



**ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL BIOLOGY POSITION STATEMENT  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TIMBER SUPPLY  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY – PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
JULY 10 2012**

**Members of the Special Committee on Timber Supply,**

On behalf of the Association of Professional Biology ("APB"), we appreciate being invited to provide input on this important provincial issue. We begin with a brief background on the Association so that you may have a better understanding of the important role we and our members play in the development of conservation and resource management policy at all levels.

The APB has formally represented the interests of Biology Professionals in British Columbia since 1980. The Association was originally formed by academic, government and private sector interests to collectively bring recognition, credibility and legislative accountability to the professional practice of applied biology. Our members represent and adhere to the highest standards and expertise in application of science and professional ethical conduct across a broad range of disciplines including: conservation biology, environmental toxicology, land and resource management and impact assessment. At present the Association represents approximately 1,000 biology professionals in this province.

Governed under the College of Applied Biology Act, our members subscribe to a strict code of ethics that includes a requirement to "...uphold the principles of stewardship...". The Association defines stewardship as the "...care and management of ecosystems to ensure a continued flow of ecological goods and services to nature and humans."

In consideration therefore of what questions the Special Committee is tasked with deliberating on, and in keeping with the Association's foundational principles, we provide the following recommendations on the mid-term timber supply issue. In particular the Association has focused on where such decisions relate to and may impact the "maintenance of high environmental standards and protection of critical habitat for species and key environmental values":



## **1. What values and principles should guide the evaluation and decision-making regarding potential actions to mitigate the timber supply impacts?**

British Columbia's Forest reserve areas provide a diversity of ecological benefits that help keep this province's working forests healthy, productive and resilient. These reserves assist the province in meeting its biodiversity objectives by protecting critical habitat for species and ecological communities at risk. As an example, some of the larger forest reserves are vitally important to the management and recovery of threatened Caribou or Northern Goshawk populations in BC as well as a host of other federally and provincially listed species. Furthermore, these same reserves create landscape level buffers that mitigate the impacts of catastrophic disturbance events such as fires and floods. Protecting these types of ecosystem benefits are even more crucial given that the severity and frequency of disturbance events are expected to increase with climate change.

Structural diversity is vital to protecting these services. Large diameter wildlife trees and downed wood common in Old Growth Management Areas provide habitat for many important natural silvicultural pest control species such as cavity nesting birds and bats. Riparian areas provide direct and indirect habitat for species such as salmon that return ocean-derived nutrients to their spawning streams. These nutrients are then dispersed to riparian and upland forests through wildlife food chain interactions, further sustaining the entire forest community in a seasonal cycle of productivity.

Under the College of Applied Biology Act and guiding tenets, Registered Biology Professionals must also work in the public interest. Old Growth Management Areas, Wildlife Habitat Areas and Ungulate Winter Ranges serve not only to protect survival habitat for species at risk, but for a number of commercially important game species. Many of these are of significant harvest value for human use, such as moose, deer, bear and mountain goat. These species rely on well connected, diverse habitat mosaics of which intact forest reserves are crucial.

This province's forest dependent ecological assets, whether they be for hunting, fishing, traditional subsistence or cultural and spiritual use, contribute to sustaining rural communities and the provincial economy in general. We believe that overall, BC will benefit more from taking a long-term, conservative and conservation-based approach to forest management than one that serves to sacrifice ecological services in favour of enhanced timber supply. To accomplish this, decision makers and resource managers must see 'the forest for the trees', taking a holistic approach to the management of all desired forest values.



BC has long been recognized for its reputation as a place of significant natural beauty. Forest reserves are critical to maintaining the “Visual Quality Objectives” and recreational values that make this province an international destination in the tourism and commercial backcountry industries. While contributing to the proper functioning of watersheds and forest ecosystems, these same reserves generate direct and indirect benefits that equate to hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue and thousands of jobs each year. Liquidating these assets to sustain just one particular industry for a short period undermines our profession’s responsibility to be effective stewards of these public resources.

The APB provides some statistics for consideration:

- ◆ Forests in the Chilliwack Forest District alone are estimated at \$5.1 billion (\$5,900 to \$7,400/hectare) in ecological benefits (including carbon storage, pollution attenuating, runoff control, etc...)¹.
- ◆ The Forest Practices Board identified the implications of losing the ecological benefits of forest reserves when it examined the effects of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation and salvage logging on the hydrology of the Baker Creek drainage, tributary to the Fraser River, near Quesnel. The study found that “peak flow changes likely to result from both the infestation and salvage logging have implications on flooding, channel stability and fish habitat in watersheds similar to Baker Creek. Other hydrological maintenance benefits as well as contributions to local community economies and cultural values were also identified regardless of proximity or level of direct reliance on forest resources.”²
- ◆ A study by Simon Fraser University identified that increasing conservation of old growth forest reserves in the Fraser Timber Supply Area would provide a net benefit to human and non-human resources over those that may be lost from restricting harvest opportunities in 71 of 82 scenarios³.
- ◆ The largest Wildlife Habitat Area designations in BC’s interior (234,538 ha in Quesnel, 379,349 ha in Williams Lake and 20,234 ha in 100 mile house TSA’s respectively) are designated for the management and protection of threatened Caribou populations⁴.
- ◆ BC’s forests possess an untapped wealth in chemical, plant and bacterial properties for pharmaceutical purposes yet to be fully determined. The discovery of the commercial

