



preserving the

great
bear
rainforest



Koye River



First Nations petroglyph

On the mainland coast of British Columbia,
opposite the northern end of Vancouver Island, north to the Alaskan border,
the Great Bear Rainforest stretches for more than 400 kilometres.

Like the rainforests of the nearby island archipelago of the Haida Gwaii,
the Great Bear Rainforest was born of a complex interaction between
ocean, mountains, forests and rain.

It is a land of mist-shrouded valleys and glacier-cut fjords,
old growth forests and rich salmon streams, and at 21 million acres,
it is part of the largest coastal temperate rainforest remaining on Earth.



Spirit Bear

Coastal temperate rainforests have always been rare and are considered more threatened than tropical rainforests.

Nearly 60 percent of our planet's coastal temperate rainforests have been logged or developed. The Great Bear represents fully one-quarter of the remaining intact forest.

Salmon are an important species and a critical source of nutrients for the health and productivity of the Great Bear Rainforest—without the salmon, the forest would not be as diverse; without the forest, the salmon cannot survive.

South of the Canadian border in North America, there are no intact coastal temperate rainforest patches larger than 12,000 acres.

The Great Bear Rainforest supports one of North America's largest populations of grizzly bears and the world's largest known population of rare, white Spirit bears. These bears—a subspecies of black bear with a recessive gene that results in their white color—are found only in numbers in the Great Bear Rainforest region.

The Great Bear Rainforest is one of the last places on Earth that still retains all of the elements of a functioning, large-scale coastal temperate rainforest ecosystem.



Orca (killer whales) in a fjord of the Great Bear Rainforest

The loss of the Great Bear Rainforest could ultimately mean the loss of some of the oldest surviving cultures in the Western Hemisphere.

The Great Bear Rainforest is the ancestral and current home of many First Nations that have lived on the bounty of the forest and the ocean for more than 10,000 years.

The people of the coastal First Nations—their histories, identities and spirituality—are inextricably linked to the lands and waters of the rainforest. Oral traditions, songs, art, ceremonies and place names passed down for generations connect people with their environment.

For the First Nations, stewardship of natural resources is an inherent part of their culture and many still follow traditional stewardship practices.

First Nations are working to blend the strengths of traditional and modern, science-based stewardship methods for the Great Bear Rainforest. Fundamental respect for other species and their habitats is one of the core strengths of traditional stewardship.

The Great Bear Rainforest is valuable both economically and as an irreplaceable ecosystem. The conservation challenge is to find a way to balance the ecological needs of the lands and waters with the economic and cultural needs of the people.



Canoeists exploring Great Bear Rainforest estuary

Decisions are being made right now
that will determine the future
of the Great Bear Rainforest.

Will it be a future of hope or of loss?

We have a choice.

The Great Bear Rainforest is a vital natural and economic resource for British Columbia. To be successful, conservation in the Great Bear Rainforest must be more than a wilderness agreement. It must not only protect ecosystems, but also respect indigenous cultures, and strengthen the economies of local communities that depend upon the rainforest for their way of life.

Following the conclusion of negotiations with First Nations, historic land use agreements in British Columbia could ultimately provide full protection for as much as 30 percent of the Great Bear Rainforest's 21 million acres and establish a process to develop ecosystem-based management practices for the entire rainforest.

These unprecedented consensus agreements between the Great Bear Rainforest's main constituencies—local, regional and provincial governments, industry, communities, workers, small businesses and environmental organizations—offer a rare opportunity to create a new model of lasting conservation in the region.

First Nations and the provincial government of British Columbia must also come to agreement on land use plans before any conservation is legislated.

The development of dedicated public and private funding sources that support community stability of First Nations is key to ensuring the implementation of the consensus agreements.



Stagoo River

The campaign for the Great Bear Rainforest is designed to help ensure a healthy future for 21 million acres of coastal temperate rainforest.

Conservation investments are expected to be held and managed in a conservation endowment fund. Grants will likely be distributed through two separate funding sources:

a conservation endowment fund raised from private, philanthropic sources and dedicated solely to conservation management, science and stewardship jobs, and restoration activities in First Nation communities; and

an economic development fund created from provincial and federal government contributions and dedicated to investments in ecologically-sustainable business ventures within the First Nation territories or communities.

A separate, proposed Socially Responsible Investment component would allocate funds for all qualifying businesses for development loans and venture capital funding.

Private, philanthropic funding helps drive the commitment of government funds to support the land use agreements and will also support First Nation commitments to conservation outcomes.

These conservation investments will support sustainable economic development in First Nations communities that commit to protecting large portions of their ancestral land base in designated protected areas while managing the rest under ecosystem-based management.

Ecosystem-based management is an adaptive approach that seeks to incorporate ecological, socio-economic and cultural needs into the creation of long-term, sustainable land use implementation plans.



Wolves of the Great Bear Rainforest

If we're going to preserve
one of the rarest, richest
landscapes on Earth,
this is our best chance.

Together, the public and private funds help to ensure a healthy future for more than 21 million acres of coastal temperate rainforest and prove that conservation and economy can co-exist.

By any measure, the preservation of the Great Bear Rainforest is one of the most compelling conservation visions of our times. But until the agreements are finalized, financed and implemented, the Great Bear Rainforest will remain under threat.

Without a timely commitment of private, philanthropic funds, First Nations with large protected areas within their territories may have difficulty successfully implementing and maintaining the consensus land use agreements.

Ultimately, the opportunity in the Great Bear Rainforest is about more than the preservation of one beautiful place. This project is a global model of what conservation must become in the 21st century—an inherent part of economies, environments and cultures.



Hiker above Dean Channel

The Great Bear Rainforest cannot be saved in pieces and it will not be saved until we can give real meaning to the connection between the economy and the environment. The chance to preserve the Great Bear Rainforest reaches beyond the piecemeal preservation of a few, isolated valleys and sets the stage for a broad-based transformation in land use and forestry practices. And it aims to sustain the region's ecosystem and the communities within it as a single, unbroken whole.

But we must act now,
or our best chance
to preserve
the Great Bear Rainforest
will be lost
forever.

After years of effort by a wide range of environmental organizations, industry in British Columbia joined local, regional and provincial governments to seek a lasting solution for the resources of the Great Bear Rainforest. Your financial support is vital to ensure that historic consensus agreements are finalized, funded and implemented.

A coalition of four environmental non-governmental organizations—Greenpeace Canada, Sierra Club of Canada-British Columbia chapter, ForestEthics and Rainforest Action Network—has engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders to work towards consensus for the long-term preservation of the Great Bear Rainforest. These groups have also been working with a coalition of Canadian and U.S. foundations to support conservation and community-development opportunities.

Tides Canada Foundation, Canada's only national public foundation focused on supporting environmental and social causes, is leading the Canadian fundraising initiative to help ensure the successful implementation of the historic land use agreements. This role complements Tides Canada's mission to strengthen the capacity of charitable organizations to sustain this type of work into the future.

Tides Canada Foundation and The Nature Conservancy are working together to raise funds for this initiative in Canada and the United States.

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