

The New Forest Act

Protecting Communities and Nature

DRAFT PROPOSAL

Updated September 2026

Jennifer Houghton
Independent Custodian, New Forest Act
newforestact.ca

Preface to the Expanded Edition October 2025

The New Forest Act Proposal and Backgrounder have been expanded as of October 2025, following feedback from people across the province.

Key additions include:

- The 3-Zone Forest Management Framework has been **renamed to** the **Protect–Restore–Harvest (P.R.H.) Framework** to reflect its emphasis on ecological integrity, restoration, and responsible harvesting - and to clearly differentiate it from other "three-zone" frameworks that use very different principles and standards.
- We have clarified how the **outcomes of NDS forestry** differ from industrial forestry**,** showing how P.R.H. Zoning under Nature-Directed Stewardship produces healthier ecosystems, safer communities, and more stable jobs.
- A section describing **what NDS is** and how it works has been added to ensure the concept is fully understood.
- A new section now describes what **logging looks like under Nature-Directed Stewardship** (NDS)**,** providing clear examples to reassure supporters and address critics who fear the proposal eliminates logging altogether.
- The proposal now explicitly frames forests as **critical public infrastructure**, essential for flood and fire protection, clean water, carbon storage, and community resilience.
- A new section outlines **how foresters will learn** and be accredited in NDS - starting with paradigm-first training and a ready-to-implement pathway (course, field practicum, supervised project/sign-off) built on existing skills.

These additions strengthen the proposal by making Nature-Directed Stewardship and the P.R.H. Zoning more transparent and more practically explained to demonstrate their alignment with the needs of BC's people, forests, and communities.

Acknowledgements

The New Forest Act was developed through the Boundary Forest Watershed Stewardship Society between 2024 and 2026.

Jennifer Houghton was the principal author of the proposal, with significant contributions from Herb Hammond, Dave Weaver, and Ray Hanson. Many other individuals contributed research, technical knowledge, review, mapping, and perspectives during its development.

Following the dissolution of the Boundary Forest Watershed Stewardship Society in 2026, Jennifer Houghton became the independent custodian of the New Forest Act proposal and supporting materials.

Executive Summary - New Forest Act: Protecting Communities and Nature

What this does. The New Forest Act shifts BC from volume-driven industrial logging to Nature-Directed Stewardship (NDS), treating forests as critical public infrastructure for water security, flood/fire protection, carbon storage, biodiversity, and community stability. It replaces the current regime with outcomes-first rules and community-centred governance.

Why now. Industrial forestry has produced degraded landscapes, higher disaster risks and costs, and declining jobs and mills - while prioritizing short-term timber flow over long-term ecosystem function and local economies. The legislation enshrines ecological integrity and public interest ahead of private extraction.

How the transition works.

- **Licences end at renewal.** Existing licences are dissolved at their five-year renewal dates - an orderly 1–5 year transition with no tenure buy-backs.
- **Statutes repealed and replaced.** The Act repeals the Forest Act**,** FRPA**,** PMFLA**,** and the Ministry of Forests Act**;** the Water Sustainability Act is fully implemented (not repealed) to support watershed-first planning.

The framework: P.R.H. (Protect–Restore–Harvest) implements NDS in space and sequence:

- **Protect** primary forests in perpetuity (no industrial logging/roads).
- **Restore** degraded secondary forests (road removal, hydrology repair, proforestation; no "salvage" logging).
- **Harvest using** selection-based forestry on previously logged/roaded lands, with partial cutting, continuous cover, and full-cycle tree retention - only where ecological thresholds allow.

Governance the public trusts. A new Ministry of Ecosystem Integrity (MOEI) administers the Act with Indigenous and public leadership; Community Forest Boards make local decisions; Regional Log Sort Yards restore open, competitive log markets; an independent Forester General reports annually to the Legislature. Local ranger stations, regional science panels, and Indigenous Knowledge Panels anchor monitoring, compliance, and learning.

What changes on the ground.

- **Outcomes first:** forests kept functioning - connected cover, cold clean water, stable slopes, living soil carbon, wildlife habitat.
- **Logging continues, but differently:** selection/partial cutting, minimal roads, higher structural retention, and hydrology-led layout.
- **Jobs shift and grow:** restoration, monitoring, planning, regional sorting, local mills, and value-added manufacturing - more jobs per cubic metre and steadier community work than industrial-extraction-and-export.

Training and accreditation are ready to implement. Foresters learn NDS via a paradigm-first course (outcomes/limits), a field practicum, and a supervised project with sign-off, built on skills already taught (selection systems, riparian design, terrain stability). Government can require NDS sign-off on public projects and credit hours toward professional development, with simple annual audits to improve.

Economic rationale. The PRH system avoids liquidation, restores watershed security, and supports small and medium-sized local businesses in milling and value-added manufacturing. It re-opens regional log markets so public timber becomes public value instead of raw-log exports.

Decision in front of BC. Enact new legislation that protects people and ecosystems, aligns with DRIPA, and puts British Columbians to work in conservation, restoration, and careful selection forestry - or continue paying for floods, fires, drought, and lost opportunities. The New Forest Act provides a legislative framework for protecting British Columbia's people and ecosystems while supporting stable community-based economies.

Table of Contents

PREFACE TO THE EXPANDED EDITION OCTOBER 2025 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - NEW FOREST ACT: PROTECTING COMMUNITIES AND NATURE 3

INTRODUCTION 7

NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF INDUSTRIAL FORESTRY 9

Costs of Disasters *11*

Forests as Critical Infrastructure *12*

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION AND POLICIES PROTECT PRIVATE INTERESTS 13

THE NEW FOREST ACT 15

TRANSITIONING GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES TO A NEW SYSTEM 15

THREE KEY PRIORITIES OF THE NEW FOREST ACT 16

PRIORITY #1 – ECOSYSTEM INTEGRITY 16

P.R.H. - PROTECT-RESTORE-HARVEST STEWARDSHIP MODEL *18*

PRIORITY #2 – COMMUNITY-BASED DECISION MAKING 19

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE *19*

PRIORITY #3 – COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIES 22

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH 22

The economic & employment value of switching to forestry based in Nature-Directed Stewardship *23*

9 ways new jobs are created under the New Forest Act and NDS: *23*

Economic and Job Benefits of NDS Style Forestry & Mills *24*

Why Log Sort Yards? More Jobs, Better Returns for BC Taxpayers, Access to Logs by Small Business at Competitive Prices *25*

CONCLUSION 28

APPENDIX – Replacement of the Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA) 29

This document comprises a summary of the New Forest Act proposal, how the system will be managed under it, and its benefits to the people of British Columbia.

INTRODUCTION

The New Forest Act is intended to ensure that forest management on public lands focuses on the interests of communities and nature rather than on extraction interests. Under this new legislation, the primary objective of forest management will be to maintain the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems. The new system will also give community members a say in decisions about local forests, as well as bolster and stabilize community economies while diversifying and strengthening the broader BC economy.

The existing Forest Act would be gradually repealed, along with the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Private Managed Forest Land Act. All existing licenses would be dissolved when their five-year renewal comes up, permitting a gradual transition to the system. This would give the forest industry and communities time to adjust.

Under the New Forest Act, the structure, support, and relationships are centered around Community Forest Boards (CFB) which operate under the principles of Nature-Directed Stewardship (NDS)[1] which is a type of ecological management. The development of CFBs will require organizational change and the creation of new government agencies. These are described briefly below and in detail in the Backgrounder (see Backgrounder page 15).

By enacting brand-new legislation that implements an ecological model of forest management, the Provincial government has an opportunity to put people in BC to work in meaningful careers conserving forest ecosystems while positioning itself as a leader in climate mitigation and adaptation. The New Forest Act can also help to make BC's commitment to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

[1] Nature-Directed Stewardship (NDS) is a type of landscape planning that is known by other names, including Ecosystem Based Conservation Planning, ecosystem-based management, ecosystem-based forestry, and ecological or ecosystem management. In this report we will refer to it as Nature-Directed Stewardship and/or ecological management. NDS is a system of ecosystem protection, maintenance, restoration, and human use. It was developed by the Silva Forest Foundation to protect ecosystem integrity and biodiversity at multiple spatial scales. For more information see Backgrounder page 19.

