
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Office of the Premier

PROVINCE ANNOUNCES A NEW VISION FOR COASTAL B.C.

VANCOUVER – Provincial land use decisions for the Central Coast and the North Coast will preserve some of the most spectacular, ecologically diverse regions in the world, including critical Spirit Bear habitat, Premier Gordon Campbell announced today.

The combined Central Coast and North Coast Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) areas are approximately 6.4 million hectares, or more than twice the size of Belgium. The total combined protected areas for these regions are approximately 1.8 million hectares, or more than three times the size of Prince Edward Island.

“The agreement reached on these areas represents an unprecedented collaboration between First Nations, industry, environmentalists, local governments and many other stakeholders in how we manage the vast richness of B.C.’s coast for the benefit of all British Columbians,” said Campbell. “The result is a strong marriage that balances the needs of the environment with the need for sustainable jobs and a strong economic future for coastal communities.

“Diverse interests have come together in a unique partnership that will support economic opportunity while preserving some of B.C.’s most spectacular wilderness areas and protecting habitat for a number of species, including the rare Spirit Bear. I want to thank all the groups who have shown vision, foresight and patience in bringing us to this historic day.”

These protected areas preserve some of the largest intact temperate rainforests in the world and conserve more than 200,000 hectares of the Spirit Bear’s habitat, including the more than 103,000 hectare Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy on Princess Royal Island. In short order, legislation will be introduced around these land use decisions to establish new protected areas and further sustainable logging practices in the region.

“This agreement brings an end to the long-standing resource-use conflicts over this land,” said KNT First Nations chairman Dallas Smith. “Now our people have a more active role in how and where business is done in our traditional territories, and we can move toward cultural, ecological and economic stability in this region.”

The decisions are particularly significant for the balance they bring between the environment and forest management. The land use decisions protect vast areas of temperate rain forest, while providing a unique framework called Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) for the industry to work in. These agreements set the stage for a collaborative model to fully implement EBM in these areas by 2009.

“I commend the provincial government for its commitment to this land use planning process,” said Heiltsuk Chief Ross Wilson “We’re looking forward to finalizing and implementing our land use agreements. Completion of the government-to-government land use agreements will ensure the well-being of the lands, waters and peoples within our Traditional Territories.”

The decisions pave the way for finalizing government-to-government land use agreements with First Nations. This will enable the formation of Land and Resource Forums allowing the Province and the First Nations to work together to finalize and implement land use plans that incorporate the cultural values and ecological and economic interests of the First Nations.

“For the past seven years Canadian Forest Products, Catalyst Paper Corporation, International Forest Products and Western Forest Products have worked with environmental groups, coastal stakeholders, First Nations, the Province and customers to achieve the outcome being announced today. This is a significant step forward, and increases certainty for all involved,” said Western Forest Products CEO Reynold Hert.

“These land use decisions are a historic step towards a new level of co-operation in British Columbia’s forests,” said Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell. “Government, First Nations, environmentalists, resource industries and communities have found common ground, and this continued collaboration will play an important role in our work ahead to fully implement these LRMPs.”

Greenpeace, ForestEthics and the Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter, were intimately involved in building this collaborative solution for more than five years. These organizations are expressing strong support for the land use decisions reached between First Nations and the Province and are looking forward to its on-the-ground implementation.

The public planning process assessed ecological, social and economic values of the regions. Key elements of the planning decisions include identifying new protected areas, creating the Spirit Bear conservancy and adoption of ecosystem based management (EBM) that encourages conservation and sustainable land use practices. These elements demonstrate B.C.’s commitment to sustainable forest practices, something international markets are demanding.

The provincial government and First Nations have embarked on developing a new relationship based on mutual respect and the principles of recognition and reconciliation. Land and resource management plans and the opportunities they provide are an important part of that endeavour.

Scenic video footage is available to television stations in Canada and the U.S., and is digitally archived on the Pathfire Digital Media Gateway; video news provider “B”; story number CNW06BEAR1.

To view or download maps and other related materials, please visit:
<http://www.mediaroom.gov.bc.ca/DisplayEventDetails.aspx?eventId=36>

3 backgrounder(s) attached. 1 factsheet(s) attached.

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