

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO****NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE****SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Thursday, November 4, 2021

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NEW BUSINESS**ADJOURNMENT**



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2021FLNRO0068-002088
Nov. 2, 2021

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development

Government taking action on old-growth deferrals

VICTORIA – The Province has announced its intention to work in partnership with First Nations to defer harvest of ancient, rare and priority large stands of old growth within 2.6 million hectares of B.C.'s most at-risk old-growth forests.

“Forests are a part of who we are as British Columbians. We have a responsibility to ensure the benefits are shared, today and with future generations,” said Premier John Horgan. “Following the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, we are taking steps to fundamentally transform the way we manage our old-growth forests, lands and resources.”

Logging deferrals are a temporary measure – recommended by 2020’s Old Growth Strategic Review – to prevent irreversible biodiversity loss while First Nations, the Province and other partners develop a new approach to sustainable forest management that prioritizes ecosystem health and community prosperity throughout B.C. This new approach will be based on the recommendations provided in the Old Growth Strategic Review and will recognize that a shift to prioritize ecosystem health is necessary if the forests are to continue to provide essential benefits, such as clean air, clean water, carbon storage, conservation of biodiversity and timber.

Details of these forest stands – mapped and defined by a panel of independent scientific and ecological experts – have been shared with First Nations rights and title holders so they can advise how to proceed on the deferral areas within their respective territories. The Province is requesting that First Nations indicate within the next 30 days whether or not they support the deferrals, require further engagement to incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge, or would prefer to discuss deferrals through existing treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements. Capacity funding of up to \$12.69 million over three years is available to support this process.

To support the deferral process, government will immediately cease advertising and selling BC Timber Sales in the affected areas.

“We’re building a new vision for forest care to better share all the benefits of our forests together, for generations and generations to come,” said Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “We are committed to working in partnership with First Nations to make sure we get this right and to supporting workers and communities as we develop a sustainable approach to managing BC’s old-growth forests.”

The Province is also bringing together strategically co-ordinated and comprehensive supports to help forest workers, communities and First Nations with the necessary supports to offset job

and economic impacts that may follow new harvest restrictions. Programs will include connecting workers with short-term employment opportunities, education and skills training or funds to bridge to retirement. The Province will also work in partnership with business and communities to develop new supports that will assist rural communities to create jobs through diversified economies, infrastructure projects and innovation in industry.

When the deferral period ends, the newly identified at-risk forests will either be added to B.C.'s 3.5 million hectares of old-growth forests already off-limits to harvesting, or included within new forest management plans.

As per the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, government will work in partnership with First Nations to provide clarity on the areas of forest that should be protected forever, the areas that may support some harvest under strict management conditions that prioritize ecosystem health, and the areas that can be accessed for sustainable timber management to support workers and communities. The result will be permanent protection for more of B.C.'s most important old growth and more clarity to support investment and jobs.

"A commitment to partnership with First Nations and integrating their perspectives on land is fundamental to facilitating the required paradigm shift in forest management that includes old growth as a key component of ecosystem health," said Garry Merkel, one of five members of the independent technical panel, and co-author of the Old Growth Strategic Review. "Once temporary deferrals are in place for the most at-risk ecosystems, government can turn toward implementation of the remaining recommendations of the strategic review and developing a new path forward."

There are already some parts of the province, such as the Great Bear Rainforest, where Indigenous Nations are working in partnership with government and industry to diversify management goals. These innovative partnerships demonstrate what can be achieved together and it is the provincial government's intent to build upon this type of forest management model throughout the province.

"By doing this work, we're following through with the recommendations from the Old Growth Strategic Review, and our commitment to reconciliation in line with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act," Premier Horgan said.

The Province will provide resources to support First Nations in assessing new data and decisions on deferrals and participating in the development of the Province's new approach to sustainable forest management. This will allow First Nations and the Province to determine if forest carbon offsets could be used to support the protection of old growth. The Province will also establish a new process to enable individuals and organizations to donate funds to purchase existing timber licences and preserve old-growth stands.

Learn More:

To learn more about the new vision for B.C.'s forests visit: www.gov.bc.ca/forestfuture

B.C.'s old-growth strategy: www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth

Modernization of B.C. forest policy: www.gov.bc.ca/modernforestpolicy

Learn more about B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>

Three backgrounders follow.

Contacts:

Lindsay Byers
Press Secretary
Deputy Communications Director
Office of the Premier
778 678-5539

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource
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Media Relations
250 896-4320

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BACKGROUND 1

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Milestones to a new vision for old growth

The Old Growth Strategic Review report, *A New Future for Old Forests*, was released in September 2020. Government began implementing its 14 recommendations immediately.