Peoples Act (DRIPA) real.

Rationale for a New Forest Act

Primary Forests Ensure Our Survival

Natural ecosystems function fully and flawlessly without industrialized activities on them. Fully functioning primary forests ensure our survival and are the source of what we value. Legislation must elevate forests beyond the monetary of timber.

Humans value forests for:

- fish and wildlife habitat, including high-quality habitat for specialized species, like woodpeckers, marbled murrelets, spotted owls, and caribou.
- diverse communities of plants, animals, and micro-fauna
- water quality and quantity
- fresh air
- food
- cultural importance
- spiritual values
- mental health
- recreational values and non-consumptive use, e.g. ethno-ecotourism, wildlife viewing, guided hiking, and biking tours, guided interpretive education and awareness.
- harvesting of non-wood products, such as florals, medicinals, and mushrooms
- moderation of climate
- mitigation of severe fires, floods, and drought

Natural defenses, including intact ecosystems like primary forests, can play a critical role in enhancing the resilience of human and ecological systems to disasters and climate change. Intact ecosystems are often adapted to natural disturbances such as floods and wildfires. They may have the capacity to

withstand or recover from extreme weather- and climate-related hazards and adjust to ongoing environmental changes.[2] They do not require costly repairs like human-made structural defenses.

In this time of climate uncertainty, extreme weather events, and increasing disasters, the conservation of BC's primary forests and restoration of forest landscapes is essential. Our laws must preserve forests and all the things we value them for.

Ecological forest management creates different outcomes than industrial forest management. The industrial model creates a landscape that becomes ecologically degraded, is less valuable over time, and cuts jobs. NDS not only preserves the ecological integrity and the value of landscapes over time but also preserves community jobs. This type of planning recognizes the relationship between ecosystems and economies. When we take care of the ecosystem, we take care of the economy.

At this point in time, **the appropriate political decision** is for the BC government, on behalf of citizens, to take back control of public lands from private companies. This must be addressed now - for the sake of public safety, for the BC economy, and so that our children have a future.

Negative Outcomes of Industrial Forestry

Decades of overcutting from industrial logging have resulted in enormous losses of primary forests in BC. Between 2001 and 2019 logging accounted for 3.9 million hectares of forest cover loss in the province. When compared with the most forested nations on a per capita basis, BC's record of total forest cover loss is, by far, the worst. [3]

These losses and the current industrial forest system have come with major costs:

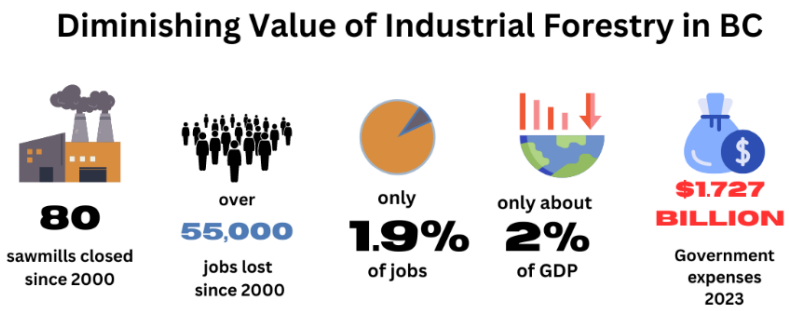
- economic loss to communities
    - the loss of 55,000 direct BC forestry jobs since 2000 [4]

[2] Glick, Patty & Powell, Emily & Schlesinger, Sara & Ritter, Jessie & Stein, Bruce & Fuller, Amanda. (2020). The Protective Value of Nature: A Review of the Effectiveness of Natural Infrastructure for Hazard Risk Reduction.

[3] Evergreen Alliance. Per Capita Tree Cover Loss. January 14, 2021. https://www.evergreenalliance.ca/forest-trends/per-capita-tree-cover-loss-r1/

[4] Relationship between direct forest industry jobs and volume harvested on all land in BC 2000-2020, Evergreen Alliance Staff, May 29, 2021, Retrieved here: https://www.evergreenalliance.ca/forest-trends/relationship-between-direct-forest-industry-jobs-and-volume-harvested-on-all-land-in-bc-2000-2020-r15/

    - over 80 sawmills have closed since 2000 [5]
- the economic value of BC forests has been lost
    - Corporations have removed most of the highest grade of timber and are moving out of BC and investing profits outside of Canada.
- the declining contribution of forestry to the BC GDP
- the cost to the public of managing BC's public forests has exceeded all direct revenue collected from the forest industry by $3.65 billion (2010-2020)[6]
- ecological degradation
    - degradation of water, including decreased water quality and supply for community watersheds, agriculture, and forest health
    - degradation of soil, including moisture and nutrients
    - degradation of watershed hydrology that results in many ecological costs.
    - loss of biodiversity
    - local extinction of species
- Canada's greenhouse gas emissions from logging are higher than that from oil sands
- loss of climate moderation



The devastating outcomes include more floods, drought, fires, and landslides, most tragically, a deadly slide at Duffey Lake that killed 5 people. The BC government has been blaming global climate change for these disasters. However, while climate plays a role, the increase in the frequency and magnitude of these disasters can be directly and indirectly linked to industrial logging (see Backgrounder page 4).

[5] United Steelworkers Special Report. Submission to BC Ministry of Forests on Log-Export Policy.

[Report]. - Burnaby, B.C.: USW District 3 Office, Janurary 5, 2012.

[6] Broadland, D. Forestry Doesn't Pay the Bills, Folks. Focus on Victoria. July 1, 2020. https://www.focusonvictoria.ca/issue-analysis/35/

As the climate crisis intensifies, primary forests remain our most effective system for storing large amounts of carbon dioxide and providing essential protections against extreme weather events like flooding, fire, and droughts. Unlogged primary forests have a moderating effect on climate, floods, and heat.

The provincial government **may not be able to control the global climate,** but it can control logging on public land in BC. One of the most effective actions the BC government can take to protect BC residents, economically and physically, is to preserve what is left of primary forests and embark on ecological restoration of most of the rest (with limited logging – see Backgrounder page 15).

Costs of Disasters

Over the past decade, the BC economy has been hit hard by the costs of recovery from disasters, including damage to public infrastructure, disaster response, and business losses.

Billions of taxpayer dollars are being spent on reacting to disasters rather than preventing them. In 2021, BC was beset by three extreme weather disasters: an unprecedented heat dome, devastating wildfires, and an atmospheric river and flooding. A study found that the costs to BC's economy from these events are estimated to be between $10.6 and $17.1 billion[7]. Lost wages were estimated to be between $1.5 to $2.6 billion.

The rising costs of disasters could fill a thousand-page document. Here are just a few:

- Between 2001 and 2010, Canadian insurers averaged $675 million a year in losses related to severe weather, but heading into 2024, losses exceeded $2 billion annually.[8]
- Over the past 50 years, nearly $8 billion has been spent in Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements as a result of disasters across Canada.[9]
- The 2024 BC budget includes $252 million over four years starting in 2023/24 to bolster the province's capacity to prepare for and respond to future climate emergencies.[10]

[7] A Climate Reckoning: The economic costs of BC's extreme weather in 2021, BY MARC LEE & BEN PARFITT, November 2022, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

[8] Kshatri, S. Insurers and claimants under strain as weather-related disasters mount in B.C. (17, March 2024), CBC News. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cold-millions-insurance-damages-1.7142869

[9] Excell, G & Parry, JE, Transformation Its Approach to Funding for Climate Disaster Recovery, (13, October 2024) Retrieved from https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/canada-transform-approach-to-funding-climate-disasters

[10] Stronger BC for Everyone, Taking Action for You, Budget and Fiscal Plan 2024/25-2026/27, (2024), Retrieved from https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2024/pdf/2024_Budget_and_Fiscal_Plan.pdf

- In 2023, wildfires in the Shuswap and Okanagan caused more than $720 million in insured losses, making it BC's costliest event ever. [11]
- The BC budget for fighting wildfires doubled from $1.02 billion between 2010-2014 to $2.12 billion between 2015-2019.[12]
- The costs of the catastrophic 2018 flood in Grand Forks in 2018 are estimated at $165 million.[13]
- The 2024 BC budget dedicates $234 million of new funding over two years for infrastructure projects and programming to 'decrease flood risks."
- For the 2021 flooding in the southern part of the province, BC paid $228M to help farmers and ranchers impacted by floods.
    - The federal government estimates it will need to pay almost $3.4 billion for its share of the disaster recovery bills.[14]
    - The Insurance Bureau of Canada has estimated the cost of insured flood damage was at least $450 million.[15]

In addition to monetary costs, industrial forestry has taken its toll on people, wildlife, and ecosystems. The damage has been examined, studied, photographed, and published by hundreds (possibly thousands) of scientists, journalists, and residents. Just a few examples of these problems are in the Backgrounder.

