in a herd unable to sustain itself naturally, and the decline will continue if the wolf slaughter ever stops.

VWS Fish Lake Toadlet Migration Fence a Big Success

“Stop biodiversity loss or we could face our own extinction, warns UN”. Such headlines as this one from *The Guardian* are found in major media today. Leading biodiversity experts are most worried about the massive loss of small species, which could cause whole food chains to collapse.

Western Toads power our ecosystems by feeding numerous other species such as birds, fish and reptiles. Amphibians have been declining worldwide for decades, largely because of cumulative diseases that have become more prevalent with climate change. New research shows that a staggering 500 species of amphibians have declined, with at least 90 species now extinct. The good news is that some species are recovering.

Another cause of the decline has been habitat loss and degradation. In a 2008 survey of wetlands in the Arrow-Boundary Forest District, only 27.5% had Western Toads (Dulisse, FWCP, 2009), but the populations are healthy.



Isaac Carter

The VWS toad research team comprised of biologists Wayne McCrory, Marcy Mahr and wildlife technician Cindy Walker are wrapping up their five-year study of western toads at Fish Lake. Armed with a much greater knowledge of toad migration patterns, highway 31A crossings and mortality hot spots than when they started in 2015, the toad team is now moving on to a Mitigation Implementation phase by working closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI).

VWS has now provided MOTI with draft plans for their Engineering Department to work on the design options and costs of three potential highway eco-passages with directional fencing to further reduce highway deaths to migrating adult and juvenile toads. This would mean building toad tunnels such as at Summit Lake and/or modifying existing culverts when they are replaced.

A first priority when the VWS research began was to address the high mortality of migrating toadlets in mid-summer and fall at the Fish Lake Rest Stop, visited by thousands of people annually. Many tourists and local residents who witnessed large numbers of toadlets killed by traffic were very upset and wanted something done. Our big success after five years was the final completion in 2019 of the 500 metre long permanent toadlet migration fence through the Rest Stop. It now directs hundreds of thousands of tiny, migrating beings away from the

highway and sudden death, to a wooden bridge that allows them to cross safely under the Goat Creek bridge and continue their migration up the mountain to hibernate.

Since no commercial toadlet type fence was available, we experimented with different designs that would also be pleasing and safe to the public where the fence crossed the picnic area. We finally settled on green PVC waterline pipe cut in half, with custom made metal frames to hold the fence in place. The final sections were installed in July, just in time for an estimated migration of 200,000 or more toadlets. Hundreds of tourists who stopped at the Rest Stop were fascinated by being able to witness a major migration phenomenon by just peering over the fence through the Rest Stop.

Considering the need to reduce highway mortality to the species, and the success of the VWS Public education program on toad ecology, we hope to get funding to support a part time interpreter during the toadlet migration next year.

Many thanks to the local residents who volunteered as citizen scientists through our “Toad Ambassador” program, for helping move over 600 adult breeding toads and numerous

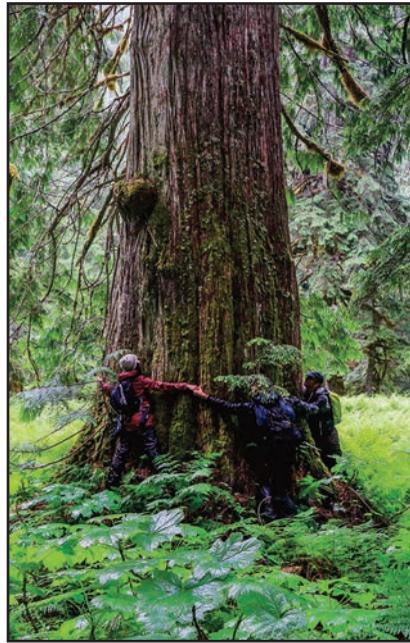
migrating toadlets (elsewhere at Fish Lake and near Bear Lake), safely across the highway. We are grateful to Columbia Basin Trust, Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund - Regional District of Central Kootenay Area “D”, Yellowstone to Yukon, the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation through the Craighead Institute, and Valhalla Wilderness Society for funding. An anonymous donor also contributed through a Canadian foundation.



