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## ABC FP Climate Change Position Statement

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Position Paper

## **Climate change is causing widespread impacts to British Columbia's forests and ecosystems**

British Columbia forest ecosystems are being profoundly impacted by a changing climate. Wildfires, pest and disease outbreaks and maladaptation of local tree populations are having direct impacts on ecosystem function, timber supply, employment, and forest sector revenues. Many other values are also at stake. The combination of increased tree mortality and extreme fire weather intensifies threats to human life, property, infrastructure, and public health. Warmer winters, drier summers, and reduced snowpack elevate the increasing role of forests in regulating water quality and quantity for the benefit of aquatic ecosystems, hydroelectric power, and human consumption. Alteration of habitats creates new challenges for the conservation of biological diversity.

Climate change is altering the relationship between people and forests in BC, not just in the flow of values but also in the relative priorities society places on them.

## **Forest professionals are on the front lines of climate change impacts**

BC Forest professionals have an on-the-ground presence throughout BC, and are well-positioned to assess risks and implement measures to adapt to the effects of a changing climate on forest ecosystems when supported by robust legislation, sound scientific policies and adequate resources. Such measures include managing forest fuels and landscapes to reduce wildfire risk, planning road and crossing structures for water management, detecting and alleviating pest and disease outbreaks, regenerating with climatically suitable species and seed sources, and making necessary provisions for wildlife habitat.

Forest management can also contribute to mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions by enhancing carbon stored in BC's forests and in forest products. Forest professionals have a strong presence in the development of forest policies and in their implementation on the landscape. As a result, they are central to assessing and managing climate change risks.

## **Forest professionals have a role in communicating the limits of adaptation**

Beyond their role in putting adaptation into action, forest professionals have a critical role in raising public awareness.

Forest professionals are developing expertise to translate climate projections into a broad array of anticipated impacts on forest values, to detect the early warning signs of climate-driven ecological disruptions, and to recommend management options.

This stewardship responsibility includes advising policymakers and citizens on the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to moderate the impact of climate change on the sustainability of forest ecosystem, goods and services.

However, adaptation will not be enough. The degree to which the global community limits greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change will affect the success of forest professionals in pursuing meaningful forest management adaptation.