Forests as Critical Infrastructure

British Columbia already invests billions in human-made infrastructure - dams, bridges, highways, and water systems - to protect people and enable stable economies. Forests provide the same services: they regulate water flow, filter drinking water, store carbon, moderate climate extremes, and protect communities from floods, fires, and drought. Yet unlike roads and bridges, forests are given away to private companies to be liquidated.

---

[11] Kshatri, S. Insurers and claimants under strain as weather-related disasters mount in B.C. (17, March 2024), CBC News. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cold-millions-insurance-damages-1.7142869

[12] https://www.evergreenalliance.ca/portal-increase-in-forest-fire-hazard/1/

[13] Brighter Future for Boundary Forests, Hanson, R. et al. Boundary Forest Watershed Stewardship Society, March 2021.

[14] Rabson, M. Federal disaster aid for 2021 B.C. floods taking too long: MP, The Canadian Press, (12, March, 2024) retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-fraser-valley-floods-2021-federal-disaster-aid-delay-mp-1.7141403#:~:text=The%20federal%20government%20estimates%20it,of%20that%20has%20been%20paid.

[15] CBC News, Federal government to invest more than $500M in B.C. flood recovery, (23, February 2023) Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/federal-recovery-funding-b-c-2021-flood-1.6757555

The New Forest Act reframes forests as **critical public infrastructure**, to be managed with the same seriousness as other life-supporting systems. This shift ensures that the public benefits of forests - safety, clean water, carbon storage, and stable rural economies - are protected for the long term.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION AND POLICIES PROTECT PRIVATE INTERESTS

The outcomes from the system demonstrate that government has been putting corporate considerations over ecosystem values and the public good. Stable community economies and job security are no longer represented in provincial legislation.

Under the industrial paradigm, which is enshrined in BC laws, forests are viewed as a resource whose only value to humans is in generating profits through timber extraction.

Problematic tenets of industrial forestry:

1. Timber is the primary product; all other values are insignificant.
2. Forests are managed for volume, aka fibre, rather than value.
3. Sustaining the short-term flow of timber (Allowable Annual Cut) is more important than sustaining the long-term productive condition of a forest.
4. Logging is viewed as the solution to anything that affects trees (such as pine beetle or fire) [16]

This industrial paradigm is outdated, unsustainable, costly, and damaging.

The tenure system, also enshrined in law, gives private interests the power to control public forests. Low stumpage rates, high grading, and subsidies allow corporations rather than the public to collect their fair share of the full value of BC public forest assets.

Under the current provincial legislation:

[16] Hanson, R, et al. Brighter Future for Boundary Forests. Boundary Forest Watershed Stewardship Society. 2020.

- tenures held by corporations are protected.
- professional reliance is written into policies and operations.
- corporations are left to monitor themselves and make short-term profit their primary objective.
- there are no significant negative consequences for companies that are degrading the land or eliminating local jobs (only minor fines and "*don't do it again*" recommendations in forest audits).

As a result, tenure holders have no motivation to shift from an industrial paradigm to an ecological paradigm that would benefit communities.

Tenures are now an impediment to the development of rural economies. The political reason for creating the tenure system decades ago - rural jobs - is no longer valid. Industry has driven out jobs.

Private companies have been more than sufficiently compensated through enormous profits and subsidies over the decades. The companies have not upheld their end of the contract which was to create a sustainable industry and stable community economies.

There is, therefore, little to be gained by chipping away at the current forestry legislation one policy at a time.

Legislation must safeguard the people and nature. BC government policy and decision-makers choosing to implement a strategic vision of managing ecological integrity can make this happen.

THE NEW FOREST ACT

Transitioning government and communities to a new system

Suggested Legislation Transformation Mechanisms

As part of the restructuring under the New Forest Act, the tenure system will be eliminated. There will be no buy-back of tenures from companies.

1) To achieve a complete reform of the tenure system, the current Forest Act must be allowed to transition and be ultimately repealed. This means all licenses must be dissolved.

   There is a mechanism within the current Forest Act to do that: at the 5-year renewal time of every licence (be it a Tree Farm, Forest Licence, Timber Sale, etc.).

   Depending on the term of each licence, a transition period would be from 1 to 5 years. This would give the corporate forest industry and communities time to transition and adjust. It would also provide the government with the mechanism to achieve an orderly shift, both economically and administratively.

2) Acts that must be repealed:

   - **Ministry of Forests Act**
   - **Forest Act**
   - **Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)**
   - **Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA)**

   The New Forest Act must include a specific regulation for the Private Managed Forest Land. The same principles of Nature-Directed Stewardship (NDS) as proposed for public land would apply to private land.

   A detailed implementation brief for the replacement of the Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA) is included as an Appendix to this proposal. The Appendix outlines enforceable

standards, watershed thresholds, governance mechanisms, tax classification reform, and transition measures specific to private forest lands, including Vancouver Island.

3) The **Water Sustainability Act** should not be repealed, but should rather be fully implemented, and fully enacted by completing its regulations- specifically for the Water Sustainability Planning regulation. This is a powerful piece of legislation that was never enacted and would fully support the new Forest Act proposed herein.

THREE KEY PRIORITIES OF THE NEW FOREST ACT

The New Forest Act will be a complex piece of legislation. It will be written by government lawyers and legislative experts working on behalf of the BC public and Indigenous Peoples. We have identified three key priorities that must be **the basis of the new legislation**. The intention is that the principles, standards, and structures delivered here will be augmented and developed by public servants using the appropriate legal language and legislative mechanisms.

The New Forest Act is founded in principles to provide a system that:

1. preserves and restores natural ecosystem integrity and resilience.
2. gives local people and Indigenous Peoples decision-making power in what happens in the forest ecosystems that affect them.
3. builds stable community-based jobs and local economies that strengthen the larger BC economy.

PRIORITY #1	PRIORITY #2	PRIORITY #3
Preserve Ecosystem Integrity	**Community-Centered Decision-Making**	**Community-Based Economies**

PRIORITY #1 – ECOSYSTEM INTEGRITY

The first and overarching priority is to enshrine in law that all forestry decisions are based on ecosystem and conservation science plus Indigenous knowledge, rather than timber supply considerations. The

preservation of ecosystem integrity is an umbrella priority that applies to everything else that comes after it.

The top goals for Priority #1:

- Safeguard people from hazards such as floods, fires, drought, and climate change by preserving nature's capacities for protection and mitigation.
- Enable nature to continue to provide the ecosystem services that humans need for survival.

Nature-Directed Stewardship (NDS) is the foundation for the New Forest Act. Ecological, cultural, and economic needs can be met by basing management and activities on NDS. NDS recognizes that successful human economies are dependent on thriving natural ecosystems.

Key elements of NDS include:

- a vision of living as a respectful part of the ecosystems that sustain us.
- biology and ecology are put ahead of politics and short-term economic expediency.
- actions are grounded in both Western science and Indigenous knowledge.
- management is based on long-term ecosystem plans, not short-term development plans.
- timeframes are 250 to 500 years and beyond.
- incorporates the Indigenous concept of building a reciprocal relationship with nature: take no more than we need, and we give back by ensuring that ecological integrity is maintained
- planning happens across networks of ecological reserves at multiple spatial scales.
- people cannot make demands on ecosystems that exceed their biological or physical limits.