INTRODUCING THE RAINBOW-JORDAN WILDERNESS PROPOSAL

An exciting effort has come to fruition this year with the development of the Rainbow-Jordan Wilderness park proposal. Last year, we reported on the initial findings in what has been called the fourth major biodiversity hotspot of the Ancient Inland Temperate Rainforest ecosystem. This unroaded wilderness, just north of Revelstoke in the Monashee Mountains, was previously unknown to the scientific community though it's most ancient parts have likely been flourishing with extraordinary biodiversity for many thousands of years.

After another year of monitoring and analysis, the two newly studied, contiguous valleys were mapped, along with a significant portion of the Jordan River, as the 8,408 hectare Rainbow-Jordan Wilderness park proposal. The proposal encompasses the most extensive tract of Ancient Inland Rainforest discovered in BC's Interior Wetbelt since the Incomappleux ancient forest, as well as rare wetlands and other ecosystem types that contribute to the importance of the truly diverse rainforest wilderness. A 12-page briefing document, featuring the results of species inventories to date, mapping of various habitat types, and wildlife values including the potential for intact Mountain Caribou recovery habitat, has been presented to the BC Ministers of Environment and Forests.



Douglas Noblet



Some ancient cedars in the proposal are over 3 meters in diameter and have been estimated at well over a thousand years old. [Photo: Amber Peters]

considering the impacts of surrounding recreation and clearcut logging.

Amber also stressed the importance of preserving the very last of these extremely resilient forests, noting that the wettest parts will likely continue to grow as oases on the landscape while surrounding plantation forests continue to burn. Further public information sessions will be planned in the coming months to gain support for the protection of this ecological jewel.

Valhalla's Craig Pettitt and Amber Peters have continued their work monitoring trail cameras placed strategically in the largest of the two contiguous valleys this year and have developed a log of wildlife sightings. They have also begun introducing local supporters to the proposal including The North Columbia Environmental Society whose team members helped to identify a route into some of the most accessible ancient forest for the respectful enjoyment and inspiration of supporters, and to help with campaign efforts. This has already opened up opportunities to share the proposal with a larger audience.

This November, Amber was invited to present the findings of the first ever biodiversity surveys and wildlife habitat assessment of the new park proposal as a part of the Columbia Mountains Institute's CRED Talks (Columbia Region Ecological Discussions) series. In the 30 minute discussion, she revealed some of the rare species found during the initial inventories and emphasized the need to secure what remains of the regions' intact wildlife habitat



Biologist and campaigner Amber Peters shares some of the exciting findings in the Rainbow-Jordan Wilderness with a crowd at the Revelstoke Community Centre.

It has been a major effort to identify the last of these rare ecosystems, and now, with great determination and 1,800 supporters by our side, we will continue to fight for all three of our proposals for a future of climate and biodiversity resilience.

Please follow us at www.vws.org and on Facebook as we post proposal updates over the coming months, and visit www.vws.org/action for ways you can help.

STUDY REVEALS CHILCOTIN WILD HORSES CARRY ANCIENT BLOODLINES FROM DIFFERENT CONTINENTS

A genetic study being completed with Dr. Gus Cothran of Texas A & M University shows that the wild horse bands, numbering about 1,000 animals spread over the West Chilcotin Plateau, survive in semi-isolated enclaves and do not all have the same ancient ancestry. Thanks to funding support from Lush Cosmetics and the Fitzhenry Foundation, researchers were able to walk hundreds of kilometres of wild horse trails in different areas of the Chilcotin collecting wild horse hair left on trees and branches. The hair basal follicles were analyzed by Dr. Cothran's genetics lab to determine ancestry. He's a world expert on horse bloodlines.

