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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

### **Great Bear Rainforest milestone reached**

VICTORIA – Another milestone was reached today with environmental groups and forest companies jointly submitting proposals to increase conservation, while maintaining economic activity in the Great Bear Rainforest, Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Minister Steve Thomson announced.

An 82-page submission from Joint Solutions Project, a working group of environmental groups and forest companies contains numerous recommendations, including:

- Additional areas to be set aside to support the conservation goal.
- A harvest level to maintain viable forestry operations.
- A new approach to landscape planning that better accounts for old growth, cultural values, biodiversity and riparian zones.

In March 2009, the province, First Nations, environmental groups and forest companies agreed to a five-year timeframe to review implementation of ecosystem based management land use objectives in the Great Bear Rainforest with the goal of “concurrently moving to high levels of ecological integrity and high levels of human well-being and if that is not possible, to make meaningful increments to both.”

The recommendations submitted today, part of the five-year implementation review of ecosystem based management, will now be evaluated by the Province, Nanwakolas Council and Coastal First Nations. Government has reconciliation agreements with both these groups of First Nations. In addition, 12 other First Nations will need to be consulted since they also have traditional territory in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Ministry staff will review the recommendations for legislative and fiscal implications and implications to other resource users. First Nations will review for implications to their interests. The Province is committed to working with its First Nations’ partners to conclude the review in a timely and efficient manner. In addition, any proposed changes to the existing land use orders will be subject to a 60-day public review and comment period as required under the Land Act.

Joint Solutions Projects is comprised of the forest companies operating in the Great Bear Rainforest (Western Forest Products, Interfor, Howe Sound Pulp and Paper, BC Timber Sales and Catalyst) and three environmental groups (ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club of BC).

The Great Bear Rainforest covers 6.4-million hectares on B.C.'s north and central mainland coast and is world-renowned for its biodiversity.

**Quotes:**

**Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations –**

“I congratulate the forest companies and environmental groups for their continued cooperation and efforts in finding solutions that manage both the environment and local economies in this unique region of the world.”

**Nanwakolas Council president Dallas Smith –**

“Everyone involved has put a ton of time and effort into this and it’s nice to finally see these recommendations come forward. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with Joint Solutions Project as we go through the government-to-government decision-making process.”

**Art Sterritt, Executive Director, Coastal First Nations –**

“We are pleased that the Joint Solutions Project has completed its work. Coastal First Nations will now take this report to our communities for review and discussion prior to finalizing legal objectives with the Province for the Great Bear Rainforest.”

**Learn More:**

Fact sheet on the Great Bear Rainforest: <http://ow.ly/sWWfJ>

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