

SIERRA REPORT **SPRING 2024**

Building a brighter future, together.

Nature Agreement between First Nations, B.C. and Canada aligns \$1 billion to fund conservation

In the fall of 2023, the First Nations Leadership Council and the governments of B.C. and Canada ratified a long-anticipated Nature Agreement intended to protect 30 percent of lands in B.C. by 2030, including at-risk old-growth forests, and supporting implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The Nature Agreement includes new and existing government funds totaling over \$1 billion to support First Nations and other communities' efforts to restore ecosystems, improve stewardship, and create Guardian programs.

Some important features of the Nature Agreement include:

- Interim targets of protecting 25 percent of lands by 2025, helping us to stay on track for 30x30.
- Implementation of the Old Growth Strategic Review recommendations and permanent protection for up to 1.3 million hectares of the most at-risk old growth by 2025.
- Following through on the Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan, and actions to protect Spotted Owl habitat.

Sierra Club BC will continue to track progress on these commitments, especially how the money will be spent and criteria to ensure the most at-risk ecosystems and habitats are prioritized for protection.

These major funding announcements are incredibly important for old-growth and ecosystem protection. SCBC continues to track government progress on 30x30, support new protected and conserved areas, and foster community engagement through webinars, petitions, media hits, social media campaigns, and more.



Photo by Troy Moth.



A big win for at-risk migratory birds, marbled murrelets and old-growth conservation!

Last November we partnered with Ecojustice and Wilderness Committee to take the federal government to court to advocate for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats across Canada. We made a case that federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault had failed in the government's duty to protect bird habitat under the Species at Risk Act (SARA) by protecting only their nests and not the wider habitat they need to survive and recover.

The marbled murrelet is an endangered migratory seabird that nests in coastal old-growth forests in B.C. It is nearly impossible for people to spot their nests in the towering trees, so habitat protection based on identifying individual nests alone is completely ineffective.

In February, the Federal Court ruled that the Canadian government's interpretation of SARA was unreasonable and that protection measures need to be reconsidered by Minister Guilbeault.

This is a big win that has larger implications for habitat protection for bird species across Canada. The federal government will likely have to do more to ensure the survival and recovery of these species. This could lead to the protection of more old-growth forests and other habitats important to migratory birds, and the many other species that rely on them.



Welcoming a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework draft

SCBC welcomed the B.C. government's Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework draft, which has the potential to transform how B.C. addresses the biodiversity crisis. With the right commitments and timely change on the ground, the Framework could finally resolve significant gaps in legislation and policy that have left many species and ecosystems threatened or endangered in B.C.

While the draft framework is a step in the right direction, we also cautioned that immediate interim measures are needed to stop the ongoing loss of at-risk habitat and ecosystems while work on legislation co-developed with First Nations continues.

Thousands of people have provided input and commentary to strengthen the framework. Sierra Club BC developed feedback and an online letter-writing tool to help interested community members in B.C. have their voices heard.

Photos: (Top) An endangered marbled murrelet flies back to their old-growth nest after a day of fishing (Photo by Deborah Freeman).

(Bottom) Two threatened woodland caribou (Photo by Jared Hobbs).

Helping communities step into action

We know that acting in the face of the climate and biodiversity crisis can feel overwhelming. That's why one of SCBC's strategic goals is to support local leaders in creating positive change within their communities. We are leveraging our networks and resources to help people step into action in ways that are meaningful for them. **Throughout this report you'll find spotlights on local leaders we've supported that are helping create a better future for all.**



Progress on old growth protection

United for forests!

Something special happened in September. People across the province from Campbell River to the Kootenays stood in front of their MLA offices to say old-growth forests must be protected, we want all beings to thrive, and we want our communities to be safe and resilient to climate impacts.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the day of action and who contributed to the cause using our letter-writing tools. The message and spirit were strong at the 17 locations across the province!

