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New BC Guidelines for Forest Carbon Offsets Called “Greenwashing” by eight Environmental Groups

April 16, 2010, Vancouver, BC--New B.C. guidelines for forest carbon offsets are “fake climate change action” and will fail to reduce carbon emissions quickly or protect vulnerable ecosystems, eight environmental groups said today.

The guidelines released by the Pacific Carbon Trust (PCT) promote forest carbon credits for activities like fertilization that are not being considered credible in other jurisdictions, like California.

“This package of activities is fake climate change action,” says Jens Wieting, Forest Campaigner with Sierra Club BC. Wieting adds, “Minister Bell claims his goal is to take a leadership position on climate change but the Pacific Carbon Trust announcement positions B.C. as a laggard instead.”

The Pacific Carbon Trust’s goal is to buy offsets to help BC achieve a carbon neutral government by 2010. The April 15 \$3 million Request for Proposals targets the forest-based activities of afforestation (tree-planting on non-forested lands), select-seed (better quality seeds) and fertilization projects, on Crown and private land.

“Questionable activities like select-seed and fertilization represent business-as-usual, status quo forestry, and do not provide a meaningful contribution in the fight against climate change. High quality forest carbon offsets must both provide real and immediate carbon emission reductions and have demonstrable benefits for biodiversity and species. The new guidelines fail on both accounts,” says Valerie Langer, BC Forest Campaigns Director with ForestEthics.

BC’s forests have some of the highest carbon storage per hectare on the planet. Forest carbon credits for conservation allow for a financial incentive for offset projects with immediate emission reductions and allow species to adapt to a changing climate.

The new guidelines are based on the Ministry of Forests draft protocol that went out for public comment in 2009. Ten environmental groups provided detailed comments, but their input has been ignored and the original draft protocol, in the PCT’s own words, has been “reworked” -- essentially dressed up and presented again, as an appendix to the BC Forest Offset Guide.

The groups who provided comments are BC Spaces for Nature, CPAWS, Ecotrust, ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Sierra Club BC, Wildsight and West Coast Environmental Law.

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