



Community Forest Plans to Log in Gray Creek Watershed

by Daniel Bouman

On July 13, 2010, SCCA representatives attended the Sechelt Community Forest (Sechelt Community Projects, Inc.) open house to view areas proposed for logging over the next 20 years. The mapping was vague and difficult to decipher, but plans to log in the Gray Creek Watershed Reserve sometime within the next five to ten years were obvious. When asked why they have decided to ignore the regional Joint Watershed Management Agreement (JWMA) and the Sechelt Nation's Strategic Land Use Plan, neither of which permit industrial activity in the watersheds, Community Forest staff responded that they had

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Which will prevail in the Gray Creek watershed: your right to a vital source of drinking water or the Community Forest's right to log? *Tella Sametz photo*

Emanuel Machado: Sechelt's Manager of Sustainability and Special Projects

by Tella Sametz

Emanuel Machado is Sechelt's manager of sustainability and special projects. He began work in January 2010. Sustainability might be defined as meeting the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs—in essence, leaving things in as good or better shape than we found them. So what is it that Machado actually does?

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Saving Savary Island's Precious Forested Sand Dune Ecosystem

by David Moore

Islands are a defining feature of the BC coast and, like most of nature's features, there are no two alike. In the Powell River district, Savary Island wears its uniqueness boldly and visibly. If that uniqueness is to be kept intact, we must heed an urgent call for the protection and conservation of the forested sand dune ecosystem in the central part of the island.

Savary boasts kilometres of wide sandy beaches, a feature that has been its traditional claim to fame. Archaeological evidence documents occupation by Coast Salish people over thousands of years. The island's modern history started in 1886 when Jack Green became the first non-aboriginal permanent resident.

In the early 1900s the subdivision of Savary resulted in a total of more than 1,700 lots. Over the years the island has been home to hotel fires, shipwrecks (including the sinking of the tugboat *Teeshoe* in the 1950s) and a notorious murder.

The lure of Savary as a holiday destination remains stronger now than ever, and hundreds of summer visitors return every year, arriving by pleasure boat, water taxi and floatplane. The island has no BC Hydro service; rustic simplicity and natural beauty are the greatest rewards of time spent here. Savary's natural history is fascinating, and its sand beaches play a prominent role. In fact, apart from a few rock outcrops, the whole island is made of sand. Savary was a prominent sand pile in the Georgia basin well before the last ice age. Since

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Gray Creek Logging

decided to "press the issue" with government over whose rights will prevail in the drinking watersheds. The Community Forest board of directors clearly believes it has the prerogative to authorize logging in the drinking watersheds with or without the agreement of the Sechelt First Nation or the Sunshine Coast Regional District.

The JWMA was signed on October 1, 2005. It states that the parties agree to assume authority over the Chapman and Gray watersheds for the purpose of protecting the public's drinking water. The chief and council members of the Sechelt Nation signed the joint accord, as did representatives of the town of Gibsons, the district of Sechelt and each rural area in the Sunshine Coast Regional District. A management committee implements the agreement. Sechelt Mayor Darren Inkster is a member of that committee.

"Of course, the current district of Sechelt administration would not allow logging in the Gray Creek watershed."

Sechelt Mayor Darren Inkster,
October 2010

The district of Sechelt owns the Community Forest. Nevertheless, its own corporate officer and member of the Community Forest board of directors has dismissed the JWMA as a "regional" document that does not constrain the municipality. As far as we know, Mayor Inkster and Sechelt council have not directed the Community Forest to stay out of the Gray drinking watershed or comply with the direction set by the JWMA. "Of course," Mayor Inkster stated in a recent interview, "the current district of Sechelt administration would not allow logging in the Gray Creek watershed."

The SCCA supports the JWMA and the right of the public to protect source areas of community water supply. We encourage the district to formally resolve these Gray Creek logging issues in an open and transparent way.

Gray and Chapman creeks both flow



Gray Creek is the Sunshine Coast's backup drinking water source. Tella Sametz photos

from conjoined headwaters in Tetrahedron Provincial Park and are both diverted into the regional water system, which serves about 23,000 Sunshine Coast residents.

The Community Forest is hosting a

public meeting at Sechelt's Seaside Centre on October 21 at 7 pm. We encourage the public to make their concerns known to the Community Forest and to the mayor and council of the district of Sechelt.

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Saving Savary Island

the end of glaciation 11,000 years ago, its landscape has changed due to erosion and sand dune development.

At present, a distinctive area of forested dunes is found in the centre of the island. This highly unusual landscape is located within the coastal Douglas fir biogeoclimatic zone—the most threatened zone in the province. The forested dunes give way to more open dunes closer to the seashore and then flatten out to wide sandy beaches. It is the nature of dunes that they are originally shaped by forceful winds, and the Savary woodlands are characterized by distinct linear ridges that trend from northwest to southeast. It is a curious, almost haunting sight to look across the understorey of a mature coniferous forest and notice that the ground is a series of undulating waves, originally sculpted by the wind perhaps centuries ago. This part of the island is still unpopulated and remains an intact ecosystem—an incomparable environmentally sensitive area. The land contains rare and endangered plants and plant communities.