Some of the things that define ecological limits to human use include "the habitat and reproductive needs of species, the shape of the land, how steep the slopes are, soil depth, soil texture, the amount of moisture present (both wet and dry conditions cause ecological limits), and local climatic conditions." [17]

NDS creates different outcomes than industrial management. Forest management rooted in NDS preserves the value of landscapes over time and creates and preserves community jobs. This type of

[17] Hammond, H. 2010. Progress Report Ghost River Watershed Ecosystem-based Conservation Plan. P. 27

planning recognizes the relationship between ecosystems and economies. When we take care of the ecosystem, we take care of the economy.

Under the new Act, wood products will be largely derived from ~~restoration activities and~~ secondary forests, not exploitation of primary forests. Logging activities can continue but the methods are aligned with the standards and principles of NDS, and they are limited to specific Zones (see below). Even in areas that are logged, elements that have ecological value, such as biodiversity, hydrological cycles, natural succession, wildlife habitat, standing and fallen dead trees, soil structure, microorganisms, and fungi are preserved.

P.R.H. - PROTECT-RESTORE-HARVEST STEWARDSHIP MODEL

Under the New Forest Act, forests are no longer treated as one-size-fits-all resource zones. Instead, they are designated according to ecological function and community need: Protected Forests are protected in perpetuity; Restoration Forests are restored to ecological health; and Harvest Forests are managed with care under Nature-Directed Stewardship to provide community benefits without degrading the land. This is not industrial zoning. This is ecological zoning for long-term survival and rural prosperity.

Our **Protect–Restore–Harvest (P.R.H.) Forest Zones** keep primary forests intact, restore damaged landscapes, and manage Harvest Forests with selective, nature-aligned harvesting. It's a clear, balanced system that protects communities from fires, floods, and drought while keeping people employed *in all three zones.*

There will be three levels of forest stewardship (for details see Backgrounder page 15):

1. *Protection Zone: all primary forests – conservation areas* – no logging or other extractive human activities
2. *Restoration Zone: some secondary forests* – a zone for the ecological restoration of previously logged and roaded (degraded) lands.
3. *Harvest Forests Zone:* a zone for partial-cutting timber extraction consisting of previously industrially logged and roaded lands. Logging occurs under the principles and standards of Nature-Directed Stewardship and includes leaving full-cycle trees to provide continuous forest cover.

Under this system, human uses, including logging, will be designed to prevent damage to the ecological integrity of ecosystems. This does not mean an end to logging, it means we change where, how much, what is extracted, the methods used, the products, and the outcomes of forestry jobs. Traditional practices (e.g. eco-cultural practices) will be encouraged in all zones.

Post-disturbance logging, commonly referred to as 'salvage logging,' i.e. logging after insects, disease, or fire, will not be practiced in *the Protection Zone or Restoration Zone,* and only in limited parts of the *Harvest Zone.*

PRIORITY #2 – COMMUNITY-BASED DECISION MAKING

Re-centering of forestry decision-making that provides for the public and Indigenous People to share in decision-making at all levels of planning and management. Indigenous Peoples will participate in decisions through being a part of the government agency that oversees the administration of the New Forest Act.

The top goals for Priority #2:

- Protect the public interest by empowering local people and Indigenous Peoples to make decisions about the natural world surrounding them.
- Facilitate a diverse range of forest activities, including ecosystem protection, which focus on community needs.
- Ensure that forest resources are managed for the long-term good of the people.

The New Forest Act policies will be administered by a new publicly accountable government agency, the **Ministry of Ecosystem Integrity (MOEI)**, which is jointly controlled by a collaborative of Indigenous Peoples and non-indigenous politicians and bureaucrats. This ministry would evolve out of the current Ministry of Forests.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Under the New Forest Act, the structure, support, and relationships are centered around Community Forest Boards (CFB) which operate under the principles of Nature-Directed Stewardship. CFBs oversee forest management for local land and watersheds. The development of CFBs will require organizational change and the creation of new government agencies. These are described briefly below (for details see Backgrounder page 30).

- **The Forest Research Branch**, a division of the MOEI, is expanded to manage and provide information and data to the MOEI and the regions.

- **Local Ranger Stations** are reinstituted for monitoring and compliance to NDS standards and to support and implement plans of CFBs.

Features of Community Forest Boards	
Legislation	Will be legislated under the New Forest Act
Duties	Oversee forest management for local land and watersheds
People	Comprised of local people and local Indigenous Peoples who are impacted by decisions about the land
Decision-making	Local people and local Indigenous Peoples make forest management decisions that affect their communities and local land.
Loyalty	Give undivided loyalty and allegiance to the people
Science	Guided and advised by independent science-panels
Indigenous Knowledge	Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and traditions into forest management and planning
Local Economy	Prioritize community-based economic development
Values	Take cultural and community values into consideration, including those of Indigenous people

Table 1 Features of Community Forest Boards

New entities are also created, including:

- **Office of the Forester General** - an independent, non-partisan office of the Legislature that is accountable to and reports to the Legislature annually. This office is guided by the new Forest Act and is similar to other independent offices like the Auditor General.
- **Regional Committees** - will be composed of elected members of macro-regions, such as the Kootenays, Central Interior, the Northern Interior, Vancouver Island, and the Coast, and representatives of regional Indigenous Nations. Play an advisory role for CFBs.
- **Community Forest Boards (CFB)** – Comprised of local people and local Indigenous Peoples who are impacted by decisions about the local land.
- **Indigenous Knowledge Panels** - comprised of representatives of regional Indigenous Nations. They inform, support, and advise the CFBs on practices that reflect the unique cultures, languages, values, and histories of their people regarding ecosystems.
- **Regional Log Sort Yards** - a key to making the system work economically. Log sort yards are centrally located sites where logs harvested by contract loggers are unloaded, cut to length, hand scaled, graded, and sorted into bins. They make publicly owned timber available to the public through log auctions, thus providing the basis for an open log market.
- **Regional Science Panels** - provide advice to CFBs based on current scientific literature and application of the precautionary principle.