Actions to date include:

- Government engaged with the First Nations Leadership Council to discuss the report and begin work on the approach for Recommendation 1: “Engage the full involvement of Indigenous leaders and organizations to review this report and any subsequent policy or strategy development and implementation.” Government is announcing new capacity funding of up to \$12.69 million over three years to help support this work.
- In response to Recommendation 6: “Until a new strategy is implemented, defer development in old forests where ecosystems are at very high and near-term risk of irreversible biodiversity loss,” harvest has been deferred in 11 areas of old growth throughout B.C. The most recent deferrals include those in the Fairy Creek and central Walbran area, initiated at the request of the Pacheedaht, Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht First Nations. The Special Tree Protection Regulation will also protect as many as 1,500 of B.C.’s most iconic old-growth trees and one hectare of forest surrounding them.
- To further support Recommendation 6, the province formed an independent Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel. Its advice on where priority areas should be deferred has been received and is informing government’s current discussions with First Nations rights and title holders. Further deferrals will soon follow from these discussions.
- The Technical Advisory Panel’s work, in collaboration with government, also addresses Recommendation 5: “Provide the public with timely and objective information about forest conditions and trends,” by producing and releasing maps and data on the distribution and condition of old growth in B.C.
- Work on Recommendations 1, 5 and 6, as outlined above, is underway, as is Recommendation 7: “Bring management of old forests into compliance with existing provincial targets and guidelines for maintaining biological diversity.”

Key timelines for addressing the recommendations of the old-growth independent panel report can be found online: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/oldgrowth_path.png

This work is leading to a new old-growth strategy that is part of government’s vision for forests in B.C. The old-growth strategy is expected to be complete in 2023.

For more information, please visit www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth

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Technical Advisory Panel recommendations

In June 2021, government appointed an independent panel of scientists and foresters to help with B.C.'s next steps on old growth. The purpose of the panel was to provide maps, analysis and detailed status of old-growth ecosystems in British Columbia in order to improve public information, consistent with Recommendation 5 from the Old Growth Strategic Review. The panel was also asked to provide recommendations on priority areas for implementation of deferrals, consistent with Recommendation 6 from the Old Growth Strategic Review.

Recommendation 6 from the Old Growth Strategic Review noted that, "there are some areas of the province where failure to act now could lead to permanent loss of rare or unique ecosystem components..." This was the basis of their recommendation that, "until a new strategy is implemented, defer development in old forests where ecosystems are at very high risk of irreversible biodiversity loss."

The panel has completed its work and provided a summary report of its methods, analysis and recommendations as well as a series of eight maps (www.gov.bc.ca/oldgrowth). The panel's recommendations are focused on old-growth ecology and are intended to support the discussion between provincial and Indigenous governments.

In order to identify priority areas for deferral panel members based their work on the direction provided in the Old Growth Strategic Review and have recommended that the focus should be on big-treed old growth, ancient old growth and rare old growth. The panel's analysis shows that of the 56.2 million hectares of forest in B.C., 11.1 million hectares is old growth. This consists of:

- **Big-treed old growth, 6.2 million hectares:** Big-treed old growth is naturally rare. And, since it has been heavily targeted by harvesting, big-treed old growth is now very rare compared to its historic distribution, putting it at extremely high near-term risk. The technical panel has recommended 1.7 million hectares of this be deferred.
- **Rare old growth, 0.8 million hectares:** If an ecosystem has been heavily harvested and very little old growth remains, these remnant areas are, by definition, rare. The panel has recommended 0.5 million hectares of this be deferred.
- **Ancient old growth, 0.6 million hectares:** Ancient forest is globally rare and particularly irreplaceable because of the time it takes to grow an ancient forest. The panel has recommended that 0.4 million hectares of this be deferred.

It is estimated that, historically, there were approximately 25 million hectares of old forest in B.C. Of this, 11.1 million hectares of old growth remain, approximately one-third of which, 3.5 million hectares, is already protected. B.C. is working toward a comprehensive old-growth

strategy based on the 14 recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review.

Summary tables of the panel's analysis on these forest types in B.C. is available here: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Summary_Tables_Old_Growth.pdf

The panel's work supports the discussions between the Provincial and Indigenous governments.

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BACKGROUND 3

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Supports for workers, First Nations, communities impacted by old-growth deferrals

The Province will implement co-ordinated and comprehensive supports for workers, communities and First Nations through the development of new programs and by continuing and enhancing existing programs.

Supports through existing programs

The Province will continue to provide supports through existing programs, as well as enhancing them to ensure workers, communities and First Nation communities have access to supports that help people and communities transition to new economic opportunities:

- **Forest Employment Program:** Creates short-term employment to help forest contractors explore new work.
- **Skills Training for Job Pathways:** Connects affected workers, communities and First Nation communities with skills training and educational opportunities for new careers.
- **Community Rapid Response Team:** This team will provide in-community support and will co-ordinate with ministries and organizations to ensure supports are in place for individuals and communities.
- **Rural Business and Community Recovery Initiative:** Recovery advisers will be in place to help create jobs, support rural businesses and communities, and support strategic decision-making.
- **Bridging to Retirement:** Forestry workers 55 and older may receive supports to help transition to retirement.

