

BACKGROUND

November 2007 - Preparing for the Bali Climate Change Talks

A comprehensive approach to climate change must include conservation of ecosystems

As the signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol meet in Bali to develop a negotiating mandate for a new agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions for the 2012-2016 period, they will also be deciding on a mandate for changes to the way emissions from land use, forestry and agriculture are handled. This process will determine whether land use activities will effectively contribute to climate change mitigation.

As Canada's voice for wilderness, CPAWS is promoting changes to Kyoto rules for land use and forestry that promote the best possible outcomes for both climate change mitigation and biodiversity.

Why Forests and Land Use?

Industrial Exploitation of Ecosystems Results in Increased Carbon Emissions to the Atmosphere:

- Terrestrial ecosystems store more carbon than is currently in the atmosphere, much of it stored safely in soils.
- Climate change will result in increasing amounts of carbon loss from these ecosystems as forests burn, permafrost melts, etc.
- Industrial development including logging, mining, peat extraction, oil and gas and hydro-electric development also all result in losses of carbon from these ecosystems to the atmosphere.
- Industrial development also worsens the effect of climate change on these carbon stores, speeding the positive feedback loop between climate change and carbon loss.

Ecosystem protection is an effective approach to preventing emissions from industrial exploitation and will reduce emissions as these ecosystems are affected by global warming.

Industrial Exploitation Worsens the Fate of Ecosystems in the Face of Climate Change:

- Climate change is the second biggest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss.
- The International Panel on Climate Change predicts that 20-30% of the species it has studied will be at increased risk of extinction as climate change proceeds.

- Industrial development and fragmentation of intact ecosystems undermine ecosystem integrity and will make it more difficult for species to respond and adapt to a changing climate. Commercial fishing and exploitation of marine resources have a similar impact on ocean ecosystems.

Ecosystem protection is essential to support the ability of ecosystems to survive and respond in the face of climate change.

How Should Kyoto Rules for Land Use and Forestry Change?

CPAWS is recommending that problems with the current approach must be fixed:

- Tropical deforestation, responsible for around a fifth of total greenhouse gas emissions is not addressed – **A mechanism must be adopted to reduce tropical deforestation.**
- Accounting for the impacts of forest management activities on carbon emissions and storage is voluntary. – **Accounting should become mandatory.**
- The impacts of human activities outside of forestry and agriculture are completely excluded – **The impacts of activities in all land types should be included (e.g. tundra, peatlands).**
- There is little discussion about supporting ecosystems in their ability to respond and adapt to climate change – **Ecosystem resiliency should be included in climate change adaptation frameworks.**
- Benefits to biodiversity and communities of different land uses are not considered – **Land use activities with these benefits should be preferentially promoted.**
- **Rules should preferentially promote activities with environmental and social co-benefits, including the conservation of natural ecosystems.**

An effective approach to climate change must lead with ambitious, mandatory reductions to greenhouse gas emissions consistent with keeping average global warming increases as far below two degrees Celsius as possible, compared to pre-Industrial levels. A comprehensive approach to climate change must also include the protection of natural ecosystems for the carbon they store and to decrease the impacts of a changing climate on biodiversity.

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With a network of 13 chapters, 20,000 members, over 50 staff and hundreds of committed volunteers, since 1963 CPAWS has helped to conserve over 400,000 square kilometers of Canada's most treasured wild places in parks and other protected areas- an area nearly seven times the size of Nova Scotia!