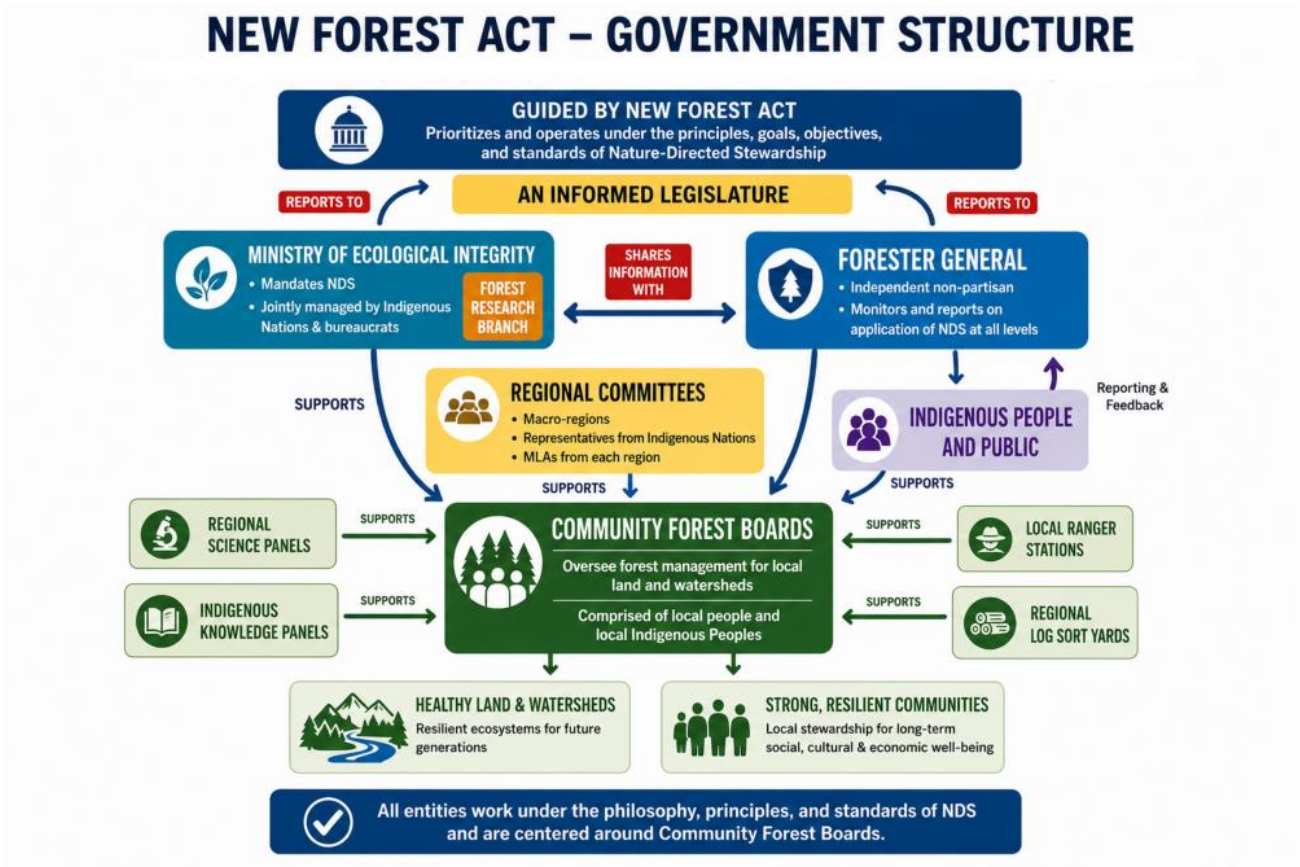


Figure 1 Government Structure

PRIORITY #3 – COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIES

To facilitate the development of stable, diverse, ecologically sustainable, community-based economies, the government eliminates corporate monopolies and, instead, incentivizes and supports small-to-medium sized businesses doing 1) local forestry, conservation, and restoration work that follows a Nature-Directed Stewardship approach, and 2) non-forestry nature-based industries.

Goals for priority #3

- Develop diverse, ecologically sustainable, stable community-based economies.
- Minimize extraction to get the most value from the lowest possible harvest by switching forest products from an emphasis on raw logs, pellets, dimension lumber, and fiber to value-added products.
- Facilitate the development of non-forestry, nature-centered industries that depend on intact areas and primary forests, including tourism (especially eco-tourism), subsistence economies, non-timber forest products, and Indigenous Guardians programs. "In order to maintain ecosystem integrity, economics needs to be about protection and wise use of ecosystems in order to ensure their continued health and well-being. Ecosystems can then continue to protect our home and the home of all beings."[18]

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

There are **significant opportunities for growth** with a switch from industrial forest management to forest management based in community-centered decision-making following the principles of Nature-Directed Stewardship. The NDS approach can provide economic benefits throughout rural forest-dependent communities. A diverse range of forest activities are supported, including ecosystem protection, that focuses on community needs.

Below, we present just some of the **employment and economic benefits** for the forestry sector, then the advantages for other industries, including tourism, non-timber-forest-products, Indigenous Guardians programs, and conservation work by making a switch.

[18] West Kootney EcoSociety, (2022), Preliminary Nature-Directed Stewardship Plans for Glade and Laird Watersheds, Retrieved from: https://neighboursunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Nature-Directed-Stewardship-Plans-for-Glade-and-Laird.pdf

COMPARISON OF BC TOURISM & FORESTRY		
	Tourism	Forestry
Jobs	154,366 (2022)[1719]	55, 715 (2021)
GDP	$7.2 billion (2022)[20]	$1.7 billion (2022)[21]
Revenues	$18.5 billion (2022)[17]	$1.7 billion (2022)
Expenses	$182 million (2023)[22]	$1.727 billion (2023) [23]

The economic & employment value of switching to forestry based in Nature-Directed Stewardship

A switch to nature-based forestry does not mean less forest-based work. By focusing on forest conservation and restoration, NDS changes the outcomes and the way forestry work is done. Timber needs are provided by secondary forests and some restoration zones (see P.R.H. system on page 17).

9 ways new jobs are created under the New Forest Act and NDS:

1. More jobs (public and private sector) in data collection, research, analysis, and science driven by a requirement to better understand ecosystems and how to protect them.
2. An increase in the number of public and private sector jobs in planning and management.
3. More local jobs by decentralizing forest management through establishment of Community Forest Boards, Regional Log Sort yards, Indigenous Knowledge Panels, and Regional Science Panels.
4. More local forest offices for monitoring and compliance, e.g. Forest Ranger jobs.
5. More Indigenous Guardians and stewardship jobs.
6. BC-based small businesses and entrepreneurship expand by enabling a competitive, open marketplace by selling timber through regional log sort yards.

[19] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/tourism-immigration/tourism-resources/tourism-research

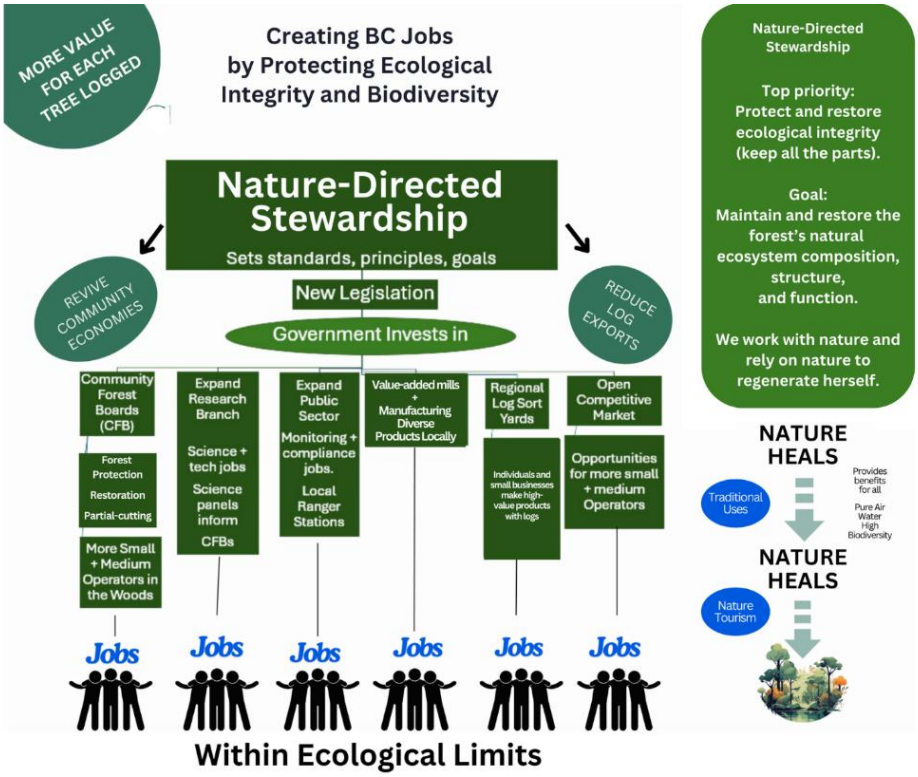
[20] https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2024/03/ValueOfTourism2022-FINAL-Feb-29-1.pdf

[21] https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2024/03/ValueOfTourism2022-FINAL-Feb-29-1.pdf

[22] https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2023/pdf/2023_Budget_and_Fiscal_Plan.pdf

[23] https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2023/pdf/2023_Budget_and_Fiscal_Plan.pdf

7. Maintaining a supply of good quality wood that can be accessed by small businesses to manufacture value-added wood products (instead of dimension lumber like 2x4s, wood chips, and pulp).
8. Long-term jobs created by switching from clearcutting to partial cutting and NDS logging methods.
9. More jobs in industries that rely on fully functioning, intact ecosystems, including, but not limited to tourism, subsistence economies, and non-timber forest products.



Economic and Job Benefits of NDS Style Forestry & Mills

The Harrop Proctor Community Forest (HPCF), east of Nelson, BC is an example of community-centered forestry following NDS principles that is both profitable and supplies local jobs. **HPCF creates over 4x the number of forestry jobs than industrial forestry in BC.**

COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF JOBS CREATED PER 1000/m3 OF LUMBER	
Harrop Proctor Community Forest	Standard forestry in BC
6 to 7 jobs[24]	0.8 to 1.0 jobs[25]

In addition to the logging operation, HPCF owns a mill which produces a variety of secondary wood products, including value-added flooring, paneling, and wood siding, which can be sold to local residents and businesses.