Results showed that two separate genetic enclaves exist in the Chilcotin with different origins. First, the study confirmed our previous genetic research that wild horses in the First Nation protected Eagle Lake Henry Cayuse Wild Horse Preserve (the only large preserve in Canada) are a rare mix of two breeds - Canadien horse and Yakutian - never found in the wilds of North America before. The Canadien horse originated from horses brought to the Colony of Quebec from France starting in 1665. The Yakut horse is a small Eurasian breed only found today in northern Siberia. We have no idea how these breeds found their way into BC's remote Chilcotin wilderness.

The genetic study showed that other wild horse bands outside the Preserve on the vast Chilcotin Plateau, separated by deeply incised river valleys, are entirely different, dominated by the genes of Spanish Barbs. Barbs were the foundation

bloodlines of the now famous Spanish horse – the Horse of the Conquistadores. No longer will cattle ranchers be justified in their historic programs to kill off the horses under false claims they are in-bred scavengers of the range.

The Spanish Barbs found in the Chilcotin corroborate historic and First Nations oral evidence that horses were first brought in to the area by the Tsilquot'in First Nations in about 1750, on trade trails from the south, from horses brought from Spain to the Americas in

the early 1500s. Indigenous people spread the Spanish horse across the interior plains of North America. The US has protected their tens of thousands of surviving wild horses despite genetic studies showing most to be mixed breeds - except for the Spanish horses protected in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Preserve in Wyoming. Spanish Barbs surviving in the Chilcotin are thus highly significant and dispute cattlemen's calls for culls by false claims that they are in-bred and inferior swaybacks. They should all be protected provincially and federally as with the U.S. federal protection of their Pryor Mountain Preserve cousins.



Sadie Parr

Chilcotin Wild Horses exist in a self-sustaining predator-prey dynamic with wolves. [Photo: Wayne McCrory]

This new information will be key in helping Tsilquot'in, Friends of Nemaiah Valley, VWS and others to protect BC's last 1,000 wild horses from government culls and other threats generated by the cattle industry. These are the last of tens of thousands of wild horses that once ran free in the interior BC grassland belt. The last wild horse cull was in 1988. Lacking any legislative protection, they are constantly under threat of indiscriminate shooting and government culls.



SLOCAN VALLEY BEAR SMART PROGRAM: BEAR-PROOFING ELECTRIC FENCING ON THE INCREASE



This year former Parks Canada interpreter Kim Frederiksen became VWS's rural Slocan Valley Bear Smart coordinator. With electric fence coordinator Gillian Sanders, Kim organized two workshops on how to bear-proof farms and orchards. This year Gillian helped install nine new electric fences in rural areas and five more were installed in the Village of New Denver. In 2019 there has been in excess of 26 electric fences sold to residents of Area H through VWS's two local retail partners. VWS 50% cost-share program for fence chargers and equipment is continuing to demonstrate how much this incentive is helping bit by bit, fence by fence, to reduce bear attractants.

Kim also did an excellent job on public outreach including a VWS Bear hotline; in what turned out to be an otherwise quiet bear year with no grizzly bear issues. Thanks go to Walter Popoff, Director of Regional Area "H" for providing funding for Kim's work and rural electric fence cost sharing while the Getty Foundation and Winton Bear Foundation (England) are also thanked for their on-going support for our Bear Smart program.

CLIMATE CHANGE: DANGERS TO HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY MOUNT

It's never been VWS's practice to scare our readers with the yearly newsletter, but perhaps by looking squarely into the mirror of 2019, we can all gain the commitment and fortitude to do something about the dangers at our doorstep.

REALITIES 2019

“Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, a landmark government report has found, warning that drastic action is the only way to avoid catastrophic outcomes.

“The report, released late on Monday by Environment and Climate Change Canada, paints a grim picture of Canada's future, in which deadly heatwaves and heavy rainstorms become a common occurrence....