Yet a dark cloud hangs over the future of this marvelous Sunshine Coast landmark. The largest intact section of the dune topography is within a specific 133-hectare parcel of land (DL 1375). The lot spans the full width of the narrow island and includes both south and north-facing shorelines. In 1981 this property was purchased by two individuals from Washington state who had vacationed on Savary for years. The partners, each of whom owned an undivided 50 per cent share, planned to subdivide the land into as many as 90 lots. Local residents, realizing that an exceptional environment would be lost if development occurred,

the Trust with assistance from both the provincial and federal governments. This was a calculated risk, because the other owner, Roger Sahlin, claimed that he had no advance notice of the sale and has since turned down market-value buyout offers by the conservation groups.

Sahlin has not abandoned his intention to partition the prop-



erty for development, and to exercise that right he took the issue to court—and won. Justice Eric Rice ordered Sahlin's property to be subdivided into eight lots. This judgement completely bypassed a normal subdivision application process, whereby an approving officer in the Ministry of Transportation must consider environmental factors and community impact—a statutory procedure designed to protect the public interest. Because the

court's partition order excluded this consideration, there are reasonable grounds to expect that an appeal by the Nature Trust of BC, in partnership with the Savary Island Land Trust, would be successful. Conservation advocates are hoping the court will resolve the dispute by ordering the sale of the entire acreage, thus providing an opportunity for the Nature Trust or some other conservation entity to preserve the dunes permanently.

How will this high-stakes gamble be resolved? Will history and fate take a turn that further increases the number of houses and residents

crowding out the last pocket of wilderness on the island? Or will the conservation community be celebrating a hard-won victory that might even spur an extension of the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve to this northern outpost?



Savary Island's unusual forested dune ecosystem is currently at the centre of preservation efforts by the Nature Trust of BC and the Savary Island Land Trust.

David Moore photos

established the Savary Island Land Trust Society (SILT) in 1997 and began to look for ways to preserve this area as a national treasure. SILT approached the Nature Trust of BC for help, and in 2002 David Syre, one of the private owners, sold his half to

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Emanuel Machado

“For local governments,” he says, “sustainability is about the integration . . . of our decision-making processes by giving the same value to social, environmental and cultural concerns as we do to economic ones. There is also a need to integrate our plans, policies and initiatives to ensure they are aligned and leading towards a common vision. Most importantly, we need to integrate our human resources, which is something organizations of all sizes struggle with.”

In 1990, Machado’s family emigrated from the Azores islands to Kingston, Ontario. Emanuel, whose background is in business and management, came to Vancouver in 1996. Three years later he and his wife Christabelle moved to the Peace region, where



he began working in local government. While at Dawson Creek he was responsible for two personal and ten corporate awards for planning, innovation and environmental protection.

According to Machado there are five major steps involved in the creation of a sustainability plan: defining or redefining a common vision; adopting a framework for decision making; creating an inventory or baseline to help understand the current level of sustainability; developing and implementing strategies and actions in areas that local government focuses on; and, finally, coming up with a series of indicators to help measure progress over time.

In Sechelt, Machado is also working on other initiatives: “We started the development of a shoreline protection strategy. We want to know more precisely how the shoreline is being impacted, and how we can best plan to reduce those impacts in the future. There is a mix of engineered retaining walls and natural ‘green shores,’ and a baseline assessment of the existing infrastructure will inform our course of action in terms of repairs to damaged areas such as the Trail Bay boulevard.

“The other project we started is the development of an urban forestry plan. Many communities plant trees for beautification purposes. Increasingly, there is recognition of the value of our forests, in particular the role they play in helping us deal with climate change—benefits such as regulation of temperature, protection from weather, stormwater retention, recreation, etc. We want to know if our current tree coverage is adequate. What kind of trees are we planting now and how will they survive in 20, 50 or 100 years? In the end, the plan will provide direction to the parks

staff on how to best manage the urban forests within Sechelt.”

Currently Machado is reviewing all of Sechelt’s plans, policies and initiatives that deal with land use, transportation, energy, water, social and cultural issues, green space, public infrastructure, economic development, civic governance, food and climate change. He is also responsible for parks. In the course of his review, he will be looking to answer three questions: why is this important? where are we now? what do we need to do to change?

Of course, many areas under review, such as water and transportation, are regional in nature. But that, says Machado, should not prevent the district aligning local policies and plans to ensure sustainability on a regional scale. A citizens’ advisory committee is being planned to support this process.

The district of Sechelt is also working towards carbon neutral-



Tella Sametz photos

ity in its municipal operations. Machado is looking at how we use energy, at its associated costs and at such environmental impacts as greenhouse gases. A plan dealing with these issues is expected to be adopted by council in the fall.

