

Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Sent via email: WLRs.Minister@gov.bc.ca

March 28, 2025

Subject: Safeguarding thriving ecosystem relationships through a new biodiversity and ecosystem health law

Dear Minister Neill:

Close to 8,000 British Columbian organizations and individuals weighed in on BC's draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health (BEH) Framework, released in November 2023 and a key step for implementing the 2020 independent Old Growth Strategic Review. These commitments were made in response to huge support for protection of old growth and other endangered ecosystems in recent years, and people and groups like ours who have participated are eager to see change on the ground.

We write today to urge BC to continue this important work and move forward on implementing the BEH Framework, including launching a robust co-development process for a new law that ensures biodiversity and ecosystem health are prioritized and which is consistent with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

It has been more than a year since the public comment period on the draft BEH Framework closed, following thousands of mostly positive comments. We celebrated the BC government's commitment in the Framework to the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity "as an overarching priority" and to "formalize this priority through legislation and other enabling tools that apply to, and can be accessed by, all sectors." We look forward to continuing our celebration of this work as the Framework is finalized and implemented through a new law.

We strongly support the paradigm shift envisioned by the Old Growth Strategic Review and the BEH Framework, described in the Framework as:

"[A] transformational shift from a land management system that prioritizes resource extraction (subject to constraints) to a future that is proactive, prioritizes the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity, and is implemented jointly with title and rights holders."

Your government's commitment to legislation enshrining this prioritization is critical. A biodiversity and ecosystem law is essential to provide the certainty and predictability we all need on the landscape. We fully agree with the Premier that measures to address the US tariff threat cannot come at the expense of our environment or reconciliation commitments. Now more than ever we need to protect what we love, preserve future economic opportunities, and ensure the security of our communities.

Doing so will also require immediate, on-the-ground measures to implement the BEH prioritization to maintain options for the future; this includes effective measures to ensure that rare and at-risk ecosystems (e.g., old growth) remain intact while negotiations and engagement processes are ongoing.

We look forward to working with BC, First Nations governments, western and Indigenous scientific experts, diverse stakeholders and local communities to shape the new biodiversity and ecosystem health law. If you have any questions about this letter please contact Jessica Clogg at West Coast Environmental Law, 604-601-2501.

Sincerely,

- Ancient Forest Alliance
- Armstrong Spallumcheen Trails Society
- Arrowsmith Naturalists Club
- Awinakola Foundation
- Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- BC Great Blue Heron Society
- BC Marine Mammal Rescue Society
- BC Nature
- Bluewater Adventures
- British Columbia Federation of Flyfishers
- Brown Property Preservation Society
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – BC Chapter
- CAPE BC - Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment - BC Committee
- Chase Environmental Action Society
- Clayoquot Action
- Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver
- Commercial Bear Viewing Association
- Council of Canadians, Campbell River Chapter
- Council of Canadians, Duncan Chapter
- Council of Canadians, Nelson/ West Kootenay Chapter
- Council of Canadians, South Okanagan Chapter
- Creatively United for the Planet Society
- Denman Island Climate Action Network (DICAN)
- Doctors for Planetary Health - West Coast
- Ecojustice
- Elders for Ancient Trees
- Elphinstone Logging Focus (ELFR)
- Endangered Ecosystems Alliance
- Esquimalt United Church Justice Team
- First Things First Okanagan
- Fraser Valley Salmon Society
- Friends of Carmanah-Walbran
- Friends of Clayoquot Sound
- Friends of Cortes Island
- Friends of French Creek Conservation Society
- Friends of the Gulf Islands Society
- Galiano Conservancy Association
- Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society (GOMPS)
- Generation Squeeze
- Georgia Strait Alliance

- Greater Victoria Acting Together
- Greater Victoria Climate Hub
- iD2 Communications Inc.
- Julius Csotonyi's Paleoart and Scientific Illustration
- Koksila Watershed Working Group
- LADR Landscape Architects
- Leadnow
- Lillooet Naturalist Society
- Living Language Institute Foundation
- Mt. Willet Wilderness Forever
- My Sea to Sky
- Nanaimo & Area Land Trust
- Neighbours United
- Organizing for Change
- Paddlers Inn Ltd.
- Parents 4 Climate
- Pathways to Leadership with
- Racialized Immigrant and Refugee Women's Society
- Pender Harbour Wildlife Society
- Pender Ocean Defenders
- PKOLS Mount Douglas Conservancy
- Planetary Resilience Council
- Raincoast Conservation Foundation
- Save Estuary Land Society
- Save Our Forests Team - Comox Valley (SOFT-CV)
- Save-The-Cedar League
- Save What's Left Conservation Society
- Sea To Sea Greenbelt Society
- Sierra Club BC
- Silva Forest Foundation
- Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition
- Stand.earth
- Sunshine Coast Conservation Association
- Tree Legacy Society (TLS)
- Tree of Life Nature Playschool
- Tudor House Press
- Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition
- Vancouver Unitarians Environment Team
- Victoria Climate Action Team
- West Coast Environmental Law Association
- West Kootenay Climate Hub
- Wilderness Committee
- Wilderness Tourism Association of BC
- Wildsight
- Wildsight Invermere
- Yellowstone to Yukon
- Zero Waste British Columbia (ZWBC)
- Zimt Chocolates

CC:

Premier David Eby

Minister Ravi Kahlon, Chair, Environment and Land Use Committee

Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Jim Rutkowski, Chief of Staff to the Premier

Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit, BC-Assembly of First Nations