



Brigade Bay Nature Reserves Dedicated on Gambier Island

by Lois Kennedy

The lands around Brigade Bay were some of the most beautiful on Gambier Island: a protected bay with a large intertidal zone, rich in biodiversity and with a small fish-bearing stream emptying into it.

Despite a cautionary warning to the new owners from

continued on page 3

Getting the Sechelt Community Forest Back on Track

by Jay Forsyth

In our last newsletter (January 2005), the SCCA questioned whether the District of Sechelt was off on the wrong foot in its approach to community forestry.

In early March, the District of Sechelt submitted its community forest application to the Ministry of Forests without releasing any substantive details to the public.

The public responded with an outpouring of letters opposing the plan, which helped delay its submission. Mayor Reid promised to use this 60-day postponement to address numerous concerns raised by the public, the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) and the Sechelt First Nation (SFN), the most important of which involved the inclusion of the Chapman Creek and Gray Creek drinking watersheds in the timber harvesting area and the complete lack of community input.

With the 60-day period now over, the district has clearly broken its promise to address these concerns. Following the one token "public information meeting," held on April 19, at which over 100 citizens expressed their outrage with the application, the district agreed to proceed on condition that logging in the Chapman Creek watershed be delayed for 100 years but logging in Gray Creek proceed as originally planned. This attempt to sidestep community concerns was rejected by the SCRCD on May 12. The SCRCD board of directors went on to pass a motion stating that it is "strongly opposed to the granting of any community forest tenure in the Chapman-Gray

continued on page 2



Sakinaw Lake on a clear day, facing northeast from the outlet, where a floating walkway leads to a path to the ocean. Daniel Bouman photo

Sakinaw Stewardship Fair a Success

by Andrew Scott

About 75 people turned out for the February 2005 Stewardship Fair, held at Pender Harbour Community Centre in Madeira Park. Participating organizations included Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC), Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society (MVIHES), Nature Trust of BC, Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF), Pacific Streamkeepers, Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society, Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature Reserve Society, The Land Conservancy and the SCCA.

continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

Table listing contents: SCCA Marine Projects (3), Tuwanek Beach Access (4), John Hind-Smith Remembered (4), Executive Director's Report (5), Noteworthy News & Events (5)

continued from page 1

Sechelt Community Forest

watershed and that this opposition be strenuously and vigorously communicated to the Ministry of Forests and to all governments on the Sunshine Coast.”

With much of the public and the SCR D opposed to the community forest application, the District of Sechelt has failed in its drive to manufacture community support. Its approach has served to aggravate the community and set the stage for continued controversy. What could and should have been a

positive opportunity for the Sunshine Coast is now proving to be an insult to the spirit and intent of community forestry.

Despite the path that the district has chosen to take—and the distrustful environment it has built—the SCCA continues to believe in, and will work for, a vision of a viable and community-driven community forest on the Sunshine Coast. To salvage what is left from the current situation, the SCCA recommends that the following actions take place before the application proceeds any further. Let’s hope the district has the wisdom to listen to the community and the common sense to make the changes required to get back on track.

Actions Needed for a Viable Community Forest:

1. The watersheds that supply the Sunshine Coast’s drinking water must be removed from the land base of the proposed community forest. Despite the overwhelming opposition to watershed logging, the District of Sechelt plans to simply delay logging in these watersheds as a form of protection. Planning to log the drinking watersheds in the future means we are agreeing to watershed logging today. The only way to truly protect the watersheds from logging and other industrial activity is to remove them from the land base of any industrial tenure. Furthermore, by agreeing to and planning for watershed logging in our community forest, residents on the Sunshine Coast may open the door to other industrial activities in the watersheds, such as gravel-pit mining.

2. The governance structure of the community forest corporation must be publicly controllable and include representation from all local governments, including the SFN and the SCR D. The District of Sechelt plans to ensure they have majority control over the proposed community forest corporation. The proposed community forest will impact all communities on the lower Sunshine Coast and, therefore, all communities must be officially represented in the decision-making process.

3. Following respectful consultations with the SFN and the SCR D, the District of Sechelt must demonstrate that these governments clearly support the community forest application by including a letter of support in the application. To date, the district has ignored concerns raised by the SFN and the SCR D.



Recent clearcut logging in the Chapman Creek drinking watershed area by AJB Investments Ltd. of West Vancouver.

Daniel Bouman photo

4. Following the completion of the actions above, the District of Sechelt must consult genuinely with the public and accommodate its concerns in a meaningful manner. To date, the district maintains that there is “broad-based and substantive” support for the application and that “the majority of the comments in the community are positive.” Yet there is a limited amount of documentation to support such statements. Documentation of community support must include all the letters generated in regard to the community forest from all sectors of the community.

The SCCA urges members to write the Minister of Forests (see back page for contact information) and highlight these actions.

continued from page 1

Sakinaw Stewardship Fair

The opening presentation was made by Sid Quinn, resource manager for the Sechelt First Nation, who welcomed everyone to Sechelt territory and gave some historical perspective to his people’s presence in the Sakinaw Lake area. Sunshine Coast Regional District director John Rees spoke about the complex water-use issues associated with the 10-lake Sakinaw system, including the pressures of growth and development on the water supply. Grant McBain, FOC’s community advisor for the

Sunshine Coast, showed slides and gave a history of Sakinaw Lake from the salmon’s point of view, providing an overview of habitat conditions. Alan Kenney talked about the vital role that PSF plays in support of Pacific salmon restoration and stewardship projects, and Faye Smith of MVIHES gave an inspirational account of her society’s initiative in improving and preserving the important Englishman River salmon runs on Vancouver Island. After lunch about 20 individuals, including members of the Sakinaw Lake Homeowners’ Association, participated in a round-table discussion on forming a stewardship group for the Sakinaw watershed.

continued from page 1

Gambier Island Reserves

the neighboring Sea Ranch community at Long Bay, the large wetland which is the headwaters for the Long Bay stream was trashed by heavy logging machinery and left strewn with slash. Water running from the wetland into the stream turned brown. Silt covered prime spawning habitat, potentially suffocating eggs, alevins and fry. Logging and poor road building damaged seven streams emptying into Brigade Bay so badly that winter rains left the ocean muddy. Two streams were barely recognizable. Rare coastal plants were destroyed by an illegal barge loading ramp. Gas and oil pooled in tire tracks just metres from the ocean. Our hearts were broken and we were outraged!

So why bother to tell this story? After all, the planet is covered with much worse environmental holocausts than this one. But this story is also about the important role of local stewardship groups.

The Gambier Island Streamkeepers had been doing stream mapping and fish-habitat rehabilitation in this area for years. Together, the Sea Ranch community and I, as the Streamkeepers coordinator, lodged a complaint with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, documenting the destruction of fish habitat. This brought results! After several FOC site visits, a remediation plan crafted by a private environmental consultant became a condition for final subdivision approval. Streamside areas were cleared of slash and replanted with thousands of healthy young trees. Streams that had been obliterated were reconstructed. Culverts and bridges were replaced properly. The wetland had thousands of cuttings and saplings planted to enhance its natural regeneration. Three years later, it is already looking beautiful again—a testimony to the resilience of nature. This wetland, almost 40 hectares in size, has now been donated by the owners as a nature reserve to the Islands Trust Fund. A management plan is in the works and a local stewardship group will be established to oversee the plan. No one will ever hurt this wetland again. My heart sings.

One of the most heartening consequences was the least expected. There were contractors on the site who were also dismayed by the environmental damage. One took me on a private

tour of the entire property, revealing much more extensive damage than I had previously seen. Another contributed 30 hours of machine time to begin the rehabilitation of the wetland.

More than five hectares of steep forested bluff have also been donated to the Islands Trust Fund as a nature reserve, and a large grassy area is being dedicated as a public recreation park, likely to be owned and managed by the Sunshine Coast Regional District. A portion of the upland foreshore area of the bay has



Salmon spawning area at the mouth of Brigade Bay Creek.

Photo courtesy Gambier Island Streamkeepers

been preserved for public use. Through road and trail designations, public access from Brigade Bay to Halkett Bay Provincial Marine Park, Long Bay, Mount Artaban, Lost Lake and Douglas Bay has been retained. The Brigade Bay subdivision is now a nexus in the island-wide network of trails being developed and maintained by the Gambier Island Conservancy.

In a perfect world this devastation would never have occurred. But even in our imperfect world, there are still success stories. This subdivision is a testament to the powers of local environmental knowledge, determined community advocacy and stewardship, and negotiation among all the stakeholders involved in land-use planning.

SCCA Marine Habitat Projects

by Daniel Bouman

The SCCA has been gathering information about critical marine habitats, thanks to funding from the Vancouver and Bullitt foundations. We have also received a great deal of assistance from the Living Oceans Society. We are now entering a new phase in this work where we'll be consulting with sport and commercial fishers. Here's a bit of background on the project.

The federal government has formally committed to establishing Marine Protected Areas on Canada's west coast through the *Oceans Act*. Agreements between the federal and provincial governments to make this happen have already been signed. We don't know yet when and where these MPAs will be established or what the designation will involve. We are, however, preparing to advocate for MPAs that are scientifically and socially acceptable. This means that we'll need to accumulate a great deal of information as soon as possible.

There are data sets already available that describe many

important marine features: ocean bottom mapping, tides and currents, kelp beds, eelgrass meadows, clam beaches, landing records, catch logs, estuaries, etc. What we're doing now is interviewing fishers—the people actually working in the marine environment—about what they believe are the areas most important for protection and those most necessary for continuing sport and commercial activity.

In the past, decisions about activities in the marine environment have often been made by governments, without scientific rationales or any real consultation with those directly impacted. The idea behind these interviews is that the knowledge of people using the environment is key to integrating all the different data sets and coming up with a comprehensive system of protected and commercial areas. We want to make sure that marine use policy in the Strait of Georgia and adjacent inlets reflects the participation and knowledge of the residents of the region. If you are a fishing person or you know someone who is, we would like to talk with you! Please feel free to call Dan at 604-886-8325 or Dianne at 604-885-6283.

The Uncanny Case of Shrinking Beach Access at Tuwanek

by Linda Williams

BC's coastal beach accesses are statutory rights-of-way "taken" by the Province during the subdivision process and registered through the access-to-water provisions of Section 75 of the Land Title Act. Permanent local access to the coastline is a prerequisite for subdivision approval in British Columbia. The rights-of-way so designated must be a minimum of 20 metres wide and spaced at intervals of 200 metres in subdivisions bordering on the ocean. Subdivision property owners are considered to have 'bought into' the beach accesses. Under BC law, the statutory access to water rights-of-way are binding on all parties (including government), their heirs and assigns.

With the enactment of the Community Charter, the province divested most of the authority for municipal roads administered by the Ministry of Transportation to municipal governments. Specific provisions, in keeping with the previous legislation that safeguarded the statutory rights-of-way, were included.

Before the ink was dry on the new charter, District of Sechelt staff decided that part of the beach access in Tuwanek was "superfluous to our needs" and agreed to sell it to the adjacent property owner. District of Sechelt staff apparently overlooked Section 7 of the Community Charter, wherein authority for statutory rights-of-way (excepting those for drainage) is not divested by the province. And, although district staff prepared two bylaws under authority of Section 40 of the Community Charter, they did not consider the provisions of Section 41, which limit their authority over registered beach accesses, or any part of one.

This issue should be of concern to everyone living in a municipality in coastal BC. The Tuwanek Ratepayers Association believes the province has a permanent duty to ensure that the provisions of the Land Act, the Land Title Act and the Community Charter are enforced. Beach accesses outside municipalities currently administered by the Ministry of Transportation remain fully protected. Those inside municipalities must be accorded the



Sunshine Coast beach accesses are guarded by forest gnomes (though many signs have been removed). Andrew Scott photo

same level of protection, as the Community Charter Act intends. The Tuwanek Ratepayers Association has asked BC's ombudsman to investigate.

Coast Conservation Elder and Teacher John Hind-Smith

by George Smith

One thing that Canadian society can learn from First Nations is the art of honouring elders. John Hind-Smith passed away on April 8 at Totem Lodge in Sechelt. If there ever was a spiritual elder for the conservation community (and others) on the Sunshine Coast, that person was John Hind-Smith.

John began his love affair with nature while growing up in his native Yorkshire. He hiked and caved extensively in northern England and Scotland with his brother Lawrence. After fixing airplanes in India for the Royal Air Force during World War Two and living for a short time in Ontario, John turned up on the Sunshine Coast in 1960. He worked at the pulp and paper mill in Port Mellon briefly then set up his refrigeration business, which lasted until he retired around 1985.



John Hind-Smith, 1921-2005

However, it was not work that motivated John; John's love was nature, the wilder the better. Shortly after arriving here he began spending much of his time hiking up onto Mount Elphinstone and beyond into the Tetrahedron alpine, often following creeks before the roads were built. Over the years he built up a deep knowledge of our local ecosystem and shared that wisdom freely with the many coast residents he led into the woods. John gave back to nature in his own uniquely humble, quiet and respectful yet very firm way. Among many other contributions, he was a lifetime member of the Sunshine Coast Natural History Society (first called the Marsh Society); director of conservation for the Gibsons Wildlife Club; a founding member of the Salmon Enhancement Society, the Elves Club, the Search and Rescue Group and, of course, of the Tetrahedron Alliance.

In the words of Tony Greenfield, president of the Sunshine Coast Natural History Society, John "should perhaps best be remembered for his early role in efforts to preserve the Tetrahedron as a natural area. John knew the Tetrahedron area from his personal explorations before it appeared on anyone else's radar screen, and he recognized its local and provincial significance. Eventually, the area was preserved as a provincial park, and John's inspirational efforts were enshrined in the naming of a subalpine lake (located directly beneath both Tetrahedron and Panther peaks) as John Hind-Smith Lake. This pristine mountain lake, visited by few, is truly a worthy memorial to a great man, and in many ways it captures John's essential nature, for he preferred to work in low-key ways, out of the headlines."

Those of us lucky to count John as a friend enjoyed his very English sense of humour, which could be both gentle and wickedly black at the same time. However, it may be that John's most defining characteristic, and one that enabled his enormous conservation contribution, was his deep sense of grace toward all living beings. John was indeed a true elder who taught us much and left an inspirational legacy.

On Arbitrary Authority: The Executive Director's Report

by Daniel Bouman

The SCCA has been dealing with a diversity of issues over the last few months. Many are controversial in part because they involve the arbitrary use of authority to deny environmental protection. In briefly touching on these I hope you will get a picture of what life in the executive director's office is like.

A major milestone was passed on May 13, 2005, when the SCCA made its second appearance in the BC Supreme Court. As readers will recall, in 2003 the SCCA made a complaint to the Association of BC Forest Professionals about the ethics and practices of a forester operating in critical wildlife habitats in Jervis Inlet. It should have been a relatively simple matter for this professional body to refer our complaint to its investigation process. Instead the ABCFP refused to investigate our complaint and also refused to provide a meaningful explanation. I consider their response to be arbitrary. We didn't accept this, and two years later we're in court seeking an order forcing the ABCFP to allow an investigation of the complaint. Our case was very clearly argued by Cathy Parker of Arvay Finlay in Victoria. We are now waiting for the judge to make a finding. We believe that the public has, or should have, a right to make complaints against foresters and see those complaints dealt with in a fair, open and transparent way. The idea that the ABCFP has a right to arbitrary authority over complaints is clearly not in the public interest and leads directly to habitat destruction.

Another issue related to the arbitrary exercise of authority involves the District of Sechelt's "community" forest license application. There are criteria established by government for evaluating Community Forest License applications. These guidelines require demonstration of public consultation and support. The District of Sechelt has not consulted with the public, has received a huge response in opposition, has not secured the support of the Sunshine Coast Regional District or the Sechelt First Nation and hasn't responded meaningfully to the concerns raised. The reasons for all the opposition are covered elsewhere in the newsletter. Suffice it to say that the District of Sechelt should comply with the application guidelines in a clear and candid manner. If it fails to do so, the application should be denied. There are strong indications that the provincial government is prepared to impose this new logging license on Sunshine Coast residents despite the district's failure to respond to public

concerns. One small effect of this potential arbitrary use of authority is that it makes the SCCA's phone ring! I've spent a huge amount of time responding. The salient fact here is that arbitrary authority usually leads to poor decisions and harmful environmental impacts.

One last item. As many of you already know, mining exploration is underway on the Sechelt Peninsula, particularly in the wetlands of the Carlson Lake area. There are several layers of environmental protection in place for this area. These include



Exploration work by Pan Pacific Aggregates has caused environmental damage on the Sechelt Peninsula.
Ryan Logtenberg photo

riparian set-asides for fish-bearing streams, a landscape unit plan and designated Old Growth Management Areas. It turns out that mining exploration is exempt from most of these provincial protections. Consequently, based on the provisions of the *Mineral Tenure Act*, the mine proponents assume that they have arbitrary authority to do as they please (I am prepared to argue otherwise). The point is this: the lack of representation of the public interest through an impartial, honest and forthright process leads directly to habitat destruction. (See www.thesc.ca for future updates.)

The SCCA's mandate is to seek protection for biological diversity. Much of our work involves participating in public processes, so it's not surprising that we have a strong interest in good governance—i.e. governance that empowers the public through fair, open and transparent processes. Poor governance of the sort that establishes arbitrary authority almost always leads directly to environmental damage.

Noteworthy News and Events

The annual general meeting of the SCCA was held April 2005 at the Sechelt Public Library. Director Jay Forsyth gave a presentation outlining the SCCA's position on community forestry (see the SCCA website at www.thesc.ca for more details). ☺ We're thrilled to announce that Gail Riddell and Harold Fletcher have joined the SCCA board of directors. Gail is the former director of UBC's teaching centre for faculty and previously served on the Sierra Club of BC board. Harold will assume the all-important position of treasurer. Welcome aboard, Gail and Harold. ☺ SCCA director Tish Davies has stepped down from the board

but taken on the vital task of membership director. John Field, SCCA treasurer since the association was founded, will remain as a director. Many thanks to Tish and John for their outstanding efforts. ☺ In April 2005, notification was received from Bill Barisoff, Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection, that district lots 5399 and 5400 will be added to Ambrose Lake Ecological Reserve pending agreement by the Sechelt First Nation. The entire Ambrose Lake watershed will then be protected. ☺ The Nature Trust of BC has announced the acquisition of a 6.5-hectare property on Gunboat Bay in Pender Harbour through the generosity of the Beaty family. Important riparian areas, including the mouth of Heid Creek, will be protected.

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Area A Quality Water Association	Friends of Caren	Sandy Hook Community Association
BC Spaces for Nature	Friends of Homesite Creek	Sargeant Bay Society
Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society	Gambier Island Conservancy	Storm Bay Joint Tenants Association
Carlson Point Property Owners	Gibsons Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre	Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society
Eco-Care Conservancy (Powell River)	Halfmoon Bay Greenways	Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society
EcoTech Youth Service Program	Native Plant Society of BC (SC Chapter)	Sunshine Coast Natural History Society
Elphinstone Living Forest	Okeover Ratepayers Association	Sunshine Coast Water First Society
	One Straw Society	Tetrahedron Alliance
	Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society	Tuwanek Ratepayers Association

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA)

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"The purpose of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association is to preserve the natural biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast region for the present and future benefit of humanity and all life, specifically to:

1. Conduct research to inventory and describe our remaining natural areas with the goal of identifying land and waters important for the preservation of biodiversity. All information collected will be freely available to the public.
2. Work to retain such lands and waters in a natural state and make them available for the public enjoyment where possible.
3. Raise public environmental and conservation awareness by sponsoring educational programs and workshops and by building access infrastructure for low-impact recreation."

(Our constitution requires that membership in the SCCA is conditional upon acceptance of the purpose of the SCCA stated above.)

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL

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