Why Log Sort Yards? More Jobs, Better Returns for BC Taxpayers, Access to Logs by Small Business at Competitive Prices

LOG SORT YARDS ARE A KEY TO MAKING THE OVERALL SYSTEM WORK.

Vernon log sort yard, an experiment run by the Ministry of Forests from 1999 to 2002, is an example of a successful forestry enterprise that:

- employed local people
- recovered more value per volume of wood than the industry standard[26]
- resulted in higher stumpage returns for the people of BC.
- made publicly-owned timber available to the public through an open log market (rather than concentrating it in the control of a few corporations)
- encouraged the development of value-added businesses.
- aided small business development and job creation.
- was a financial success: from 1999 to 2000 it produced a Net Profit (less stumpage revenue) of $337,606

(The government shut down the Vernon Log Sort Yard in 2002 because its success was a threat to the forest tenure system, which gave - and still gives - corporations control of BC public forests.)

A benefit of setting up log sort yards across BC is that they will create a market economy which will give an accurate, unsubsidized economic value of logs. The softwood lumber disputes will no longer be an

[24] COMMUNITY FORESTS AND VALUE ADDED ENTERPRISES Harrop-Procter Community Forest – It's All About Local Values 3A SIBAC Extension Note - May 2015, BC Community Forests Association. P. 3

[25] 2019-2022 sources BC Ministry of Forests & BC Stats via Evergreen Alliance analysis

[26] At Vernon, every log was hand-scaled, so there was an accurate estimate of the volume. When compared to weigh scaling of similar logs by weight (converting weight into volume), Vernon showed that weight scaling resulted in 10-15% less volume. Because BC currently relies on weight scaling for stumpage payments it loses 10-15% of the actual volume cut. This means that, in essence, without the Log Sort Yards, companies get that 10-15% for free.

issue once BC changes how stumpage is calculated. Softwood lumber tariffs would go away because licensees would no longer be determining the stumpage themselves.

Realizing the full value of timber

The only way for BC to realize the full value of its forest resources is to focus on value over volume. Regional log sort yards can be run by Community Forest Boards and take a portion of income from log sort yards to cover their costs and pay their people. The BC government will still get stumpage revenues that will likely be higher than current timber companies pay.

Local and regional log sort yards connect people to their own timber. The value of logs can be retained within the community. Residents of BC communities deserve to have this system available to them.

Ecological conservation is a driver of economic development.

There is a direct relationship between conservation action and economic diversification for communities. Protecting and conserving primary forests and restoring secondary forests opens up opportunities for developing and expanding other industries that depend on ecologically-functioning forests, clean water, and full biodiversity.

Sectors that already generate high value and have the potential to grow under ecological forest management:

- **Conservation and restoration jobs, training, education** (currently supplying at least $705 million to the BC GDP)[27]
- **Tourism** - $18.5 billion in BC revenue 2022 - more than any other resource industry, including forestry ($1.7 billion), agriculture and fisheries ($3.4 billion), oil and gas ($4.5 billion), and mining ($5.4 billion).[28]
    - **Nature-based tourism** – in 2001 tourists spent $1.4 billion in BC and brought in $129 million in BC government revenues (in 2024 dollars) through nature-based tourism, such as bird



British Columbia has over 500 types of bird species and preeminent viewing opportunities for birdwatchers.

[27] Delphi Group, Working for Watersheds: Opportunities for Growth in BC's Watershed Sector, (May 2021), Retrieved from: Working-for-Watersheds-Full-Report.pdf

[28] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/tourism-immigration/tourism-resources/tourism-research

watching, hiking, caving, river-tours, kayaking, canoeing, wildlife viewing[29]

- **Hunting and wild harvesting** – ungulate herds of moose, elk, and deer are worth billions, and game birds are worth millions[30]
- **Freshwater Recreational fishing** - average annual expenditures of $526 million on goods and services by people fishing (between 2000 to 2022)[31]
- **Subsistence economies** – has the potential value of $800 million to $1 billion annually[32]
- **Non-timber forest products (NTFP)** (florals, mushrooms, berries, medicals, etc.) - the economic value of NTFP is difficult to measure but in BC it has been roughly valued at between tens of millions[33] and $600 million.[34]
- **Indigenous Guardians & Stewardship Programs** - An analysis[35] of two Indigenous Guardians programs in the Northwest Territories found that for every dollar invested they create about $2.50 of social, economic, cultural, and environmental value. In 2023/2024 the federal government invested $4.2 million in BC Indigenous Guardians programs.[36]

There is also non-monetary value created by Indigenous Guardians programs, stewardship programs, subsistence economies, hunting, and wild harvesting. Rural community members have opportunities to engage with the land and water in ways that allow for the transfer of cultural knowledge. It allows for increased capacity for self-determination and food sovereignty, and the ability to avoid falling into poverty. These activities contribute to well-being on social and physical levels by making available healthy foods and fulfilling productive outdoor activity.

If preserved, BC ecosystems offer a wealth of world-class natural landscapes and unique biodiversity that provide communities with sources of ecological, socio-cultural, and economic value that are not connected with extracting timber.

[29] Tourism British Columbia, Economic Value of the Commercial Nature-Based Tourism Industry in British Columbia, (September 2024), Retrieved from: https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2018/08/Economic_Impacts_of_Commercial_Nature-Based_Tourism_Report-sflb.pdf

[30] As per Mike Morris, MLA for Prince George-Mackenzie, April 13, 2024, Statement to the BC Legislature (see details in the Backgrounder)

[31] Fisheries and Oceans Canada, British Columbia Freshwater Recreational Fishing 2022, Retrieved from: https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/analyses-econom-analysis/analyses/rec-fresh-douce-2022-eng.html#fast-facts

[32] See calculations on page 20 in the Backgrounder.

[33] Forest Practices Board, Follow Up: Integrating Non-Timber Forest Products into Forest Planning and Practices in British Columbia, July 2011

[34] From: Government of British Columbia (2016) Retrieved from https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/ntfp/

Hamilton, E. (1998). An overview of the current situation of non-timber forest products in British Columbia. In Non-Timber Forest Products Workshop Proceedings. April 3-5, 1998. Alert Bay, B.C. Inner Coast Natural Resources Centre, pp.10-14. As seen here on July 22, 2024 - https://wood465-kozak.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2013/01/Non-Timber-Forest-Products.pdf

[35] https://www.ilinationhood.ca/publications/report-sva-analysis-of-current-amp-future-value-of-indigenous-guardians-work-in-the-nwt

[36] Government of Canada, List of 90 Indigenous Guardians projects 2023-2024, Backgrounder, Retrieved from: https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2023/09/list-of-90-indigenous-guardians-projects-2023-2024.html

CONCLUSION

By enacting new legislation that prioritizes ecological integrity, British Columbia has an opportunity to grow a world-class conservation sector in addition to bolstering existing land- and water-based eco-friendly industries. By shifting BC government investments from industrial forestry to other growth industries, there is enormous potential for expansion.

Industrial forestry **continues to extract costs** from British Columbians, degrade the environment, and provide little financial return. However, the conservation and restoration of forests can be a significant driver of the economy due to its capacity to create jobs and revenues in multiple industries.

As the climate crisis intensifies, primary forests remain our most effective system for removing massive amounts of climate-changing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and providing essential protection against extreme weather events like flooding, fire, and droughts.

The favourable choice is clear: enact new legislation that benefits British Columbia's people and its ecosystems.

CONTACT

New Forest Act
Jennifer Houghton, Independent Custodian
newforestact.ca
info@newforestact.ca

APPENDIX

Replacement of the Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA)

Vancouver Island Implementation Brief

This Appendix provides detailed implementation standards for replacing the Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA) under the New Forest Act framework. It outlines enforceable ecological thresholds, governance structures, compliance mechanisms, and tax classification reforms applicable to private forest lands.

APPENDIX: REPLACEMENT OF THE PRIVATE MANAGED FOREST LAND ACT (PMFLA)

Under the New Forest Act Framework

Vancouver Island Implementation Brief

The New Forest Act (NFA) establishes a unified legal framework for all forest lands in British Columbia, including lands currently governed by the Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA). The principles, thresholds, and governance structures outlined here are grounded in the core NFA documents and are implemented through binding legislation and regulation. This appendix demonstrates how those existing NFA principles are applied to private forest lands on Vancouver Island. Under the NFA, private land standards are not advisory, instead they are enforceable law.

