



Report Summary

Overview

British Columbia's forests are in crisis. Despite strong provincial commitments over the past five years—including the Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR, 2020), the Nature Agreement to protect 30 percent of B.C. by 2030 (2023), and the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (2023)—the province has so far failed to deliver the promised paradigm shift in forest stewardship. Industrial clearcutting, climate-driven wildfires, and myopic conservation progress continue to erode ecological integrity, placing biodiversity, First Nations' values, communities, carbon retention, climate resilience and future economic opportunities at risk.

Key findings of “Closer to the brink: The state of the forest in B.C. in 2025”

- **Old-growth loss continues:** Nearly 5 percent (510,000 hectares) of the 11 million hectares of old growth identified in 2021 has been logged, burned, or removed from the public land base.
- **Logging continues to target at-risk, big-treed forests, particularly on the coast.** Since 2021, the rate of logging in big-treed old growth continued to be higher than in smaller-treed, less productive old growth forests that are currently at lower risk of biodiversity loss.
- **Deferral recommendations did not effectively pause logging in endangered old growth:** Logging was four times more likely inside at-risk old growth forests that were recommended for deferral than in other old growth.
- **OGSR recommendations have not yet led to significant new protection of old growth:** Most of the 368,000 hectares of old growth protected by some designation since 2021 stemmed from processes underway long before the province committed to a new stewardship paradigm. Less than 2 percent of the most at-risk forests were protected as a result of new policy.
- **Remaining primary forest is dominated by lower productivity ecosystems:** Only 2.5 million hectares of high-productivity primary forest (old growth or younger, naturally disturbed forests) with the potential to support large trees remain, much of it in small patches surrounded by degraded forest.
- **Wildfire disturbance has increased sevenfold in recent years compared to past decades:** Although wildfires are natural parts of a forest's lifecycle, the increased extent and severity of fires driven by climate heating heightens the urgency of protecting remaining old growth from logging.
- **There is little evidence of a policy shift that puts ecological health first:** The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework is unfinished, conservation progress is glacially slow, and provincial leadership continues to prioritise timber supply over ecological resilience.
- **The province's commitment to 30 x 30 provides an opportunity to shift policy:** The 12 percent of B.C.'s forests currently under strong protection are skewed toward low-productivity ecosystems with small trees. Less than 5 percent of high-productivity big-treed forests are protected, far short of goals for ecosystem representation. Achieving 30 percent protection of representative ecosystems will require a shift from safeguarding low-productivity areas to protecting remaining big-treed old growth and younger high-productivity primary forests.

Conclusions and recommendations

Addressing the intercepting crises of our time calls for the promised paradigm shift in managing forests in B.C., a shift that prioritises ecological health, carbon stores, climate adaptation and sustainable human communities above short-term timber revenue and corporate profit. Change will require that the province embraces responsibility for the degraded condition of B.C.'s forests and enables the following actions:

1. **Speed up effective implementation of the OGSR recommendations** by:
 - a) **Keeping at-risk old growth standing** to allow for planning, including providing funding to enable conservation options.
 - b) **Applying an ecological lens to all government decisions** through a finalised Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.
 - c) **Providing transparent, timely and independent state-of-the-forest and OGSR implementation reporting** to allow the public to track progress.
2. **Prioritize protection of big-treed high-productivity forests** to meet 30 x 30 targets instead of continuing to “protect” ecosystems not threatened by logging.
3. **Support First Nations leadership** with adequate funding and capacity to achieve interim and long-term conservation solutions, rather than offloading responsibility without resources.

The OGSR recommendations were widely supported, yet the past five years show little evidence of a change in provincial forest stewardship. Without change, B.C.'s globally significant forests and biodiversity will all but disappear, communities will suffer more with wildfires and floods due to cumulative effects of logging and climate heating, First Nations will continue to lose food security, and mills will continue to close. Change is possible: governments, communities and businesses in B.C. can act together with wisdom and integrity to safeguard the ecosystems that support us all.