Potential new programs

The Province will work in partnership with businesses, communities and First Nation communities to develop a suite of targeted supports that will help mitigate the adverse economic impacts associated with old-growth deferrals. Areas of focus include developing:

- Supports for job creation in rural British Columbia through value-add forestry and other manufacturing.
- Supports for infrastructure and economic development projects that promote diversification and resilience. This could be similar to the StrongerBC Rural Economic Recovery stream of the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure program that supported projects such as upgrading industrial parks, destination development, airport expansions, marine access, recreation and heritage infrastructure.
- Establish an internal government office to bridge and leverage cross-ministry connections for strategic collaboration on rural diversification.

Learn more about support programs: www.gov.bc.ca/forestfuture

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YUKON TERRITORY

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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

ALASKA

Priority Deferral Area

- Prioritized big-treed old growth
- Ancient forest
- Remnant old ecosystems
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
- Forested land not assessed
- Forest information not publicly available

This map reflects analysis performed by the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel (Daust, D., Price, K., Holt, R., Matthaus, L. and Merkel, G.) utilizing Province of British Columbia data. Version 2, October 24, 2021.

Areas with ancient forest may be displayed as prioritized big-treed old growth due to the hierarchy of the overlay. For the same reason, remnant old ecosystems may be displayed as ancient or prioritized big-treed old growth. Prioritized big-treed old growth contains older mature forest in some ecosystems.

Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited are forested areas already covered by an existing conservation designation. Some priority deferral areas shown are already covered by an existing conservation designation.

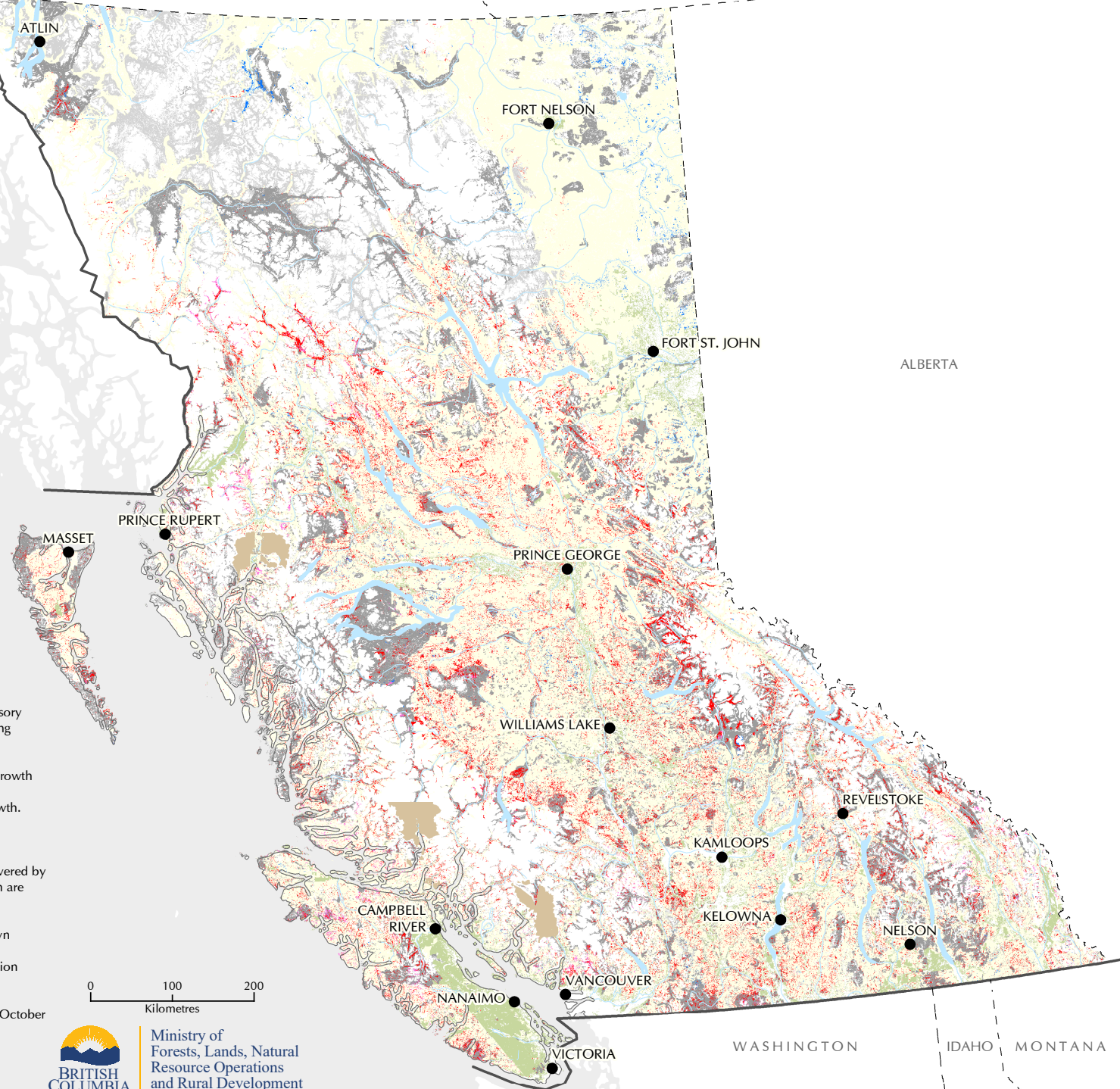
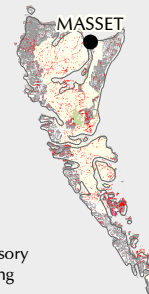
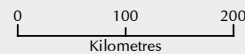
Forest assessment land base is forested land excluding areas with a crown closure less than 10%, private, municipal and first nation reserve lands. Forested land not assessed is land within private, municipal and first nation reserve lands.