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¹ Natural Capital in BC’s Lower Mainland Valuing the benefits from nature. David Suzuki Foundation 2010

² Forest Practices Board Bulletin, Volume 8 - Ecosystem Services and British Columbia’s Forest and Range Lands

³ The Economics of Protecting Old Growth Forest: An Analysis of Spotted Owl Habitat in the Fraser Timber Supply Area of British Columbia Final Report. Knowler and Dust 2008.

⁴ Province of BC Approved Wildlife Habitat Areas [accessed online July 5 2012]



drug "Taxol", derived from a chemical in Pacific yew, used widely in the treatment of several cancers<sup>5</sup> is an example of the resources still awaiting discovery.

## **2. How should decisions regarding potential actions to mitigate the timber supply impacts be made and, by whom?**

Government is ultimately the decision maker on most land use issues, those decisions must be based on the best available science and robust, credible evidence and information. While it can be argued that the decisions to increase timber harvesting activities which have led to this supply shortfall should have included an appropriate mitigation strategy in the first place, the problem is now at hand and in need of swift coordinated action. The APB feels that registered professionals, independent of government, working within their diverse areas of training and expertise, can provide the necessary legislated accountability, working with decisions makers, local communities, specialists and First Nations to provide the essential information upon which harvesting decisions should be made.

## **3. What cautions and advice do you have for this committee in considering whether and how to mitigate mid-term timber supply?**

While the politically expedient solution to the timber supply issue may be to open reserve areas to harvest, as resource professionals our members are concerned that the province is about to sacrifice significant biodiversity and other public interest values and economies for short-term timber gains. Reductions in reserve quality, (e.g. Harvest in WHA's and/or reductions in general wildlife measures) could have many detrimental impacts such as species at risk population declines and potential extirpation.

Maintaining diverse forest ecosystems is critical for the maintenance of resiliency in the face of an uncertain climatic future. Forest reserve areas provide a level of diversity and thus help to protect forest ecosystems from future assaults such as experienced from the Mountain Pine Beetle. The Association is also cognizant of the existing and projected future effects of climate change and the role that healthy, biodiverse forest communities will play. Numerous studies, many done by the Province of BC, point to the critical role that BC's forests do, and will play, in mitigating local and international climate change impacts. The Association is accountable to its own climate change policy which dictates that "Applied Biology Professionals have a crucial role to play in reducing the adverse impacts of climate change on ecological goods and services by developing innovative, adaptive and environmentally sustainable solutions." With this in mind, the

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<sup>5</sup> Goodman, Jordan; Walsh, Vivien (2001). *The Story of Taxol: Nature and Politics in the Pursuit of an Anti-Cancer Drug*. Cambridge University Press.



APB cannot overlook the ramifications of reducing standing and downed wood carbon sinks that the remaining mature forest reserves provide. Effective conservation of these resources is fundamental to BC maintaining itself as a leader in dealing with climate change.

#### **4. How would you as an individual or a community want to be engaged in these considerations going forward?**

As a community of practice, Registered Biology Professionals are well placed to provide the necessary balance to economic pressures driving resource demands in BC. As practitioners spanning a range of disciplines, we work and share members and interests with organizations like the Association of BC Forest Professionals and Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists. The Association sees itself having a value-added role in any government policy or decision-making surrounding the sound management and conservation of BC's natural resources.

In closing, the Association of Professional Biology is calling for careful consideration around timber harvesting in existing reserves. This will ensure that the most stringent science-based information is used prior to making management decisions that could have far-reaching adverse consequences for BC's ecological values. Encouraging the application of sound stewardship principles will ensure the best results for the people of this province, our rich natural assets and the economy for the long-term.

On behalf of the Association, thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this process. We look forward to assisting the Province of BC in its ongoing policy development and decision making processes.

Sincerely,

**Association of Professional Biology**

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President

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The Association of Professional Biology represents approximately 1,000 Registered Professional Biologists (RPBio) and Registered Biology Technologists (RBTech) employed by industry, government and non-government organizations in all aspects of biology. We help members maintain competence and achieve high professional standards; advance the development and application of sound biological principles in the management and conservation of BC's natural resources; and foster public understanding of impacts of human and other activities on natural resources.

**~ Delivered to Committee by Pamela Zevit, RPBio, APB Past-President, Chair Practice  
Advisory and Professional Ethics ~**