The public retains rights to safe drinking water, stable slopes, functioning ecosystems, and transparent enforcement. The NFA provides the legal tools under provincial natural resource and administrative law to repeal PMFLA, restructure regulatory authority, and implement enforceable compliance mechanisms.

The Province of British Columbia has clear constitutional authority to regulate natural resource use on private lands in the public interest. Comparable regulatory frameworks already exist in agricultural land use, riparian protection, building codes, and environmental protection statutes.

The Water Sustainability Act provides legislative authority for watershed-level planning and regulation across private and public lands. The NFA operates consistently within this authority, enabling cumulative watershed management regardless of land ownership boundaries.

---

1. EXECUTIVE BRIEF

What This Does

Under the New Forest Act, the Private Managed Forest Land Act (PMFLA) is repealed, and its lands are brought under enforceable NFA standards and regulations.

It ensures that private forest lands currently under PMFLA:

- Protect community drinking water
- Operate within ecological limits
- Maintain economic stability
- Are subject to meaningful enforcement and public reporting

What This Does NOT Do

- It does not expropriate private land.
- It does not prohibit harvesting.
- It does not eliminate forest-based jobs.
- It does not impose public ownership.

What Changes

- Logging of primary forests ends.
- Watershed risk thresholds (including ECA) become enforceable constraints.
- Selection/partial cutting becomes the default harvest method.
- Preferential tax classification becomes conditional on measurable compliance.
- Routine inspections and public reporting become mandatory.
- A public planning process through Community Forest Boards.
- Local governments gain formal standing in watershed risk review.

Implementation & Enforcement Capacity

The NFA rebuilds enforcement capacity across all forest lands, including former PMFL areas. This includes:

- Local inspection presence rather than centralized oversight alone
- Routine compliance inspections (not complaint-driven)
- Public reporting systems (a compliance dashboard)
- Escalating administrative penalties
- Restoration cost recovery
- Preferential tax status tied to compliance

Penalties and restoration cost recovery contribute to funding compliance and monitoring systems. The NFA framework is designed to be staffed, enforceable, and operationally realistic.

Core Outcomes

1. Safe drinking water

2. Stable slopes and roads
3. Long-term ecosystem integrity
4. Predictable, economically stable forestry

---

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL) on Vancouver Island is uniquely sensitive because:

- It is often located adjacent to communities.
- It overlaps with community drinking watersheds.
- It includes steep coastal terrain vulnerable to landslides.
- It directly influences flood risk and road stability.

Under the current PMFLA framework:

- Harvesting standards are less comprehensive than those applied to public Crown forest lands and do not require thorough watershed-level planning or cumulative disturbance analysis.
- Local governments have limited authority and cannot use bylaws or permits to restrict forest management activity.
- Enforcement is limited and largely complaint driven.
- Public reporting is minimal.
- Preferential tax status is not directly tied to measurable watershed outcomes.

The result is public controversy, watershed risk, and loss of public confidence in how forest operations are regulated and enforced.

The New Forest Act resolves this by applying enforceable ecological constraints and accountability mechanisms to all forest lands, including private lands currently under PMFLA.

The following standards demonstrate how the NFA applies enforceable ecological constraints to private forest lands previously governed by PMFLA.

---

3. NFA PRIVATE LAND STANDARDS

A. Immediate Hard Stops (Effective Upon PMFLA Repeal)

1. **Primary Forest Logging Prohibited**
    - Logging of primary forests is no longer permitted.
2. **Drinking Water Protection**
    - Expanded, enforceable protective buffers and watershed-level disturbance controls around licensed drinking water intakes.
    - Existing licensed drinking water intake protections under PMFLA are expanded under the NFA to include all community use watersheds, including those without licensed intakes but with downstream residential wells, surface withdrawals, or documented domestic water users.
    - ~~e~~ Enhanced standards for road density and stream crossings in community use watersheds.
    - No harvesting where slope instability poses drinking water risk.
3. **High-Risk Terrain Red Lines**
    - Operations prohibited on slopes exceeding designated hazard thresholds.
    - Mandatory geotechnical review in moderate-risk terrain.
4. **No Net Increase in Watershed Risk**
    - Watershed disturbance thresholds, including Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA), are established in regulation by the Ministry of Ecosystem Integrity (MOEI) based on hydrological science, terrain stability data, and regional ecological conditions. Thresholds may vary by watershed classification, but once set in regulation they are legally binding. Any adjustment to thresholds requires formal regulatory amendment and public transparency.
    - Where Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) exceeds threshold (e.g., ≥35%), new harvesting pauses until recovery or mitigation reduces risk. See requirements below.

Watershed Data Transparency Requirements

All private forest landowners must submit standardized watershed disturbance data, including Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) calculations, to MOEI on an annual basis.

- ECA methodologies must follow provincially prescribed standards, including the 2020 Standards for Assessing the Condition of Aquatic Ecosystems under BC's Cumulative Effects Framework.
- Submitted data will be publicly available through the compliance dashboard.
- Where ECA data is incomplete at the time of PMFLA repeal, landowners must submit calculated values within six months. Until submitted, new harvesting approvals may be temporarily restricted in designated community watersheds.

B. Default Operating Standard

1. **Selection / Partial Cutting as Default**
    - Continuous-cover forestry becomes standard.
    - Clearcutting allowed only under narrow, regulated exception.
2. **Landscape-Level Planning Required**
    - Operations are assessed within full watershed context through Community Forest Board - coordinated planning processes that integrate public and private forest lands under the NFA.
    - Community Forest Boards develop transparent watershed-scale development maps (e.g., 5-year proposed harvesting plans) that identify cumulative disturbance, ecological protection zones, and spatial sequencing of activities across both public and private lands.
3. **Road and Stream Crossing Standards**
    - Maximum road density limits expressed as kilometres of road per square kilometre (km/km²), aligned with standards applied on public Crown land.
    - Maximum road width standards equivalent to those applied on public Crown land.
    - Mandatory deactivation of inactive roads.
    - Upgraded stream crossing engineering standards.

C. Ecological Constraint Thresholds

When watershed disturbance indicators approach or exceed regulatory thresholds, a structured review process is triggered.

Watershed Risk Review Process Includes:

1. Technical assessment by MOEI hydrology and terrain specialists
2. Notification to affected local governments and Community Forest Boards
3. Public posting of watershed status
4. Temporary pause on new harvest approvals within affected sub-basins
5. Requirement for a mitigation or restoration plan

Enhanced review means that harvesting proposals are evaluated within full watershed context rather than property boundaries alone. Approval decisions must demonstrate no net increase in watershed risk before proceeding.

---

4. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Ministry of Ecosystem Integrity (MOEI)

- Sets enforceable regulations, standards, and thresholds
- Issues stop-work and restoration orders.
- Conducts inspections.
- Publishes compliance dashboard.
- Issues and enforces escalating penalties.

Community Forest Boards (CFBs)

- Coordinate watershed-scale planning across public and private forest lands, including tree harvesting activities.
- Identify watershed risk priorities
- Provide formal written input on high-risk proposals
- Trigger formal watershed risk flags
- Recommend restoration sequencing and priority areas
- Receive written responses from MOEI explaining how recommendations were addressed

Local Governments

- Formal standing in watershed risk reviews that identify risks (drinking water, roads, emergency risk).
- Authority to submit drinking water and hazard evidence to MOEI process.
- Receive written responses from MOEI.

---

5. ENFORCEMENT & COMPLIANCE

Under NFA:

- Routine inspections are mandatory (not just complaint-driven).
- Violations are publicly reported (public compliance dashboard is created).
- Stop-work authority is immediate.
- Restoration orders are enforceable.
- Penalties escalate for repeat offenders.
- Preferential tax classification is revoked for non-compliance.

---

6. TAX AND INCENTIVE REDESIGN

To support orderly transition from PMFLA to the NFA framework, a Transitional Enhanced Stewardship Classification may be established. This classification provides a modest additional tax reduction (for example, an additional 5% beyond current managed forest classification levels) for landowners who meet and maintain full NFA compliance standards.