The B.C.-wide day of action was a huge success thanks to everyone who showed up in the cold, offered support, and made forest-based art in their communities. It was moving to see so many people come out to speak for all the beings that can't speak for themselves.

Since the rally, we've continued building momentum. We've met with key Ministers and MLAs, and supported our members in doing the same to make sure that politicians know old-growth action is a priority. We've also worked with community leaders from around the province to foster deeper relationships with their local forests and learn how to better care for these ecosystems.

FOREST LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Elders for Ancient Trees works hard for younger generations to have a future with more intact ecosystems and all the benefits they provide. They are Susan Gage, Jackie Larkin, and Bill and Jan Johnston. They have spoken to thousands with thoughtful words at rallies, they brought together hundreds of organizations to sign the United for Old Growth declaration, and were key in organizing the February and September 2023 days of action for old-growth forests.

Supporting the creation of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in Kanaka Bar

Sierra Club BC's Executive Director Hannah Askew and Campaign Director Shelley Luce joined Kanaka Bar Indian Band's Chief Jordan Spinks, retired Chief Patrick Michel, and Lands Manager Sean O'Rourke to see old-growth Ponderosa pines in the Kanaka Bar's Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). This proposed IPCA is found south of Lytton in the Fraser Canyon and partners are helping raise funds to make it a reality. The T'eq't'aqtn'mux IPCA (pronounced "cluck-cluck-tin") proposal is in development and will ultimately require provincial legislated protection and greater financial support to be fully realized.



Photos: (Top) Kanaka Bar Land Manager Sean O'Rourke stands beneath a stunning old-growth tree in the proposed T'eq't'aqtn'mux IPCA (Photo by TJ Watt/Ancient Forest Alliance).

(Bottom) 17 communities across B.C. joined the September day of action for old-growth forests (Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC).

Taking climate action

New framework to cap emissions from oil and gas announced during COP28

During the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, Canada announced a new framework seeking to cap 2030 emissions from oil and gas production at 35 to 38 percent below 2019 levels. This would force oil companies to ratchet down their emissions, which are currently the single largest source of greenhouse gases in the country. But with built-in “compliance flexibilities” in the framework, the actual cap will be 20 to 23 percent below 2019 levels.

Canada and B.C. have allowed high-carbon projects to export fossil fuels, including fracked LNG, for far too long. We know we cannot meet our climate goals, and maintain a livable future, without reducing oil and gas emissions.



Photos: (Left) By phasing out fossil fuels, expanding renewable energy infrastructure, reducing energy consumption and more we still have a chance to stabilize the climate (Photo by Canva).

(Right) Students participating in a forest workshop in Campbell River (Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC).

Uncertainty and risks to meeting provincial and federal 2030 targets, particularly those for the oil and gas sector, require more action to amend frameworks and close loopholes. The B.C. government now has an opportunity to swiftly enact its own provincial cap to support global efforts to phase out fossil fuels as a necessary step for a livable climate.

New report lays out a route to meet Canada’s 2050 net zero goals

Published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) and partners including Sierra Club BC, this new report offers a deep dive into what’s needed to chart a realistic path toward a climate-safe future and the pitfalls to avoid when it comes to policy.

The CCPA report found that the federal government’s 2023 net-zero report massively overestimated how much climate pollution can be reduced using carbon capture and storage technology, as well as how big a role hydrogen can play in our energy mix by 2050. The federal government is relying on these assumptions to accommodate building new LNG terminals and pipelines. The reality is that the route to a climate-safe future means winding down oil and gas production instead of expanding it.

As the report states, this means there will need to be a greater proportion of electricity in the energy mix to compensate for reduced fossil fuel use. Additionally, on a per-capita basis, Canadians consume 4.9 times as much energy as the world average and emit three times world average emissions. This means that to meet our net-zero targets, there needs to be a much greater emphasis on efficiency and reducing energy consumption at all levels. Other countries are demonstrating that this is possible without impacting the quality of our lives.

