

Canada protects ancient coastal forest from logging, hunting

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An activist chains himself to logging equipment as part of a protest by the international environmental group Greenpeace against clearcutting Canadian rainforests, in the Great Bear Rainforest on Roderick Island, British Columbia

Decades of protests and then negotiations that brought together loggers, natives and environmental activists resulted Monday in a landmark deal to protect a huge swath of forest on Canada's Pacific coast.

The agreement to ban logging in 85 percent of the Great Bear Rainforest and put an end to a commercial trophy hunt in the region for a rare white Kermode bear was announced by the government of British Columbia.

The Great Bear Rainforest covers 6.4 million hectares from Quadra Island to Alaska.

The remaining 15 percent of the ancient forest will be subject to the most stringent standards in North America for commercial logging.

The deal was also ratified by 26 aboriginal tribes that live along the Canadian province's coast, several environmental groups, and five forestry companies.

It applies a novel approach to conservation that recognizes the full array of interactions within an ecosystem, including humans.

"Ecosystem-based management is the modern term which describes what we have always believed and practiced: If we use our traditional knowledge to take care of our lands, waters and resources they will take care of us," explained Coastal First Nations chief Marily Slett.

"Our vision for the future is one where ecosystems and potential developments in the Great Bear Rainforest are in balance," she said.

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