
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Jan. 19, 2022

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development
Nanwaḱolas Council

Nanwaḱolas, Western agree to joint planning, old-growth deferral

VICTORIA – A planning and reconciliation agreement between four member Nations of the Nanwaḱolas Council and Western Forest Products Inc. (Western) includes an agreement to defer harvest of approximately 2,500 hectares of ancient, rare and other priority old growth for two years in support of Province’s Old Growth Strategy.

“The Tlowitsis, K’ómoks, Wei Wai Kum and We Wai Kai First Nations are continuing to strengthen relationships with Western through a joint planning and reconciliation agreement that, along with our Large Cultural Cedar Protocol, will prioritize some of the rarest and oldest forests with this deferral,” said Dallas Smith, Nanwaḱolas Council president. “We have done a lot of work to put us in a position to actively engage Western and others around our important cultural and ecological values while balancing the socioeconomic needs of our communities and the surrounding region.”

The Nanwaḱolas agreement covers 100% of the ancient and remnant trees in 1,068 hectares identified by the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) within Tree Farm Licence 39-2 on central Vancouver Island. Another 1,506 hectares of priority large, remnant and ancient forests have been deferred through other bi-lateral initiatives between Nanwaḱolas and Western, including a Large Cultural Cedar Protocol, TFL ecosystem mapping and an addition to the H’kusam area, originally deferred in the fall of 2020.

“I want to recognize the member Nations of the Nanwaḱolas Council and Western for working together to defer harvest of at-risk old-growth forests,” said Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “Indigenous and industry partnerships like this are key to advancing both sustainable management of our forests and reconciliation with rights and title holders.”

As recommended by the Old Growth Strategic Review, deferrals are a temporary measure to prevent irreversible biodiversity loss while First Nations, the Province, tenure holders and other partners work to employ sustainable forest management in a manner that prioritizes ecosystem health and community resiliency throughout B.C.

This agreement is supported by previous agreements between Nanwaḱolas Council and Western based upon pre-existing sustainable forest management standards that include retention of rare ecosystems. Western and Nanwaḱolas Council have a long-standing relationship, including working together on forest stewardship, and have agreed to complete collaborative plans that address their shared interests during the next two years.

“This agreement recognizes and respects First Nations’ interests as rights and title holders and

includes a shared commitment to embark on new forms of collaborative planning that incorporate the values of the four member Nations,” said Shannon Janzen, Western’s vice-president of partnership and sustainability, and chief forester. “We look forward to advancing our trusting relationship with Nānwakolas and demonstrating how a shared commitment to leadership in sustainable forest management can effectively balance environmental, social and economic objectives and increase certainty and stability for business, benefit workers and support Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.”

The Province is bringing together co-ordinated and comprehensive supports for workers, communities and First Nations to offset economic impacts that may follow from new approaches to managing old-growth forests in BC. Last month, the Province announced it was making nearly \$19 million in new funding available for the remainder of 2021-22 to provide enhanced supports, which are now in place.

“Our government is working to ensure resources are in place immediately to support workers, contractors and communities who may be impacted by old-growth deferrals,” Conroy said.

The Province is also developing additional programs that will support forestry workers and communities during the next three years, and will be announcing these soon.

Quick Facts:

- Nānwakolas Council and Western announced their intent to develop a Joint Planning and Reconciliation Agreement on Oct. 20, 2021, with a commitment to finalize their shared approach to planning and old-forest deferral within two months.
- B.C. has committed to implementing all 14 recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, and developing a new old-growth strategy with First Nations as full partners.
- The Province is working with First Nations to find agreement on deferrals of at-risk ancient, remnant and large old-growth forests identified by the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel.
- Deferrals can be implemented in two ways: by licensees agreeing to voluntarily pause harvest; or by a minister’s order under Part 13 of the Forest Act, rescinding approved permits and preventing new permits from being issued.

Learn More:

Nānwakolas Council: <https://nanwakolas.com/>

Supports for workers and communities, including Bridging to Retirement: <https://forestryworkersupport.gov.bc.ca>

B.C.’s old-growth strategy: www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth

Western Forest Products: www.westernforest.com

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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Nanwakolas Council

Joint planning and reconciliation agreement

- In the shared belief the parties are stronger working together and mutually beneficial outcomes will lead to greater long-term benefits for all parties and British Columbians more broadly, Western Forest Products and Nanwakolas Council, representing the four First Nations, have agreed to work on a joint approach to managing forests, including old forests, together in TFL 39-2 on central Vancouver Island.
- The Joint Planning and Reconciliation Agreement integrates perspectives, values, and interests of the First Nations with the intent of enhancing forest stewardship, creating socioeconomic opportunities, and providing greater operating certainty at the site level while considering recommendations of the April 2020 report, A New Future for Old Forests (“Old Growth Strategic Review”).
- With Nanwakolas leading and co-ordinating the participation of the member Nations, the parties will focus efforts to develop an Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP), including recommendations for the B.C. chief forester’s establishment of a Forest Landscape Plan as enabled by the recent Bill 23 legislation.
- The parties will engage mutually agreed upon and credible third-party experts to support the development of the IRMP, and work to enhance forest stewardship, including implementation of the 14 recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review in a manner that is supported by sound science and credible professional and expert opinion and engagement.
- The harvesting deferrals agreed between Western and Nanwakolas will help protect critical old-growth forests while the joint planning work is completed.

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