June 2025

The State of Our Forests

As Executive Director of Unlikely Allies, I am writing to emphasize the urgent need for forest policy reform to reduce growing risks to public health, infrastructure, and ecological stability. Our coalition—composed of individuals and organizations who have historically disagreed on land use—has come together because of the unprecedented and unacceptable liabilities created by forest mismanagement in British Columbia.

Forestry, as currently practiced, is no longer a net benefit to the province. Instead, it is driving up the public costs of flood recovery, wildfire response, infrastructure repair, drinking water protection, and health care burdens from degraded ecosystems and wildfire smoke. Our forests must be managed not only for timber, but to protect the people, water systems, and services they support.

This letter focuses on two critical issues: banning the use of Glyphosate in forestry applications and improving silviculture practices to increase the planting of deciduous species, along with our continued advocacy.

Improving Silviculture Practices

Current silviculture practices heavily favour flammable coniferous monocultures that increase wildfire intensity and reduce the landscape's capacity to retain water. We propose a strategic shift toward planting more deciduous species where ecologically appropriate. These trees reduce fire risk, improve soil moisture retention, and support a broader range of biodiversity.

Research by Dr. Jean-Thomas Cornelis (UBC) underscores the value of maintaining forest canopy to regulate temperature, prevent erosion, and maintain stable hydrological cycles. Dr. Younes Alila (UBC) has demonstrated that clear-cutting dramatically increases flood risk, transforming a 100-year flood into a 3- to 15-year event depending on harvest levels. These floods damage infrastructure and compromise water systems that British Columbians rely on daily.

Healthy, diverse forests act as natural infrastructure, regulating flows, filtering contaminants, and buffering both drought and deluge. Without those functions, our public systems—roads, bridges, water treatment, and health care—are left more vulnerable and more expensive to maintain.

A climate-adapted forest structure, including deciduous species, enhances soil carbon storage, safeguards critical water functions, and creates long-term stability amid intensifying climate extremes.

Stopping the Use of Glyphosate

The continued use of Glyphosate in forestry applications to maintain conifer productivity poses significant long-term threats to ecosystems and public health. Glyphosate negatively impacts soil function, water quality, and biodiversity, and has been linked to adverse effects on human health. Its use contributes to the loss of forest floor complexity and undermines natural filtration and water retention functions in forested watersheds.

We urge the Ministry to ban the use of Glyphosate in forestry. Eliminating its use will help restore natural ecosystem processes, reduce contamination of water sources, and improve long-term resilience to drought and

fire. A shift toward Indigenous forest practices and native plant regeneration will strengthen both ecological integrity and community safety.

Continued Advocacy

We continue to advocate for the following essential reforms:

- **Finalize and implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.**
  This would establish a clear, science-based foundation for land-use decisions that prioritize long-term ecological resilience.

- **Establish a Chief Ecologist to coordinate biodiversity, water, and ecosystem oversight across ministries.**
  This role would help align government actions with ecosystem-based management and ensure transparency and accountability across sectors.

- **Fully implement the Old Growth Strategic Review with enforceable timelines and Indigenous leadership.**
  Doing so is critical to safeguarding remaining ancient forests and rebuilding public trust in forest governance.

- **Ensure consistent application of forestry regulations across sectors.**
  Forestry laws are not uniformly applied to oil and gas activities. Energy regulators often administer the Forest Act without access to key tools like FRPA or the Water Sustainability Act. As a result, practices like right-of-way clearing and seismic line development bypass sustainable harvesting principles, and their impacts remain unaccounted for in Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) calculations.

- **Recognize the protection of forested watersheds as a public safety and infrastructure priority.**
  Intact forests are critical to flood prevention, drinking water security, and climate resilience, especially under increasing climate stress.

Conclusion

Current forest policies expose British Columbians to escalating liabilities: smoke-filled skies, damaged watersheds, increasing floods and droughts, and rising public costs. These are not theoretical risks—they are real, measurable, and avoidable.

We urge you to ban Glyphosate, reform silviculture, and support our platform recommendations in both policy and election commitments. The health, safety, and long-term prosperity of British Columbia depend on the choices we make now.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Nikolai Coutinho
Executive Director
Unlikely Allies

Links

Jean-Thomas Cornelis

 Cornelis, Jean-Thomas| Faculty Profile | UBC

 Publications

Dr. Younes Alila

 Alila, Younes | Faculty Profile | UBC Forestry

 UBC researchers advocate for sustainable logging to safeguard against global flood risks

 Nonstationary stochastic paired watershed approach: Investigating forest harvesting effects on floods in two large, nested, and snow-dominated watersheds in British Columbia, Canada - ScienceDirect