



FACTSHEET

2013

## Icons at risk

# The Great Bear Coast

The Great Bear region of British Columbia's north coast in Canada is a global ecological treasure, knitting together forest, river and sea into a single living system. This is no place for an oil pipeline.

THE GREAT BEAR,  
ONE OF THE  
RICHEST AND MOST  
SPECTACULAR  
ECOSYSTEMS, IS THE  
ONLY PLACE  
OF ITS KIND  
LEFT ON THE PLANET



© ANDREW S. WRIGHT / WWF-CANADA

## Birds eye view

**The region:** The Great Bear region encompasses 32,000 sq km on the British Columbia Coast between Vancouver Island in Canada and south-east Alaska, and the archipelago of Haida Gwaii. The Great Bear Sea borders the coast of the rainforest, and is fed by some of B. C.'s largest wild and free flowing rivers.

**Nowhere else on Earth:** The Pacific coastal wolf and the rare white Spirit bear are unique to this region. It is also home to one of Canada's most vital populations of Grizzly bear.

**Marine Biodiversity:** The Great Bear Sea supports countless marine species, including whales, dolphins, porpoises and all 5 species of wild Pacific salmon.

**Everything is interconnected:** The salmon reflect the interconnectedness of the sea, rivers and land, and are critical to this region. Countless streams feed rich estuaries and are lifelines for all 5 species of the Pacific salmon, which in turn feed the wolves, bears, and eagles and—ultimately—fertilize the rich soil of the rainforest.



THE GREAT BEAR  
COAST INCLUDES  
CRUCIAL HABITAT  
FOR RECOVERING  
POPULATIONS OF  
HUMPBACK AND  
FIN WHALES

## An iconic landscape

Often called 'Canada's Amazon', the Great Bear coast is truly one of the world's greatest natural gems, combining beauty, majesty, history, diversity and culture all in one. Here one of the world's largest remaining intact coastal temperate rainforests meet one of the world's last clusters of large, undammed wild salmon rivers and most productive coldwater seas. It is one of the few places on Earth where one may chance upon a Grizzly bear hiding behind the thick trees, a humpback whale diving into the sea, and a great albatross soaring across the skies, all from just one viewing spot! This coast is home to more than 30 indigenous First Nation communities with archaeological evidence dating their presence back to at least 10,000 years.

© TIM IRVIN / WWF-CANADA



**220 SUPERSIZED  
OIL TANKERS  
WILL TRANSPORT  
OIL THROUGH  
NARROW CHANNELS  
OVER CRUCIAL  
HABITAT OF THE  
HUMPBACK WHALES**

## Threats

Two decades ago, almost every valley of the Great Bear rainforest was slated for clearcut logging. After 15 years of conflict and negotiation, First Nations communities, forest companies, environmental organizations, governments, and philanthropic foundations created a world-leading model of ecosystem management for the region. As this group works to secure the future of this extraordinary place, the world once again faces the threat of losing it all.

The Northern Gateway Oil Pipeline project proposes to build twin pipelines 1,170 km long from the Alberta oil sands to Kitimat BC, bisecting the Great Bear region. The proposed project, slated for decision by the Canadian government in 2014, will transport 525,000 barrels per day of toxic diluted bitumen over hundreds of salmon rivers to BC's coast. This massive oil pipeline project threatens the very heart of the Great Bear and will destroy the cultural, ecological, and economic values of this region.

## Impact of the project

The biggest threat from this massive project is the repercussions of an inevitable oil spill. The Great Bear's waters are among the most treacherous in the world, known to mariners for heavy weather and unpredictable and dangerous waves. Yet, oil tankers as long as the Empire State Building are expected to undertake the impossible task of navigating through them without accident. The ability or capacity to respond to an oil spill in these waters simply does not exist, and there is no technology on Earth that can clean up a diluted bitumen spill at sea.

Apart from the more obvious impact on biodiversity, this project will also lead to heavy economic losses. Currently, the region's ocean based industry supports approximately 10,000 full-time jobs and is valued at over \$1 billion. An oil spill in this region would decimate that industry and those jobs, and could cost Canadians as much as \$9 billion in short-term recovery efforts alone. In the face of such catastrophic implications of this project, it is clear that the Great Bear coast is no place for an oil pipeline.

## Standing up for the Great Bear Coast

Together with Coastal First Nations, who hold title to this land, WWF is taking action. We have mobilized Canadians to oppose the pipeline, engaged B.C.'s premier, and raised awareness about the devastating impact the proposed development would have on the ecosystems, economies, and communities in the Great Bear. Exceptional Canadians from all walks of life have joined the cause and this past June, the government of British Columbia took a stand against the project. Now, as Canada's federal government deliberates a decision, we need Canadians and our global community to rally behind the Great Bear and say "no" to the oil pipeline.

## What you can do

In November, WWF and Coastal First Nations will launch the final push to convince Canada's government to say "no" to the Northern Gateway Oil Pipeline proposal. You can help now by learning more about this issue, engaging your friends and family, and sharing this message widely: The Great Bear is no place for an oil pipeline. Visit: [www.wwf.ca/greatbear](http://www.wwf.ca/greatbear)



**AN OIL SPILL  
WOULD DEVASTATE  
B.C. SALMON, WHICH  
CONTRIBUTES TO  
THE REGION'S  
\$1.2 BILLION  
OCEAN ECONOMY**



To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.  
[www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)

**SEIZE YOUR  
POWER** 

Seize Your Power is WWF's global campaign that calls on governments and financial institutions worldwide to act immediately to invest money in renewable energy projects and phase out investments in fossil fuels.

Sign the pledge: [www.panda.org/syp](http://www.panda.org/syp)