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LEGISLATION INTRODUCED FOR ZERO NET DEFORESTATION

VICTORIA – B.C.’s new Zero Net Deforestation Act encourages an equal area of trees be planted for carbon storage to offset any forest land that is permanently cleared for another use, Forests and Range Minister Pat Bell announced today.

“British Columbia is committed to achieving zero net deforestation by 2015 to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” said Bell. “Forests absorb and store carbon, which make them important allies in the fight against climate change.”

The act meets government’s commitment in the 2008 speech from the throne to pursue the goal of zero net deforestation, which will be achieved when the area of newly created forest land in B.C. is equal to or greater than the area of deforestation.

The act also requires that the Minister of Forests and Range regularly reports on progress toward zero net deforestation.

The three keys to achieving zero net deforestation are to avoid, minimize and mitigate deforestation. Sometimes the loss of forest land to other purposes, such as housing or highway development, is necessary. In these cases, the preferred option is to minimize the footprint and mitigate the impacts by creating new forests on previously non-forested land.

The Zero Net Deforestation Act defines deforestation as the permanent loss of trees from an area. Timber harvesting in B.C. is sustainably managed, and not considered to be deforestation.

“British Columbia’s forests are a tremendous resource when it comes to fighting climate change,” said Minister of State for Climate Action, John Yap. “Having a Zero Net Deforestation Act will mean our future forests will continue to help us meet our target of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent by 2020.”

The Ministry of Forests and Range plans to partner with a variety of other groups and agencies to help encourage projects that will mitigate deforestation.

“The Province of British Columbia is to be commended for its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by implementing a zero net deforestation policy,” said Michael Rosen, president of Tree Canada. “We are ready to assist the provincial government in achieving its goals by promoting the afforestation of suitable non-forest land with our B.C. partners.”

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Over the coming months, the Province will engage with stakeholders, communities and First Nations for their ideas on the best ways to implement zero net deforestation.

Visit www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/znd for more information.

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“Each year, new developments, urbanization, agricultural conversions, new power lines and other utility corridors contribute to deforestation.

That releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and removes millions of trees that are absorbing and storing carbon.

To reverse this problem, your government will pursue a goal of zero net deforestation. It will work with First Nations, industry and communities to put that goal into law by 2010 and establish a viable strategy for realizing that vision by 2015.”

– 2008 Speech from the Throne

One of the goals of the zero net deforestation policy is to support B.C.’s greenhouse gas reduction targets by avoiding and minimizing deforestation. Where this isn’t possible, mitigating impacts with afforestation of non-forest land is encouraged.

Zero net deforestation means that when trees from forest land are removed to permanently convert the forest land to a different use, new trees will be planted elsewhere. This will ensure no net reduction in forest land.

B.C.’s Climate Action Plan highlights the importance of zero net deforestation as part of taking climate action.

British Columbia is one of the first jurisdictions in the world to introduce a zero net deforestation goal in legislation.

Approximately 6,200 hectares were deforested in British Columbia in 2007. This amounts to about 0.01 per cent of the 60 million hectares of forested area in the province.

Approximately 2,000 hectares—an area about the same size as 2,500 Canadian football fields (including the end zones)—were afforested in British Columbia in 2007. B.C.’s goal is to close the gap between the area deforested and the area afforested by 2015 and beyond.
Roughly 40 per cent of deforestation in B.C. occurred on private land in 2007.

Many sectors contribute to deforestation and have an important role to play in helping B.C. reach its zero net deforestation goal.

Timber harvesting in British Columbia is sustainably managed. Sustainable forest management is not considered deforestation because, by law, harvested areas must be reforested after harvesting.

Deforestation accounts for approximately four per cent of B.C.’s annual greenhouse gas emissions.

The British Columbia Provincial Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report estimates emissions from deforestation were about 3.2 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent in 2007.

A single large, mature tree can absorb more than 20 kilograms of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year.

An average hectare of afforestation creates three days of silviculture employment.

Additional information about zero net deforestation is available on the Ministry of Forests and Range website at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/znd](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/znd). Enquiries and comments can also be emailed to ZND@gov.bc.ca.