“Canada faces markedly different outcomes, depending on the policies it chooses to reduce emissions. Under a scenario in which global emissions are dramatically reduced, average temperatures will rise only 3C across the country by 2100, including the Arctic region. But if countries – including Canada – fail to act aggressively, increases of 7-9 degrees are likely, and the Arctic faces the prospect of 11 degrees of warming.”

— *The Guardian*, 2 April, 2019

“Californians are going first where the rest of us will follow”—climate activist Bill McKibben

This was the third year in a row of monster fires in California, whipped by savage winds, burning down subdivisions. The power company turned off the power to millions of homes for four days, to avoid having fallen power lines start more fires. 200,000 people were under evacuation order, tens of thousands fled their homes, A San Francisco paper wrote of “intensified fears that parts of California had become almost too dangerous to inhabit.”

“A child born today will experience a world that is more than four degrees warmer than the pre-industrial average, with climate change impacting human health from infancy ... (to) old age.... Globally, 77% of countries experienced an increase in daily population exposure to wildfires ... The health effects of wildfires range from direct thermal injuries and death, to the exacerbation of acute and chronic respiratory symptoms, due to exposure to wildfire smoke.” — *The Lancet* Countdown on Health and Climate Change

“By ‘global catastrophic outcome’ I refer to the threat that the planet could become ungovernable over the next

11,258 World Scientists Declare Climate Emergency

“We declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency ... The climate crisis is arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected ... It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity...”

“The world must quickly implement massive energy efficiency and conservation practices and must replace fossil fuels with low-carbon renewables ... We should leave remaining stocks of fossil fuels in the ground ... We must swiftly eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels ...

“Excessive extraction of materials and overexploitation of ecosystems, driven by economic growth, must be quickly curtailed to maintain long-term sustainability of the biosphere.”

Bioscience, Nov. 05, 2019

several decades if we do not fundamentally alter our energy systems ... First, low latitudes during the warm seasons could become so hot and inhospitable to human livelihood as to generate an unstoppable drive for emigration ... The second climate impact is sea level rise ... (which) may be less immediate than the low-latitude, over-heating ... (but) it has the potential to grow exponentially, becoming unstoppable and irreversible.” — Professor James Hansen, former director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

“In 2016, it was estimated that larger and more intense weather events will cost Canada's federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements program around \$902 million each year. The health

costs of extreme weather are estimated to be over \$1.6 billion a year. The cost of property damages from climate change averaged \$405 million per year between 1983 and 2008, but have risen dramatically to \$1.8 billion a year since 2009. That number is expected to grow as high as \$43 billion by 2050.”

—*The Guardian*, 26 October 2018

SOLUTIONS

“Two essential energy policy requirements are: 1) honest pricing of fossil fuels, ie, the price must rise to include the cost of fossil fuels to society.”

“Once enacted, a rising carbon fee will make the most carbon-intensive energy sources uneconomic. Oil derived from tar sands or tar shale is high on the list of the most carbon-rich.”

“2) government support of breakthrough technologies, including clean energy research, development and deployment programs.” — James Hansen

Hansen advises that research and development of advanced generation nuclear power plants should be ramped up rapidly, because it will be needed “if we are to largely phase out fossil fuel emissions over the next half century.”

Citizen resistance to pipelines, through protests, lawsuits and environmental reviews, is important. Hansen calculated that if the U.S. Dakota Access pipeline is expanded, the additional CO2 emitted will be equivalent to fifteen 1,000-megawatt coal plants. In Canada, corporations complain that delays are costing them time and money; but that means time for government to recognize the peril of these developments.

