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June 13, 2012

Honourable Christy Clark  
Premier of British Columbia  
P.O. Box 9041, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Clark,

**Re: Scientists' Support for Great Bear Rainforest Agreements 2006 & 2009**

We are a group of scientists and conservation professionals<sup>1</sup> who are concerned about the state of implementation of the agreements to protect the Great Bear Rainforest, announced first in February 2006 and recommitted to in March 2009. We are writing to request that you fully implement the agreements to protect the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia in the next 12 months.

In the light of global environmental and economic challenges, 2012 is a critical year to find solutions that allow for sustainable development and sustainable management of the world's forests as called for by the United Nations in their declaration on the International Year of Forests, 2011<sup>2</sup>. In addition, 20 years after the historic Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the international community will come together in June of this year for Rio +20 to highlight new models as being pursued in the Great Bear Rainforest and present your government with an opportunity to demonstrate leadership.

While international efforts to protect the world's forests for climate change planning and sustainable management have rightfully focused on tropical rainforests, protection of temperate rainforests is at least as important, and Canada is unique in having some of the most important rainforests on the planet, outside the tropics.

British Columbia is endowed with the Great Bear Rainforest and adjacent offshore archipelago of Haida Gwaii as one of the few remaining large blocks of comparatively unmodified landscapes on earth. This region includes over a quarter of the Pacific Coastal rainforests of North America that provide habitat for spectacular wildlife and wild salmon runs that are increasingly rare throughout the world. However, intact productive rainforests have been reduced

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<sup>1</sup>A number of the signatories are also co-authors of an award-winning book on the world's temperate rainforests: *Temperate and Boreal Rainforests of the World: Ecology and Conservation* ([www.islandpress.org/dellasala](http://www.islandpress.org/dellasala)), which received recognition for "outstanding academic excellence" by *Choice* magazine in January 2012.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.un.org/esa/forests/2011/UN-resolution.html>

by more than one-half throughout British Columbia and up to three-quarters on Vancouver Island<sup>3</sup>. Thus, fulfilling the terms of the Great Bear agreements is vital to ensuring that this rainforest system will remain integral to Canada's natural legacy as it prepares for the challenges of natural resource demands in a changing global climate.

New information on forest carbon sinks shows that the Great Bear, Haida Gwaii, and Clayoquot Sound rainforests may play an important role in helping to stabilize the global climate, as these forests store an estimated 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon, the equivalent of nearly 100 times the province's official annual greenhouse gas emissions<sup>4</sup>. When old-growth forests are cut down, up to 40 percent of their stored carbon is released as a global warming pollutant<sup>5</sup>. The Great Bear Rainforest agreements will protect an important global sink of forest carbon stores.

The history of how the provincial government of British Columbia, First Nations, conservation groups, and the timber industry joined together on the Great Bear agreements is an exemplary model of conservation that we hope will be replicated around the globe.

In closing, we request that you address the ongoing delays of interim conservation measures by fully implementing the outstanding conservation milestones of the Great Bear Agreements by March 31, 2013 as a global model for forest sustainability. Given the global importance of the Great Bear Rainforests and the imminent threats posed to intact rainforests around the world, we commend you for reaching these agreements and now urge you to demonstrate your commitments to fulfilling them.

Sincerely,



Dominick A. DellaSala, Ph.D.  
Chief Scientist and President  
Geos Institute, Ashland, Oregon, USA  
Lead author of *Temperate and Boreal Rainforests of the World*

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<sup>3</sup>Estimates provided by Sierra Club, BC.

<sup>4</sup>Carbon storage estimates extrapolated from Keith et al. 2009 ([www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0901970106](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0901970106)), converted to CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents, and then compared to annual greenhouse gas emissions in BC ([www.ec.gc.ca/ges-ghg/default.asp?lang=En&n=83A34A7A-1](http://www.ec.gc.ca/ges-ghg/default.asp?lang=En&n=83A34A7A-1)).

<sup>5</sup>Harmon, M.E., S. L. Garman, and W.K. Ferrell. 1996. Modeling historical patterns of tree utilization in the Pacific Northwest: carbon sequestration implications. *Ecological Applications* 6:641-652.

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