



'High-Risk, Low-Reward': Experts Urge Halt to Tsitika Old-Growth Sale

Pacific Wild cites species at risk, ecological impacts, and low economic return in call to stop logging of cutblock TA1375

Victoria, B.C. (April 23, 2026) – Pacific Wild is urging the B.C. government to halt logging in a Tsitika watershed cutblock flagged for old-growth deferral, warning that B.C. Timber Sales (BCTS) is auctioning rare and ecologically critical forest for little economic return.

In letters sent this week to BCTS and other government decision makers, the organization included new data, maps, and field evidence showing that cutblock TA1375—identified by the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel as a Priority Deferral Area—provides essential habitat for threatened species and significant carbon stores. The cutblock was auctioned in March despite opposition from scientists, community members, and multiple First Nations whose territories overlap with the Tsitika watershed.

Pacific Wild, together with retired UBC professor Dr. Royann Petrell, first submitted a Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) proposal with supporting research to federal and provincial decision makers in November, and followed up in February. The organization says BCTS has not provided the scientific evidence supporting its view that a WHA is unnecessary to protect biodiversity in the watershed, nor an ecological basis for why TA1375 was removed from deferral.

After decades of conflict over logging in the Tsitika, only a small fraction of intact old-growth forest remains in northeastern Vancouver Island, meaning the loss of areas like TA1375 carries outsized ecological consequences. The watershed contains one of the only known rubbing beaches for northern resident killer whales on Vancouver Island, a rare and culturally significant coastal habitat feature that depends on intact, undisturbed shoreline ecosystems.

Pacific Wild's analysis shows the cutblock contains priority habitat for species of concern, including Marbled Murrelets, listed as threatened under the Species at Risk Act, and old-growth specklebelly lichen, a Blue-listed species associated with ancient forests. Acoustic monitoring recorded 317 murrelets flying near the cutblock in a single day last July—half of all detections recorded across the Tsitika watershed in 2020.

"This watershed supports some of the highest numbers of Marbled Murrelets on Vancouver Island," said Dr. Petrell, who has been leading the research in the area. "It makes sense to protect the old-growth nesting habitat critical to so many birds."

While TA1375 is ecologically valuable, its economic case for logging is weak. The stand is dominated by low-value hemlock and balsam on steep terrain, limiting recoverable timber value. In an effort to gain bids, BCTS reduced the export fee for raw logs harvested in the cutblock. Forestry experts warn that whether the timber is exported internationally or ends up as pulp, logging TA1375 will bring minimal benefit to the province or local communities.

"This is a high-risk, low-reward cutblock," said Registered Forest Technologist (RFT) and former BCTS Forest Technologist Greg Herringer. "It would sacrifice irreplaceable ecological values for very little economic gain."

Cutblock TA1375 is directly adjacent to the Tsitika Mountain Ecological Reserve, and the Province itself has identified adjacent logging as a key threat to the reserve, including windthrow, invasive species, and sedimentation.

The cutblock also contains Blue-listed ecosystems, large cultural cedars, and legacy trees. It is estimated to store over 12,400 tonnes of carbon; logging this area could release up to 65% of its stored carbon back into the atmosphere. Unfortunately, TA1375 is not the only ancient forest slated for deferral and now at risk on Vancouver Island, BCTS has listed at least three more similar sites on their 2026 sales schedule.

“Numerous old-growth and primary forests identified for deferral are still being auctioned—and in some cases logged more aggressively than areas never flagged for protection,” said Dr. Kristen Weiss, a conservation scientist with Pacific Wild. “Auctioning off these incredibly rare ecosystems undermines the Province’s commitments to protect at-risk forests.”

Pacific Wild says its goal is to ensure the ecological and climate values of TA1375 are fully considered by the B.C. government, BCTS, the Nanwakolas Council, and others involved in decision-making.

“The data speaks for itself,” said Weiss. “This intact old-growth forest can be protected while supporting long-term economic sustainability and Indigenous sovereignty. There are viable alternatives to logging in areas like this.”

The Ministry of Forests has the legal authority to expand protections, even where timber sales have been issued. Section 13 of B.C.’s Forest Act grants the government authority to issue a Ministerial Order that can alter, suspend, or cancel a Timber Sale Licence even after it has been sold.

“The Province can still stop this sale—but that window is closing,” said Pacific Wild Executive Director Karen McAllister. “British Columbians expect leadership that puts long-term ecological integrity ahead of short-term extraction. We are asking for this area to be protected for future generations of humans and wildlife.”

-30-

About Pacific Wild

[Pacific Wild](#) is an independent frontline defender of wildlife and wild places stretching from Canada’s Pacific coast to inland forests. Through powerful visual storytelling, on-the-ground investigations, and evidence-based research, we reveal threats to at-risk species and their habitats, champion stronger protections, and turn awareness into action.

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