By phasing out fossil fuels, expanding renewable energy infrastructure, reducing energy consumption and more we still have a chance to stabilize the climate. But it will require fast and bold action from all levels of government.

CLIMATE LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Deb Walker, a participant in our inaugural Mother Tree Local Leaders Program faith cohort, wrote an opinion piece about her journey to COP28 Dubai and why more faith leaders should get involved. “I am here because faith leaders have an important role to play in the environmental movement and the future of climate justice — we have circles of influence, we work with communities that value beauty, that care deeply for others, and we are people who believe in reciprocity across the generations.”

Education program updates

Our environmental education programs are designed to offer experiential learning opportunities that centre diverse ecological and cultural knowledges. They are deeply rooted in the principle that empowering and educating youth is vital to stewarding abundant ecosystems and a stable climate — as well as building resilient, equitable communities. As we respond to deepening environmental crises, our programming becomes increasingly important.

Our education staff also continues to work towards decolonizing the learning process by respectfully incorporating invited local Indigenous knowledge into the workshops and materials we offer. By working with Indigenous partners to incorporate traditional ways of learning and knowing, and meaningfully engaging with place, our workshops are hands-on and celebrate the many interconnections in the web of life. They also support healthy childhood development and cultivate care.

For the 2022/23 school year, we focused on delivering programs in mid/north Island communities, Metro Vancouver, the CRD, and Powell River. In addition to our workshops for children and youth, the education team has also been providing valuable learning opportunities to educators and community leaders.

During the year SCBC's education team:

- Organized over 360 workshops, resulting in more than 7,900 learners reached through our outdoor ed programs!
- Facilitated workshops at 106 schools in 20 different school districts.
- Organized four pro-d workshops totaling 76 participants.
- Saw over 3,000 people of all ages sign up for the four Learn to Draw webinars we organized in 2023. Participants learned to draw raccoons, kelp forests, spiders and river otters.

HEAR FROM TEACHERS

“Sierra Club BC’s education workshops are unique, offering students the opportunity to meaningfully engage with place, through hands-on sensory activities and interconnected thinking. They focus on cultivating care to ensure future generations are well-versed in stewarding abundant ecosystems and a stable climate.”

“These workshops were thoughtfully planned to be inclusive and adaptable, catering to a diverse student body with various needs.”

EDUCATION LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Laura Briggs has spent countless hours educating the public about ecosystems and shining a light on the life of all sizes within them. She started the Field Naturalists of Vancouver Island Facebook group as a small project five years ago. It now has over 25,000 members! This is no easy task. Laura consistently moderates the group to make sure posts are respecting beings and their habitats. Laura is also an exceptionally talented artist. She volunteered her time to grow our Sierra Club BC Facebook artists group and she offered a magnificent needle felting workshop where we made birds' nests.





Sierra Club BC and the National Farmers Union join forces to work on protecting B.C.'s farmland

A new collaboration

Only a small portion of B.C.'s landmass is suitable for agriculture, and less than half of the province's protected agricultural land is actually used for farming. Land used to grow food in B.C. is a limited resource that is frequently targeted by developers, investors, and other non-farming interests. These competing pressures have driven farmland prices up to record highs. They have also led to a severe decline in the soil quality, impacting B.C.'s food sovereignty.

Worsening climate impacts are making farming in B.C. more precarious, with increasingly unpredictable growing seasons and worsening droughts, floods and forest fires.

Sierra Club BC and the National Farmers Union (NFU) are joining forces to work on protecting B.C.'s farmland and ensuring the next generation of farmers can keep putting food on everyone's tables.

