



## PRESERVING THE GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

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

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 250 miles. Like the rainforests of the nearby island archipelago of the Haida Gwaii, the Great Bear Rainforest has been peopled by First Nations for more than 10,000 years. It is a land of history and legend, mist and waterfalls—an ancient rainforest laced with rivers and cut with fjords.

Today, it is a threatened wilderness of giant cedars and Sitka spruce, a haven for salmon, wolves and ghostly white bears. At 21 million acres, the Great Bear Rainforest is part of the largest coastal temperate rainforest left on Earth.

Born of a complex interaction between oceans, mountains, forests and rain, coastal temperate rainforests have always been rare and are considered more threatened than tropical rainforests. Scientists estimate that nearly 60 percent of our planet's original coastal temperate rainforests have been destroyed by logging and development. The Great Bear Rainforest represents fully one-quarter of what remains.

Decisions are being made right now that will determine the future of the Great Bear Rainforest. 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 global model of lasting conservation in the region.



The wolves of the Great Bear Rainforest are genetically distinct from their inland cousins.



The Great Bear Rainforest

## What's at Stake Community & Tradition

The Great Bear Rainforest is the ancestral and current home of many coastal First Nations that have lived on the bounty of the forest and the ocean for more than 10,000 years. 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. The loss of the Great Bear Rainforest could ultimately mean the loss of some of the oldest surviving cultures in the Western Hemisphere.

By definition and design, the consensus agreements in the Great Bear Rainforest are dependent upon local support for success. A coalition of environmental non-governmental organizations—Greenpeace Canada, Sierra Club of Canada—British Columbia Chapter, ForestEthics and the Rainforest Action Network—has engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders to work towards a consensus for long-term conservation in the region. These groups have also been working with a coalition of Canadian and U.S. foundations to explore conservation and community-development options.

The Great Bear Rainforest is valuable both economically and as an irreplaceable ecosystem. The development of dedicated public and private funding sources that support conservation as well as community stability of First Nations is key to ensuring the successful implementation of the consensus agreements.

An ecosystem of global importance, the Great Bear Rainforest is also a vital natural and economic resource for British Columbia. To be successful, conservation here must be more than a wilderness agreement. To be successful in this complicated political, economic and environmental landscape, conservation in the Great Bear Rainforest must not only protect the ecosystem, but also respect indigenous cultures, and strengthen the economies of local communities that depend upon the rainforest for their way of life.

## Campaign for the Great Bear Rainforest

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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 for work in the Great Bear Rainforest will likely be distributed through two separate funding sources.

### **Conservation Endowment Fund**

A conservation endowment fund raised from private, philanthropic sources will be dedicated solely to science and stewardship jobs and activities in First Nation communities. This fund will be used for restoration projects and conservation management, such as Forest Watchman jobs, and would be treated as an ever-green endowment. The Conservancy's fundraising efforts will be targeted for such an endowment.

### **Economic Development Fund**

An Economic Development Fund created from Canadian government contributions will be dedicated to investments in ecologically sustainable business ventures within the First Nation territories or communities. This fund will enable First Nations to launch conservation-based businesses that value and preserve the environment. From the perspective of both the provincial government of British Columbia and the First Nation governments, it is vital that any proposed solutions for the Great Bear Rainforest blend conservation outcomes with new economic development resources.

A separate, proposed Socially Responsible Investment component would allocate funds to qualifying businesses for business 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.



The Great Bear Rainforest is one of the last true wildernesses remaining on Earth.

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

## The Conservancy and the Great Bear Rainforest

After studying the feasibility of the conservation solutions in the Great Bear Rainforest, the Conservancy has agreed to lead a fundraising initiative to help ensure the successful implementation of the historic land use agreements.

Scientific expertise will also be part of the Conservancy's contribution to the Great Bear Rainforest. The ecosystem-based management aspect of the agreements goes directly to our core strengths—bringing applied scientific expertise to land use planning efforts. Support for the development of the ecosystem-based management plans is well-aligned with our science-based values and Conservation by Design methodology.

Greenpeace Canada, Sierra Club of Canada-British Columbia Chapter, ForestEthics and the Rainforest Action Network have worked for years to craft a conservation solution for the coast of British Columbia. The Conservancy can provide the most valuable assistance as a supportive partner by helping to develop the capacity of British Columbia-based organizations to sustain this work in the future. The campaign helps support the agreements and open new doors.

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

#### UNIQUE SPECIES & HABITAT

Salmon are an important species in the Great Bear Rainforest and a critical source of nutrients for the health and productivity of the entire ecosystem.

The salmon sustain the forest and the species that depend upon it for survival, including wolves, grizzly bears, black bears and the rare white Spirit Bears. In all the world, these bears—a subspecies of black bears with a recessive gene that results in their white color—are found in numbers only in the Great Bear Rainforest region.



Spirit Bear



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Tufted puffin

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This is a complicated project with many challenges, but one point stands out over all others. Nowhere else in the more than 28 countries where the Conservancy works have we seen the potential for an integrated conservation and compatible land use solution of this magnitude. But until the agreements are finalized, financed and implemented, the Great Bear Rainforest will remain under threat.

A timely commitment of private, philanthropic funds is essential to helping ensure that the consensus land use agreements are successfully implemented and maintained.

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 ensure a healthy future for 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.

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

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. philanthropic foundations to support conservation and community development opportunities.

The Nature Conservancy was asked to assist in the Great Bear Rainforest project by leading the capital campaign and to help develop the capacity of British Columbia-based organizations to sustain this work into the future.