For further information, see the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel's October 2021 report, "Priority Deferrals: An Ecological Approach".

Map produced by: GeoBC, Decision Support Section
November 1, 2021



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YUKON TERRITORY

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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

ALASKA

ALBERTA

Big-Treed Old Growth

- Old growth
- Older mature forest
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
- Forested land not assessed
- Forest information not publicly available

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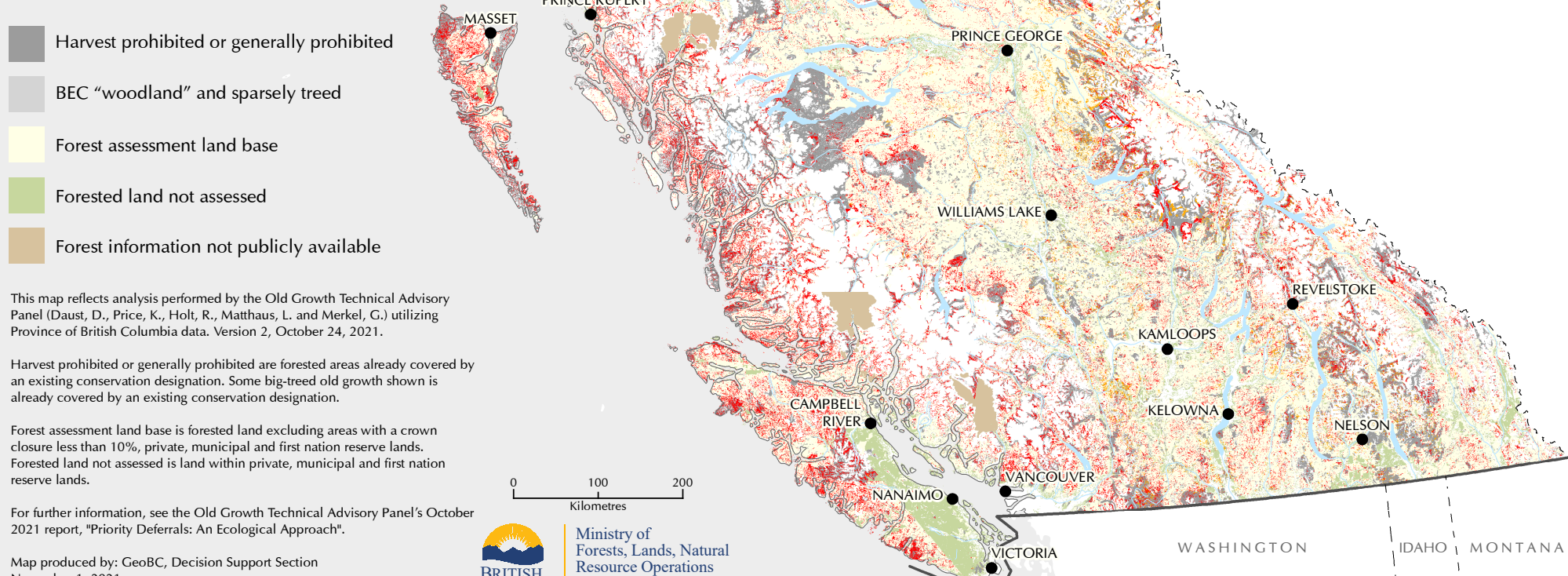
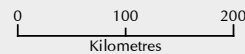
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

ALASKA

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Prioritized Big-Treed Old Growth

- Old growth
- Older mature forest
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
- Forested land not assessed
- Forest information not publicly available

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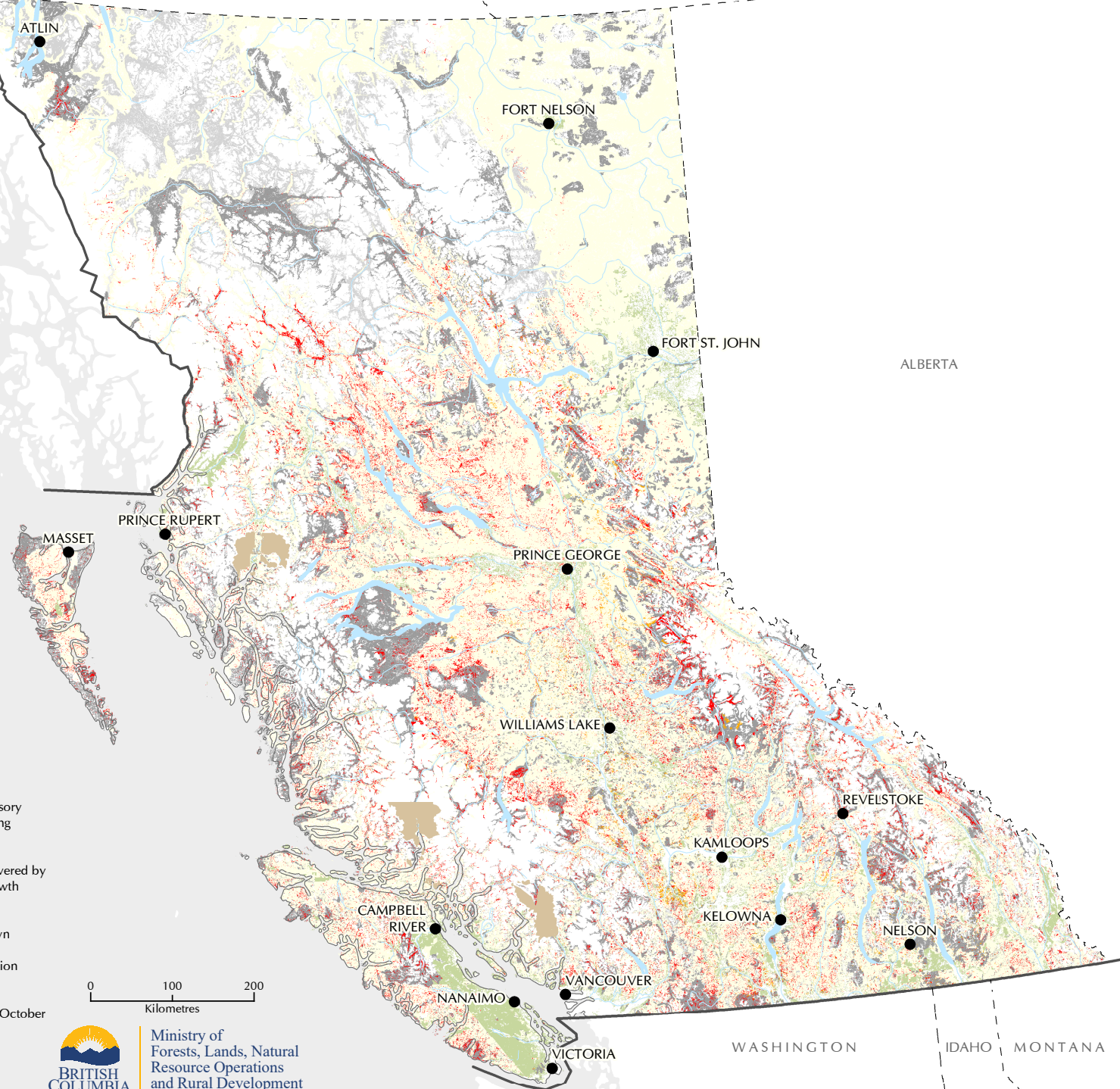
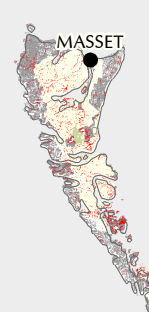
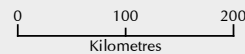
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Ancient Forest

- Ancient forest
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
- Forested land not assessed
- Forest information not publicly available