SCBC attends the National Farmers Union convention in Ottawa

Our farmland campaigner attended the NFU convention in Ottawa, where she joined farmers who are organizing to build a just and sustainable food system. During the convention, NFU members met with 11 MPs, two Senators, and four Assistant Deputy Ministers. NFU youth leaders and farmworkers led a rally for farmland protection on Parliament Hill and heard updates from the BIPOC caucus, Youth caucus, and the Indigenous Solidarity Working Group on their important work within the organization.

Photo: A group of farmers meeting at a February gathering organized by Sierra Club BC and the National Farmers Union. The purpose of the event was to share thoughts and experiences around farmland access and protection issues across British Columbia (Photo by Mary Paquet/ Sierra Club BC).

Sowing the seeds of farmland protection

What could a farmland protection coalition look like in B.C.? Who would be involved and what would their priorities be? These are some of the questions that the National Farmers Union (NFU) Farmland Committee set out to answer when they convened at Fraser Common Farm Coop in February. Present for the gathering were farmers from the National Farmers Union (NFU), Young Agrarians, Fraser Common Farm Coop, Glorious Organics, UBC farm, Athiana Acres, Richmond Sharing Farm, and the KPU farming practicum.

The purpose of the gathering was to share thoughts and experiences around farmland access and protection issues across B.C., learn more about the history of farming movements across the province, and strategize how to leverage lessons learned from previous work and turn it all into collective action for the future of farming. Guest speakers included Julia Smith, owner of Blue Sky Ranch in Nlaka'pamux territory and director of Farmers for Climate Solutions, and Heather Pritchard, founder of Farmfolk Cityfolk and co-founder of Foodlands Cooperative of BC, who both shared some of their wisdom around farmer-led advocacy initiatives.



Welcoming SCBC's Interim Executive Director

We are excited to announce that SCBC has found an Interim Executive Director to step in during Executive Director Hannah Askew's maternity leave.

Fiona Douglas-Crampton is a dedicated and positive leader with a collaborative style and high-level skills in strategic planning, human resources, operations, public speaking, and building strategic alliances. In the last decade, she has served as the CEO for both the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education and The Minerva Foundation for BC Women.

We are confident that with her leadership and support, the SCBC team will continue building an inclusive and hopeful environmental movement where people and partners from all ages, backgrounds, abilities and sectors are invited to take action in ways that matter most to them.



Photos: (Top) A greenhouse filled with sustainably grown produce at Fraser Common Farm Coop (Photo by Mary Paquet/Sierra Club BC).

(Bottom) Our new Interim Executive Director, Fiona Douglas-Crampton (Photo by Mary Paquet/Sierra Club BC).

Leave a legacy of healthy ecosystems

Giving a gift in your will to Sierra Club BC is a way of leaving a legacy of healthy ecosystems for future generations.

Your planned gift will leave a lasting impact on Sierra Club BC campaigns, so we can continue to safeguard biodiversity and advocate for meaningful action in your honour.

Your legacy will be linked with the Western red cedar. The Western red cedar can grow to be a thousand years old. The coastal temperate rainforest ecosystem in which these trees thrive took tens of thousands of years to develop. We all know how essential the biodiversity is that exists within these forests. They're irreplaceable. And in the last 150 years, humans have reduced this ecosystem to its last fragments. Stand amongst the Red Cedars and link your legacy to SCBC. Your investment will help keep these trees standing for another millennium.

For more information regarding your legacy planning, please visit www.sierraclub.bc.ca/legacy. If you name Sierra Club of BC Foundation in your will, please let us know. It helps us plan for the future and recognise your generosity, and you will be automatically enrolled in the Red Cedar Circle. Please contact gifts@sierraclub.bc.ca with your plans.

OUR FRESH LOOK

You may have noticed our fresh look! Our updated visuals better match our current values and commitment to fostering community-based solutions for the health and well-being of ecosystems across B.C. We hope you like it!



Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg.

Printed on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper.



SIERRA CLUB OF BC FOUNDATION

PO Box 8337 Central
Victoria, B.C., V8W 3R9
Ləkʷəŋən Peoples Territory

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