OLD-GROWTH FOREST IS CRUCIAL TO MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

“Forests are currently the only proven means of removing and storing atmospheric CO₂ at a scale that can meaningfully contribute to achieving carbon balance.” —**40 scientists, 2018**

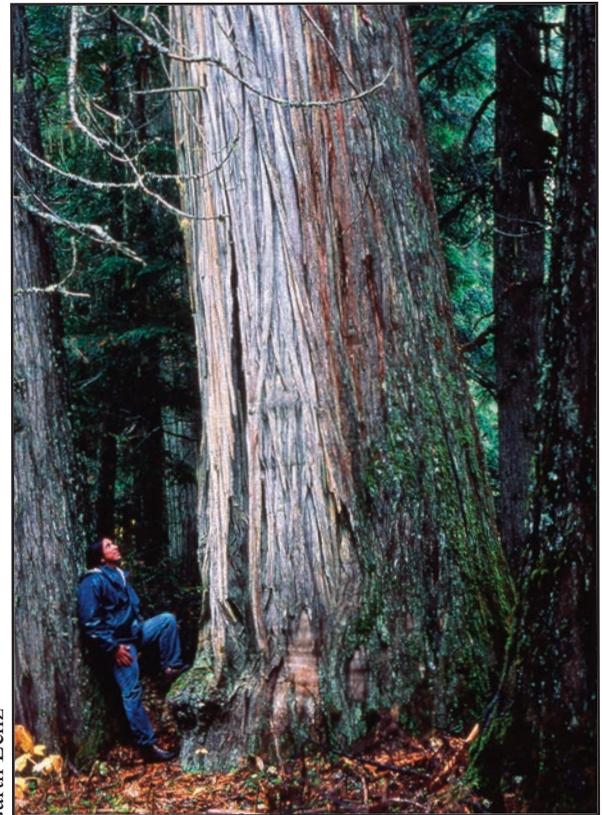
“We need to quickly curtail habitat and biodiversity loss, protecting the remaining primary and intact forests, especially those with high carbon stores and other forests with the capacity to rapidly sequester carbon...”

**11,258 Scientists, *Bioscience*, 05 November 2019
“World Scientists Warning of a Climate Emergency”**

Several false beliefs prop up the ongoing liquidation of our old-growth forest: 1) that logging is only a climate concern in tropical forests, since the land there is permanently converted to farmland, whereas in Canada we replant our forests; 2) trees replanted on clearcuts are better at absorbing carbon than old forests.

These false claims were refuted by scientific research years ago. Forests remove about 28% of the carbon put into the atmosphere by humans. It is stored in their wood and soil, but returns to the atmosphere when the forest is logged and the soil disturbed. A big tree contains enormously more carbon than a little tree. And research has shown that a big tree might absorb as much carbon in one year as a medium-sized tree has stored up over its whole lifetime. Re-planting millions of new trees where there are none is important, but they have to grow 100 years or more to do what old forests are doing where carbon-sequestering soil fungal networks have established over hundreds of years.

Today studies show that old-growth Coastal Temperate Rainforests store some of the highest amounts of carbon in the world, (Law, et al., PNAS, 2017), and that BC’s Inland Temperate Rainforest falls within the range of its coastal counterpart. (Matsuzaki et al. 2013)



Garth Lenz

“If we are serious about carbon stewardship we should protect more forest, especially old carbon-rich forests that have a good chance of being with us for decades and centuries to come (in other words, prioritized protection of productive and long-lived coastal, interior wetbelt and wetter high-elevation forests.)”

Dr. Jim Pojar, “Forestry and Carbon in BC”, Feb. 2019

CANADA AND BC ACTIONS: ARE THEY ENOUGH?

According to Dr. Hansen’s article “Oh, Canada!” (2019), our nation’s fossil fuel emissions are now 7% greater than in 1997; and these numbers do not include Canada’s growing fossil fuel exports.

On leaving the remaining stocks of fossil fuels in the ground, Canada has approved and planned pipelines to deliver tar-sands bitumen across Canada and the US, to ports for shipment to Asia. These are like a guillotine poised over the head of the planet.

