

OLD GROWTH UPDATE

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In November 2021, the Provincial Government announced its intention to work in partnership with indigenous communities to temporarily defer the harvest of British Columbia most rare, unique, and at-risk old growth forests. A technical review panel had been commissioned to identify, and map, possible at-risk areas, and accompanying the November announcement, it identified 2.6 million hectares of old growth areas for further review by Indigenous groups to better understand which of these areas should be protected.

The Revelstoke forest sector fully supports this strategy and hopes that it will lead to an Indigenous and community led planning process that will ultimately identify those areas that should be protected in perpetuity, those areas that could be managed for harvesting, and those areas that could be managed for harvesting with modified practices to minimize the ecological footprint on the ground.

Unfortunately, though well intended, the roll out of the old growth deferral strategy has been poor and has left Indigenous groups, our community and the local forest industry in a state of flux with uncertainty and some unrealistic short-term expectations by some.

Over the past six months, the forest industry has been working hard to limit or completely avoid its impacts to the proposed old growth deferral areas. These changes have not been insignificant and have led to major disruption to operations, shutdowns for contractors, and the loss of a number of well-paying industry jobs in our community. While the forest industry is moving towards identifying new development areas outside the proposed deferrals, these developments will take several years to prepare. It is simply not possible to discontinue operations while the planning is conducted while also maintaining a viable forest sector and all those it employs.

The Revelstoke forest industry fully recognizes that we all need and want to move towards a more inclusive and balanced planning process that addresses the unique interests and ecological values of the Revelstoke area, and supports the economic needs of the community and those families and people that make this community what it is. This will take time but we are prepared to be transparent and innovative in our thinking and planning. There are many varied and complex interests and concerns when so many groups are involved and these all take time and patience, by everyone, to work through. The industry is committed to this.



It is not a case of ‘talk and log’ but a case of identifying clearly understood time periods and objectives and developing a plan together to get to where we collectively want to get to. It is about balance.

The Revelstoke forest industry has been clear from the beginning that a transitional period will be needed to take the time required to fully develop a long-term planning process. This short-term period will require the logging of some previously developed blocks that overlap proposed old growth deferrals.

The Revelstoke forest industry has taken significant steps and is working in concert with the Provincial Government, the Revelstoke community and Indigenous groups to prepare a one to two year transitional plan. The plan will be to support the viability of the forest sector in the short term, minimize the impacts of and on deferral areas, while meeting the spirit and intent of the old growth strategy.

In the meantime, modified operational plans that are being identified for this summer and over the next year will only impact approximately 1% of all the proposed deferral areas in the Revelstoke area.

Our objective is to report out to the community later this year on what was harvested and what our plans are going forward into 2023.

We believe this community, working in collaboration with the Indigenous title holders, can show how complex planning processes can be done together. Respect and trust will be critical. To get it wrong will have a long-lasting negative impact on our environment and our community.

SPONSORED BY:



Mike Copperthwaite
Revelstoke Community Forest Corporation



Patrick McMechan
Stella-Jones Inc.



Nick Arkle, CEO
Downie Timber Ltd.



Fernando Cocciolo
Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd.