



SAYWARD'S ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY: FIRES, FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

1938 Sayward Fire: Scale and Response

- The **Sayward Fire** burned more than 75,000 acres, or approximately 30,000 hectares.
- The fire extended about 64 kilometres from Menzies Bay toward Courtenay.
- Approximately 1,700 men fought the blaze before heavy rains extinguished it in August.



IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

Ancient coastal old-growth ecosystems were destroyed and replaced by more uniform, single-age forests.

Thousands of mammals, birds, and other wildlife died or lost critical habitat.

Turning Point for Reforestation

Forestry officials determined that natural regeneration would fail because few seed trees remained.

The B.C. government launched its first large-scale, systematic artificial replanting program.

The program planned to plant 10,000 acres of burned or logged land annually.

New requirements emphasized the removal of logging slash and standing dead trees, or snags, to reduce future fire risk.



HISTORICAL FLOODING IN THE SAYWARD VALLEY

- The 1918 Valley Flood damaged early homesteads, including the historic general store and trading post.
- A rain-on-snow event from December 30 to January 3, 1927, followed by warm rain on January 4, caused widespread flooding.

- A 1949 flood resulted in the drowning of a Sayward resident in a raging creek.
- Residents also reported significant flood events in 1975, 1990, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2018.
- Community testimony indicates that flooding remains a recurring risk affecting properties and transportation access.





NEWCASTLE CREEK LANDSLIDE

- . On October 23, 2025, a massive landslide occurred approximately one kilometre outside the village.
- . The slide carried roughly **10,000 cubic metres** of mud and debris down a hillside just one kilometre outside the village

An abstract painting on the left side of the slide, featuring a vertical split. The left half is a textured, layered composition of teal, light blue, and green, resembling a landscape or a close-up of a natural surface. The right half is a plain white background containing text.

CONCLUSION: A CONTINUING PATTERN OF ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

Sayward's history demonstrates the effects of wildfire, flooding, and landslides on ecosystems, infrastructure, and communities.

Past disasters prompted changes in forest management and reforestation practices.

Recurring hazards highlight the importance of preparedness, watershed management, and resilient infrastructure.