

Groundbreaking Great Bear Rainforest Agreement Secures \$120 million

January 21, 2007 (Vancouver, B.C.) – Environmental groups ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club of Canada welcomed the federal government’s announcement today that it will add \$30 million to complete a \$120 million groundbreaking conservation management and economic development initiative in British Columbia’s Great Bear Rainforest.

“Today we have secured the largest integrated conservation investment package in North American history” said Amanda Carr of Greenpeace. “Once again all eyes are on Canada’s Great Bear Rainforest and our innovative, precedent-setting approach to protecting the environment.”

The funds have been awaited since last February’s announcement of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, which included protection of over two million hectares of coastal temperate rainforest. The contribution secures an additional and unprecedented \$60 million pledged by private Canadian and US donors, as well as \$30 million promised by the British Columbia provincial government.

“The challenges of our age require innovative approaches that place a premium on a healthy environment. With today’s announcement we’re proving that conservation can attract investment and actually support jobs that won’t threaten the living systems that we depend upon,” said Merran Smith, BC Coast Program Director, ForestEthics.

“Today’s announcement completes the holistic model of conservation in the Great Bear Rainforest,” said Lisa Matthaus, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter. “Coastal communities can finally move forward to create meaningful, sustainable solutions for their people and the environment they depend upon.”

Private funds will flow to a conservation endowment fund, dedicated solely to conservation management, science and stewardship jobs in First Nations’ communities. Public funds will be used for investments in ecologically-sustainable business ventures within First Nations’ territories or communities.

Both levels of government, along with private donors, must be recognized for believing in the potential of this initiative. The three environmental groups also wish to thank the coastal First Nations, The Nature Conservancy and all those who worked to make today’s announcement a reality.

The Great Bear Rainforest agreement announced in February 2006 also includes the protection of an area three times the size of Prince Edward Island and a new approach to logging called Ecosystem-based Management throughout the region by 2009. Making these agreements real on the ground and shifting logging practices remains our next big challenge.

The Great Bear Rainforest, encompassing B.C.’s north and central coasts and the archipelago of Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands), is the world’s largest remaining tract of intact coastal temperate rainforest. It is home to wolves, cougars, bears and 20 percent of the world’s wild salmon population.

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