A key issue in BC is the proposed expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. The devastating predicted impacts have sent numerous First Nations, two environmental groups and a youth climate action group to the Court of Appeals seeking Judicial Review. Speaking of the proposed pipelines into the US, James Hansen wrote, “If Canada proceeds and we do nothing, it will be game over for the climate. Canada’s tar sands, deposits of sand saturated with bitumen, contain twice the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by global oil use in our entire history.” (New York Times, May 9, 2012).

And that’s not all the potential impacts. A recent spill of tar sands bitumen from Venezuela has landed on Brazil coast’s, devastating 300 beaches, heavily impacting the tourist trade, and doing damage estimated in the billions of dollars.

Canada’s incredibly specious excuse for pushing through the Trans Mountain pipeline is that the profits from it will pay to develop clean energy. This is like justifying a bank robbery by saying the profits will be used to improve the justice system. Could anyone besides the robber believe that? The International Monetary Fund calculates Canada’s subsidies to fossil fuel industries as US \$34 billion per year, when the cost of negative impacts to health and other things are counted.

Nevertheless, some important steps are being taken. Hansen praised Canada for being the first country to impose a carbon fee-and-dividend tax. He called it “modest”, but it is supposed to increase every year. 90% of the dividend will be returned to Canadians once a year when we file our taxes. The federal tax does not apply to BC, which already had a gas tax.

SORRY, BC FORESTS BELONG TO FOREIGN CORPORATIONS

BC Premier John Horgan made the statement on the right to a person in the Comox Valley who expressed concern about the old-growth logging on Vancouver Island. It lays bare the fact that the natural inheritance of British Columbians has been sold out to foreign corporations, with transactions nailed in place by trade agreements.

Horgan says that the cost of the lawsuits *would come out of health care*. Apparently, he wouldn't take it out of the \$660 million in subsidies that BC gave to fracking companies in 2018 to expand their operations that emit methane that is worse for the climate than carbon.

We are all held hostage to a monetary system based on the continual growth of corporate profits. Whether it's the demise of mountain caribou, the slaughter of wolves, old-growth logging, watershed logging, or the government's clamp on new parks of any significant size—it's all being driven by BC's unsustainable allowable annual cut (AAC), which is largely committed to log exports. There is no intent to reduce logging.

The conditions for life on the planet can lawfully, and with the encouragement of government, be consumed for private monetary gain. The reality behind the facade of various "public processes": no reduction of the AAC, wildlife populations wiped out, no rights to clean water, manufacturing jobs exported to other countries.

We are seeing everywhere the initial consequences of ignoring the encroaching dangers of climate change: extreme weather and fire storms generative of losses of life and billions of dollars in costs for the destruction of homes, forests, and whole communities. And all the while, profit-first rules business and controls government while our elected representatives duck the central issues with political platitudes which, conceding some of the dangers, do nothing effective.

The government-business cartel pretends that there's nothing the public or government can do about the problem, because the system must not be disturbed. What is omitted is the im-

"If we don't log, we'll be fighting court battles with countries which we've signed agreements with about log exports. That'd cost millions of dollars and eat into the provincial health care budget."

—Premier John Horgan,
DecafNation, Nov. 11, 2019



Courtesy of Helen Davis

Evicted and Orphaned — This black bear cub likely just had its mother killed. Old-growth forest preserves life in many ways. On Vancouver Island, and BC's mainland coast, the bears need big, old cedar trees for dens. With the decimation of the old-growth by logging, many dens have been lost. BC continues to log the last remaining old-growth, without checking for bear dens. In some cases, the trees are so big that dynamite is used to fall them. There is a petition to the BC government to protect dens through forestry regulations at <https://www.change.org/p/save-bc-bear-dens>.

gether reduce carbon emissions." (Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 2014)

Ms. Klein portrays the present danger as an opportunity to restore international cooperation and commitment to the public interest. Once enough people recognize that what's at stake is not just the extinction of the caribou, but the extinction of life on this planet, there is no trade agreement that will stand. Scientists have made it clear that if we don't revise this suicidal system, Nature will do it for us, through damage and chaos so great as to render government itself unable to function.