Managed Forest classification under the NFA becomes conditional and performance-based.

Base Stewardship Classification

Landowners who comply with NFA private land standards retain preferential forest land tax status.

To maintain this classification, landowners must:

- Meet ecological protection requirements: including protecting all primary forest and designated Protection Zones identified through Community Forest Board planning processes (such as wildlife corridors, sensitive habitat, and high-risk watershed areas).
- Meet reforestation success benchmarks.
- Maintain riparian protection compliance.
- Meet road density and stream crossing standards.
- Respect watershed disturbance thresholds (ECA and related risk constraints).
- Maintain a clean compliance record.

Enhanced Stewardship Incentive (Transitional)

To support transition from PMFLA to the NFA framework, an Enhanced Stewardship Classification may be offered.

Landowners who:

- Voluntarily enroll early,
- Demonstrate full compliance,
- Complete required restoration in over-threshold watersheds,
- Maintain no major violations,

may qualify for a modest additional tax reduction (e.g., 5% beyond existing managed forest classification).

This incentive:

- Is conditional on continued compliance.
- Can be suspended upon violation.
- Is subject to periodic provincial review.
- Reflects the public benefit of reduced watershed risk and avoided infrastructure costs.

Non-Compliance Results In:

- Suspension or removal of preferential tax status.
- Administrative penalties.
- Mandatory restoration orders.
- Public reporting of violations.

Under the NFA, tax benefits are tied directly to measurable ecological and watershed performance.

---

7. TRANSITION PLAN

Phase 0 (Day 1–90)

- PMFLA repealed and replaced by NFA.
- Hard stops active.
- ECA/risk screening begins.
- Interim compliance authority active.

Phase 1 (Year 1)

- Property-level plans required for operations.
- Priority watersheds reviewed first (those over thresholds).
- Inspection regime implemented.

Phase 2 (Years 2–5)

- Full integration into NFA governance structure.
- Restoration backlog programs begin.
- Monitoring and compliance reporting fully operational.

---

8. SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Issue	PMFLA	NFA Replacement
Planning Unit	Property-based	Watershed-based (CFBs perform transparent planning for private and public land together)
Default Harvest	Clearcut permissible	Selection/partial cutting default
Primary Forest	Logging allowed	Logging prohibited
Drinking Water	Limited safeguards	Enforceable red lines
Road Density	Weak limits	Enforceable caps
Enforcement	Limited inspections	Routine inspections + stop-work
Public Reporting	Minimal	Mandatory transparent compliance dashboard
Tax Status	Automatic if enrolled	Conditional on performance

9. VANCOUVER ISLAND WORKED EXAMPLE (Template)

Vancouver Island Worked Example

"Marmot Meadows" is a fictional watershed used to illustrate how the New Forest Act framework would apply to private forest lands currently under PMFLA within a Vancouver Island community watershed. This scenario demonstrates function only and does not refer to any specific landowner.

1. Baseline Conditions

- Large, contiguous blocks of privately owned forest land.
- Located directly upslope from a town's drinking water intake.
- Steep terrain with known slope instability zones.
- High road density from historical harvesting.
- Equivalent Clearcut Area (ECA) at or above 35 percent in portions of the watershed.
- Clearcut harvesting remains legally permissible under the current PMFLA regime.

Community concerns include:

- Drinking water turbidity after storms.
- Elevated landslide risk.

- Flooding and peak flow increases.
- Lack of meaningful local input into forest operations.

Under PMFLA, planning is largely property-based, not watershed-based. Local governments have limited authority. Enforcement is reactive.

2. PRH Framing on Private Land

Under the New Forest Act, this landscape would be reorganized under the Protect–Restore–Harvest (PRH) framework.

Protect Zone

Areas designated for protection would include:

- Drinking water intake zones and immediate upstream slopes.
- High-risk terrain prone to mass wasting.
- Primary forests with intact structure.
- Critical riparian corridors.

In Protect areas:

- No harvesting.
- Road construction prohibited.
- Restoration of legacy roads prioritized.

Restore Zone

Areas with:

- Excessive road density.
- Over-threshold ECA.
- Hydrologic instability.
- Fragmented forest structure.

In Restore areas:

- No additional disturbance until thresholds improve.
- Active road deactivation.
- Reforestation and stand rehabilitation.
- Watershed recovery prioritized before new harvest.

Harvest Zone

Lower-risk areas where:

- ECA is below threshold.
- Terrain stability is moderate to low risk.
- Road density is within limits.

In Harvest areas:

- Selection or partial cutting becomes default.
- Clearcutting not permitted.
- Retention-based silviculture required.
- Watershed-level review applies before approval.

The PRH structure ensures harvesting continues where ecologically appropriate, while protecting and restoring areas critical to public safety.

3. ECA-Triggered Transition (≥35 Percent Threshold)

Where watershed ECA meets or exceeds 35 percent:

- Immediate classification as “Urgent Stabilization.”
- New harvest approvals paused in affected sub-basins.
- Mandatory restoration plan required.
- Road deactivation accelerated.
- Monitoring frequency increased.
- Hydrologic recovery benchmarks established before operations resume.

This does not permanently shut down forestry. It stabilizes risk before further disturbance occurs.

Once ECA drops below threshold and recovery indicators improve, controlled harvesting may resume under selection standards.

4. What Changes Immediately vs. What Phases

Immediate Changes (Day One After PMFLA Repeal)

- Logging of primary forests prohibited.
- Watershed risk screening applied to all new operations.
- Drinking water intake buffers expanded.
- Road construction prohibited in high-risk terrain.
- ECA ≥35 percent triggers stabilization rules.
- Stop-work authority active.

Phase 1 (Year One)

- Property-level management plans aligned with watershed-level constraints.
- Road density caps enforced.

- Mandatory geotechnical review in moderate-risk slopes.
- Public compliance reporting begins.

Phase 2 (Years 2–5)

- Restoration backlog addressed.
- Watershed ECA reduced below risk thresholds.
- Selection forestry becomes normalized practice.
- Monitoring and inspection system fully operational.

5. Outcome Under NFA

Under this framework:

- Private ownership remains intact.
- Harvesting continues in designated zones.
- Drinking water risk is reduced.
- Landslide and flood risk declines.
- Road density decreases over time.
- Enforcement is transparent and consistent.
- Preferential tax classification depends on compliance.

The watershed transitions from unmanaged cumulative risk to managed ecological stability.

This example demonstrates how the New Forest Act applies practical ecological constraints to private lands while maintaining economic activity.

---

10. ACTION TOOLS

Template Council Motion

THAT Council endorse the application of the New Forest Act framework to replace the Private Managed Forest Land Act;
AND THAT Council request the Province implement enforceable watershed protection standards, routine inspections, and performance-based tax classification on private forest lands;
AND THAT Council request the Province establish a formal Watershed Risk Flag process, whereby if a community watershed meets or exceeds regulatory disturbance thresholds, new harvest approvals pause pending mitigation or restoration.

Template MLA Briefing Request

“I am requesting a formal briefing on how the New Forest Act framework will replace the PMFLA and implement enforceable ecological thresholds on private forest lands, particularly in community use drinking watersheds.”

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this expropriation?
No. Ownership remains private. Standards change.

Will harvesting stop?

On primary forests - yes.
On second or subsequent growth – no. It continues within ecological limits.

What about jobs?
The forestry model required under the NFA prioritizes longer rotations, ecological protection, restoration, monitoring, and compliance oversight. This approach supports more stable, skilled employment over time compared to high-volume industrial harvesting cycles.

Is this legal?
Yes. Governments routinely regulate private land use in the public interest (ALR, building codes, riparian zones).

Is this unfair to private landowners who currently receive preferential tax status?

No. Preferential tax classification remains available. However, under the NFA it becomes conditional on measurable stewardship outcomes. Public tax benefits are tied to compliance with watershed protection, reforestation success, and disturbance thresholds. Tax incentives continue but only when public-interest standards are met.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Replacing the PMFLA under the New Forest Act restores balance:

Private rights remain.
Public safety is protected.
Ecological limits are enforced.
Economic stability is maintained.

This is structural reform, not symbolic adjustment.