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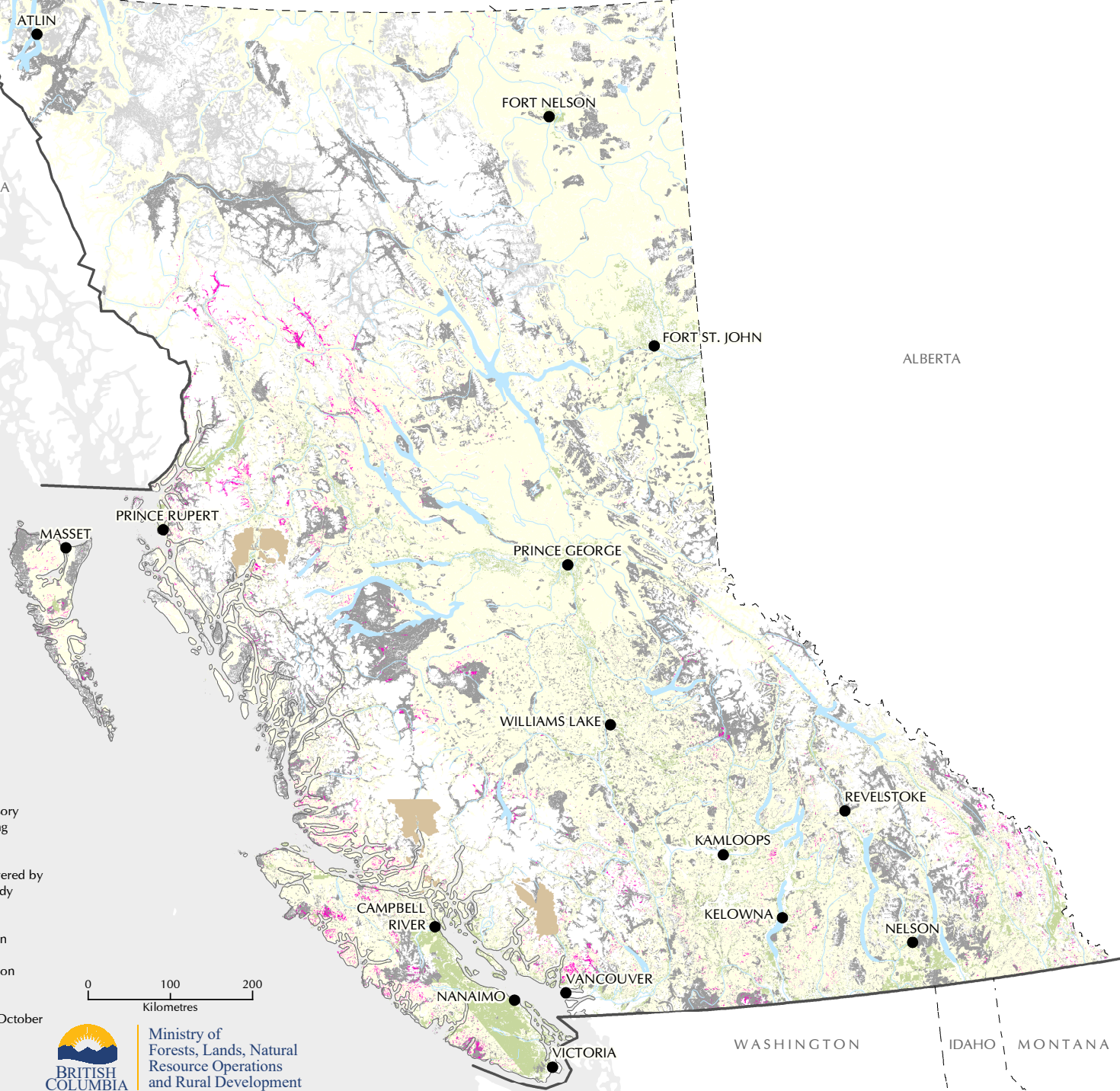
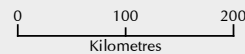
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15

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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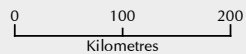
Remnant Old Ecosystems

- Rare within a BEC variant
- Rare within a landscape unit within a BEC variant
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
- Forested land not assessed
- Forest information not publicly available

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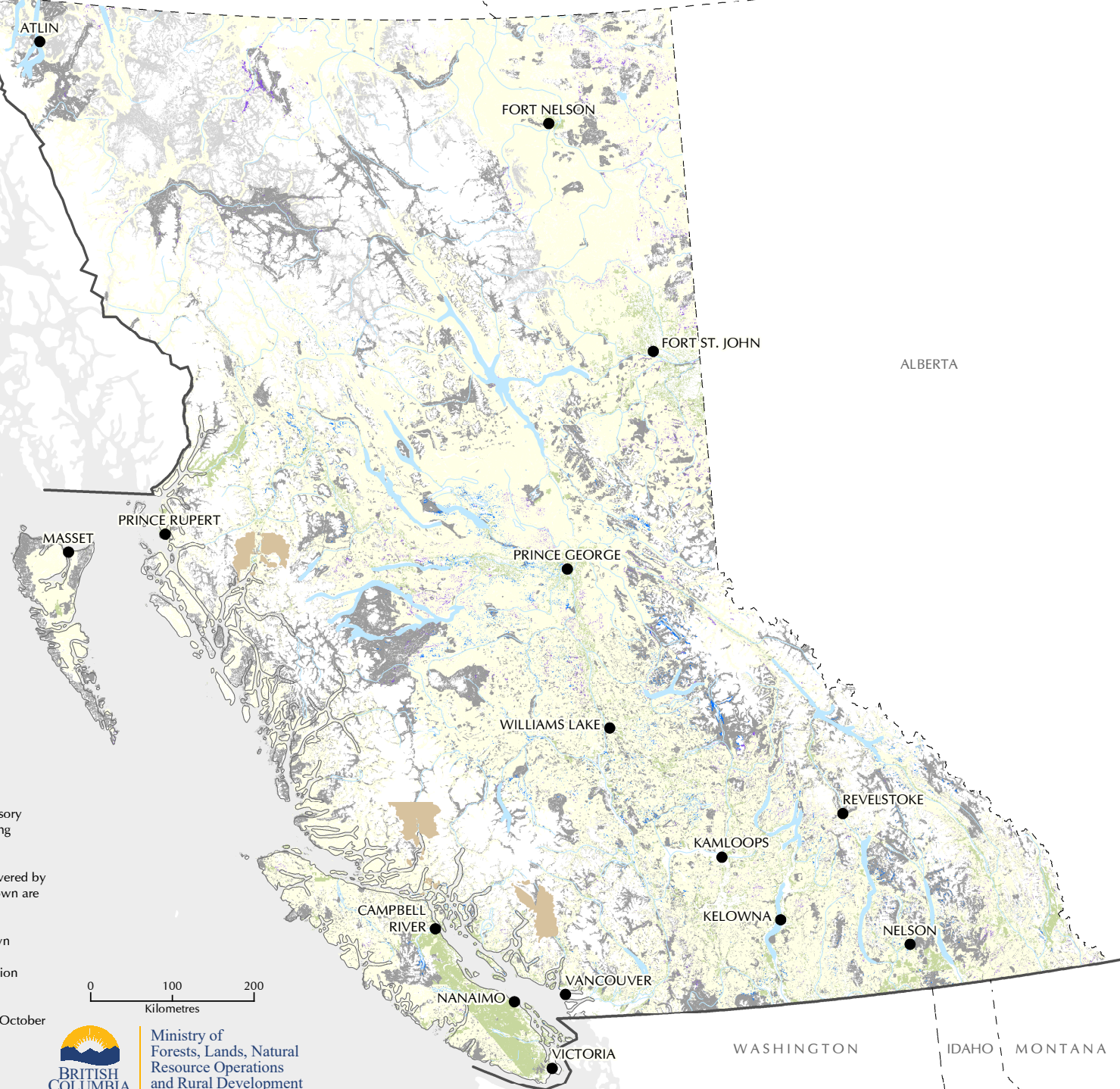