It isn't only our lives at stake, here and around the world, but the future of our children and their children. We are enroute to leaving them a despoiled and endangered planet, worsened by the ever increasing populations. It's late, very late but not too late to change, and this begins by protesting through speaking, writing letters, social media and in every public forum.

Now is the time!

VWS FORMS COALITION TO EXPAND BC PARKS

British Columbia, Canada's most biodiverse remaining province, is experiencing rapid extinction. With less than 15% of BC protected, the list of over 1600 known species at risk will continue to grow at a pace that threatens our own survival.

Despite the work of Valhalla and others who have spent decades identifying the most biodiverse ecosystems in need of protection, our government appears to have no plans to allocate any new significant biodiversity reserve for the coming days of climate crisis. In fact, it has piled nearly 600 new campsites into our existing parks this year and sold off the rights to clearcut and convert the last of our original ecosystems outside of parks, into tree farms.

The province did protect 54 trees this year, and added about 100 hectares of private land to our parks system; both baby steps that highlight the utter refusal to set aside any significant public land for the future of BC people, and the refusal to contribute to global climate and biodiversity solutions.

BC's Parks system has been evaluated by two Auditor Generals who noted alarming fragmentation and a probability of being unable to sustain biodiversity into the future. But we have a fleeting opportunity to expand the Parks system to preserve the original ecosystems that still exist outside of parks for the sake of biodiversity, freshwater security, fire and flood suppression and many other aspects of human health and safety.

Considering the predictions that the world's leading scientists are making, and the fact that BC still harbours some of the most biodiverse and greatest carbon sequestering ecosystems on the planet, our team, and a growing coalition of advocates, are not accepting that the scraps being handed to us are a fair representation of our people's needs.

In rejection of this faulty allowance we stand in coalition with others whose park proposals are also slated for logging, with those who are studying the species going extinct due to habitat loss, and with advocates of biodiversity in their own diverse forms.

The growing coalition is calling on the BC and Federal governments to hold to their promise of increasing BC's protected areas for the sake of biodiversity and climate change action. Please join us for a Biodiversity Crisis Rally in Vancouver on World Biodiversity Day, May 22nd, 2020, and stay tuned for more details. As a determined coalition we have taken a step in a direction of change, and we will continue until our demand of a significant Parks increase is met.

Unless protecting the last of our life-giving ecosystems is a priority for our people, the destruction will continue until our own survival is gravely threatened. It is an honor for our team to be trusted by our supporters as a representative voice, but in this time of intensifying crisis we need mass action. The people must rise up to demand that the legislation that is working against a Parks expansion be changed to reflect the changing climate.



Craig Pettit

In any way that you can help, whether by donating, writing letters, volunteering, or attending rallies — we thank you so much for standing with us. VWS recommends writing a letter to request a significant increase in the full protection of BC's old-growth Temperate Rainforest, including habitat protection for the Deep-Snow Mountain Caribou. Please fill out the included membership form to update your membership this year, and email amber@vws.org if you would like to be on our contact list to receive occasional updates and calls to action.

Key addresses:

The Hon. John Horgan / Premier of British Columbia / East Annex, Parliament Buildings / Victoria, BC V8V 1X4 / Fax: 250 387-0087 / E-mail: premier@gov.bc.ca.

The Hon. Doug Donaldson / Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development / PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt / Victoria, BC V8W 9E2 / Fax: 250 387-1040 / E-mail: FLNRORD.Minister@gov.bc.ca.

The Hon. George Heyman / Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy / PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Govt / Victoria, BC V8W 9E2 / Fax: 250 387-1356 / E-mail: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

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your donations are what keep us going!**