

223 international scientists urge B.C. to protect provincial rainforests

Posted by Joan Russow
Sunday, 27 January 2019 17:28 -

'There are certain places that are so biologically rare and important' Matt Humphrey ·
CBC News · Posted: Jun 28, 2018 8:00 AM PT | Last Updated: June 28, 2018

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/rain-forest-gone-1.4724448>

B.C. is known for its towering trees and temperate rain forests, but an international group of scientists is warning that without urgent protection, those forests are at risk of disappearing.

A total of 223 scientists from nine countries have signed a letter urging the provincial government to take immediate action to protect B.C.'s remaining temperate rain forests.

"There are certain places that are so biologically rare and important," said Dominick DellaSala, the chief scientist at the Geos Institute in Oregon who helped organize the letter.

"The B.C. rainforests are among those rare places."

NDP blamed for failing to save Vancouver Island old-growth giants from logging

DellaSala said both the province's coastal rainforests and rainforests further inland are dissimilar to anywhere else on the planet. Both play important roles in the preservation of biodiversity and the battle against climate change, he said.

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"People know these places are important for fish and wildlife, but they probably don't know those trees are regulating the global climate."

As rainforest trees go through photosynthesis, they absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide.

B.C.'s provincial tree threatened by climate change, expert says

Essentially the trees are large sticks of carbon, and the longer that carbon stays in the rainforest, the cooler the planet will be, said DellaSala.

He said cutting down rainforest doesn't only destroy wildlife habitats, it also releases carbon dioxide into the air, which raises the global temperature — carbon dioxide that would otherwise be locked in the trees for hundreds of years.

Primary and intact forests

The letter specifically calls for protection of primary forests (old-growth forests that have never been logged) and intact forests (forest isolated from human activity).

DellaSala said unsustainable logging practices such as new road construction and clear cutting will only lead to the "unravelling" of the forests' ecosystems.

Instead, the province's wood fibre needs should be satisfied by logging in second-growth forests which are already impacted by humans, rather than in primary or intact forests, said DellaSala.

DellaSala acknowledged that B.C.'s second-growth forests may yet not be mature enough for the timber industry to only harvest from them, but he said if the provincial government is serious about its commitment to combat climate change, it must explore the option.

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The signatories of the letter live and work in many countries, including Canada, Argentina, Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, Norway, the United States and Scotland.

With files from The Early Edition

The group of scientists includes members from Canada, Argentina, Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, Norway, the United States and Scotland. (Mark Worthing/ Sierra Club B.C.)