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Intact Watersheds

- 70 – 80% Intact
- 80 – 90% Intact
- > 90% Intact
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
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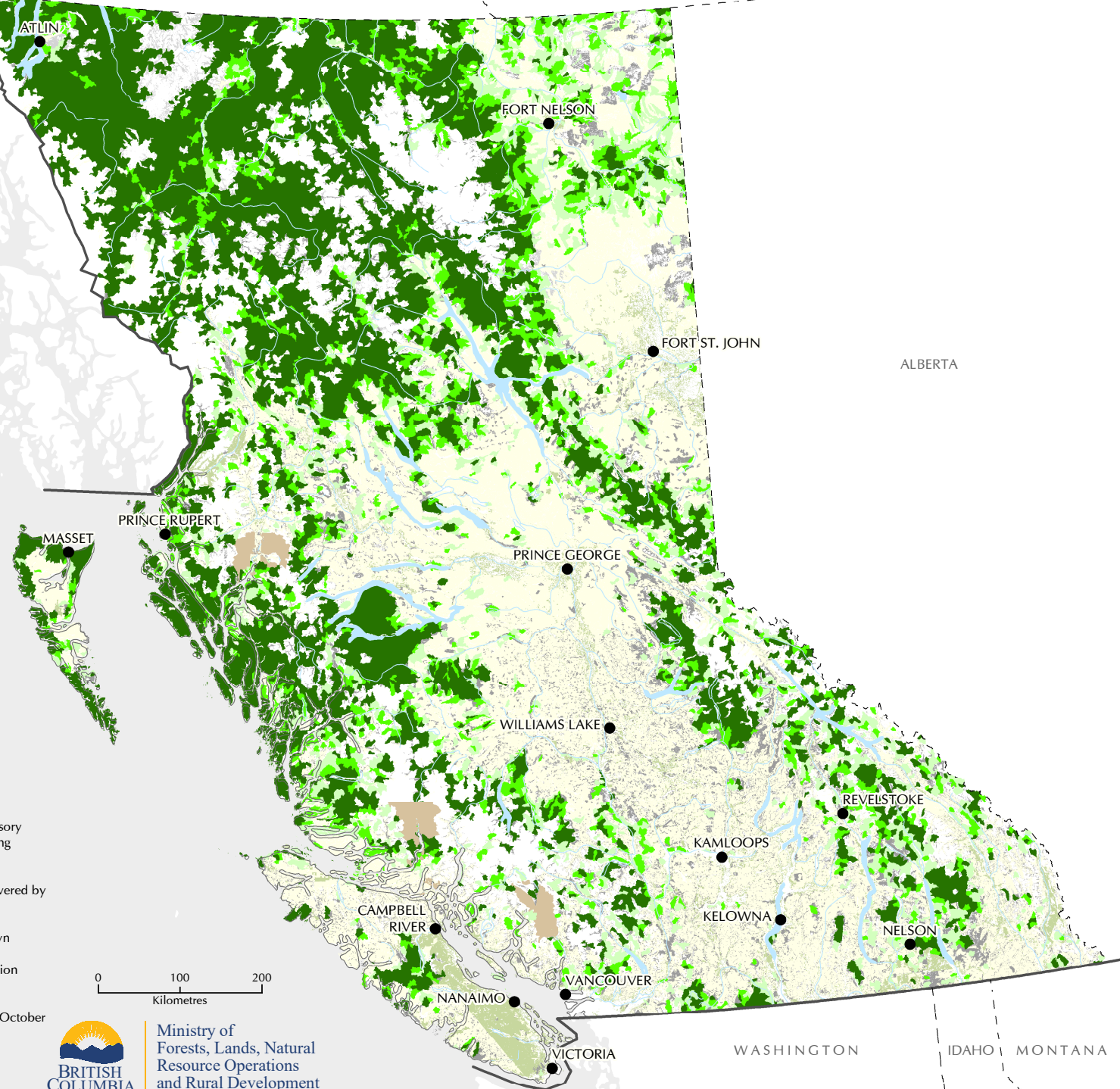
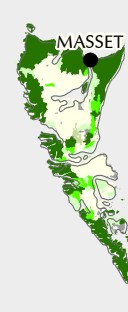
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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Recruitment Forest

- Recruitment forest
- Harvest prohibited or generally prohibited
- BEC "woodland" and sparsely treed
- Forest assessment land base
- Forested land not assessed
- Forest information not publicly available

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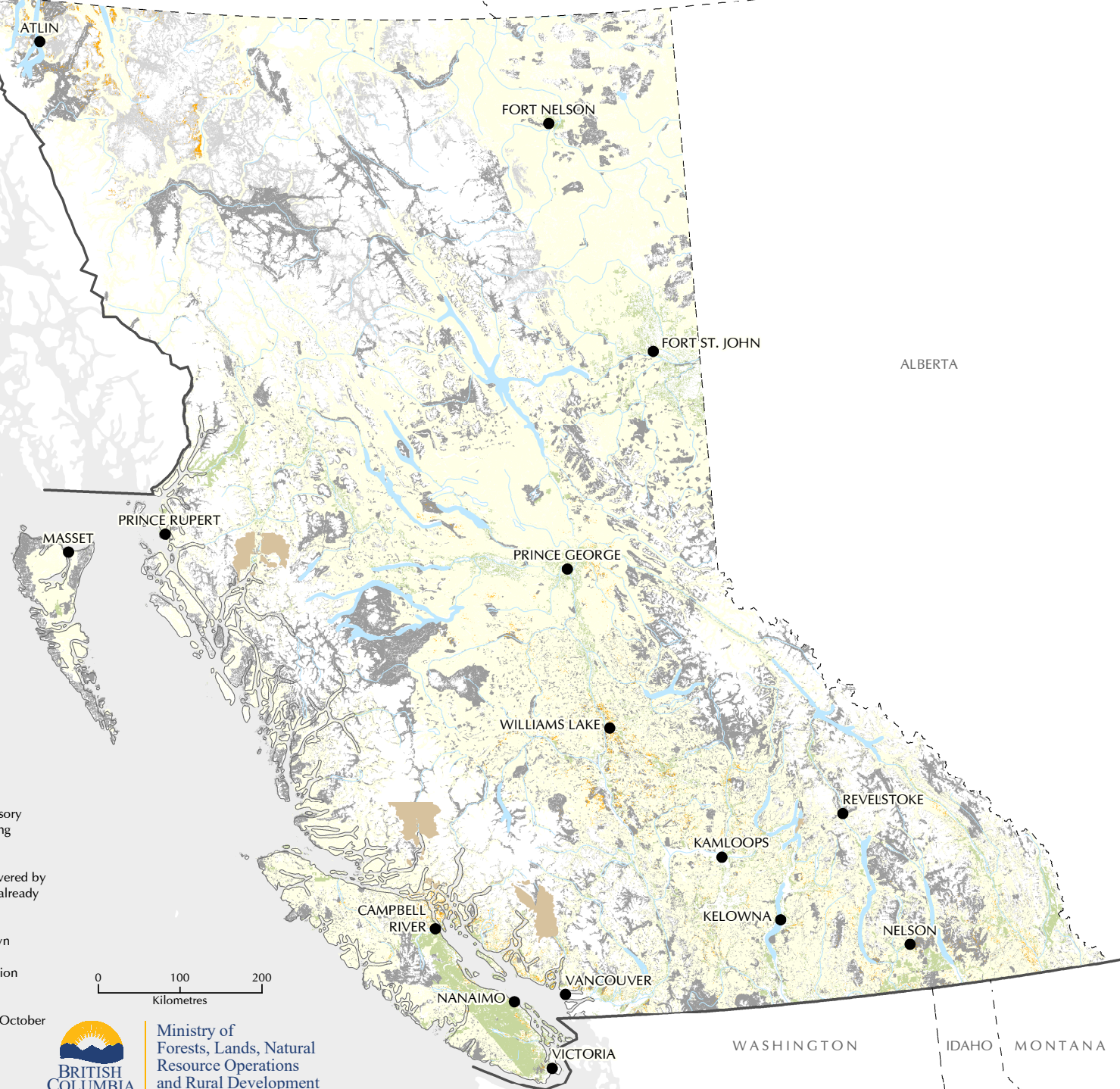
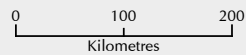
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18

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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Old Growth Forest

Relative Old Growth Tree Size (by ecosystem)

- Very small
- Small
- Medium
- Large
- Very large
- Unknown size

Protected area

Forest information not publicly available

Not Old Growth

Unlogged

Logged

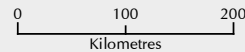
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ATLIN

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FORT ST. JOHN

MASSET

PRINCE RUPERT

PRINCE GEORGE

WILLIAMS LAKE

REVELSTOKE

KAMLOOPS

CAMPBELL RIVER

KELOWNA

NELSON

NANAIMO

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