Sechelt has partnered with the Sunshine Coast Regional District in the development of a community energy and emissions plan, which looks at regional energy consumption and recommends strategies to reduce overall emissions and costs. The Sunshine Coast spends more than \$100 million a year on energy. With proper planning, a percentage of that power could be produced locally. Sechelt, for instance, is offering a solar thermal systems program for installers to increase local capacity and create jobs in an emerging technology.

We are, Machado acknowledges, far behind Europe when it comes to alternative energy strategies. “Self-sufficiency is an European priority. We have the natural resources and they don’t. They are importers and therefore have to explore alternatives. Most countries in Europe already produce a large amount of their energy from renewable sources. We should be exploring tidal, solar and wind power. Innovation should be more encouraged.

“This community has tremendous potential to achieve sustainability. We have a great geographic location, wealth, knowledge, a diversified economy. We are moving from resource extraction to a service-based community. First we need to recapture the vision. Set goals and strategies in each area and align our strategies. We need to balance our planning and our doing. In many cases we know what we need to do. But are we willing to make the changes necessary? That is the question.”

Major gravel mining and crushing operation proposed for Howe Sd

by members of the Future of Howe Sound Society

A large-scale gravel mining and crushing development has been proposed on the Sunshine Coast by Burnco Rock Products Ltd. The site is in the McNab Creek valley, on the west side of Howe Sound, across Thornborough Channel from Gambier Island.

The proposed mine is significant in scope. Current estimates suggest an initial extraction of 400,000 tonnes per annum, spiking to 4 million tonnes at peak, for a duration of 20 to 30 years. The pit would be located 300 metres from the shoreline, very close to McNab Creek, a salmon-bearing stream. To process the gravel a crushing facility is required onsite, and a new barge dock would have to be built to enable the movement of the crushed gravel to the Burnco ready-mix concrete plants in south Burnaby and Port Kells.

In the first phase of the extraction a 77-hectare pit would be mined, with further phases expanding this footprint. An additional 10 hectares are needed for the crushing facility. The construction of the barge facility will necessitate driving pilings into the foreshore and intertidal area and will include a conveyor system to move the gravel. The loading capacity is projected to be 1,000 tonnes per hour and the system will run 300 days a year. Barges will be 50 percent longer than the typical coastal barge and capable of carrying more than twice the normal weight.



Looking up McNab Valley from Howe Sound. Jeff Gau photo

In addition to the obvious visual impact of a mining operation, potential environmental degradations include a negative effect on groundwater, damage to the McNab estuary and to fish stocks, and noise pollution from an operation running nearly full-time. The increase in barge traffic and the construction of the loading facility will potentially have a negative impact on marine-based wildlife (which has seen a recovery in this area in recent years).

While McNab Valley may seem to be a small, isolated corner of Howe Sound, tucked away out of the view of most people, the sound itself is an area of great natural beauty, encompassing several municipal boundaries. There is no long-term integrated plan for land management around Howe Sound; it relies instead on a patchwork approach from different government bodies.

There is a need to encourage communication and co-operation between these bodies in order to develop a regional vision

for Howe Sound. Local communities must be included in this evolution as well.

To try and encourage the process a new group has been formed. The Future of Howe Sound Society is a not-for-profit organization with the objective of developing an integrated, sustainable planning approach for Howe Sound. Part of this goal is to ensure that the preservation of the sound's environment as a whole is considered when development proposals are put forward. In addition, the society seeks to act as a liaison between the various Howe Sound community interests and appropriate government and regulatory bodies.

Howe Sound is still recovering from a legacy of industrial misuse, including mining. The recent sightings of whales and porpoises in the area are testament to the ongoing recovery. Increased industrial usage of Howe Sound should only be considered carefully, with a long-term view to social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Logging begins on Elphinstone with BC Timber Sales Contract

by Renee Switzer-Guarino

BC Timber Sales (BCTS), a provincial government agency, has granted a contract to log Timber Sale A71827, and as of October 2010 logging had begun. This cutblock, in the Elphinstone area, spans Robinson Brook, Clough Creek and two tributaries going into Malcolm Creek.

Some of these waterways have no buffer zones, and stream crossings appear to be permitted on the BCTS site map. There are many downstream water users on the creeks, with water licences and/or private wells, who have no other access to regional water. Water protection is not guaranteed for these users. *The Forest and Range Practices Act*, which lays out rules regarding logging in BC, only obliges industry to protect water quality in "community watersheds"—and there are no community watersheds on Elphinstone. This lack of protection makes it all the more important to speak out about the threat to the area's sole water supply.

The impact of logging in an area like Elphinstone is significant. There seems to be no protection or provision for wildlife corridors, or for old growth/veteran trees located in the areas designated for roads. There are also sensitive wetlands with flora and fauna that need protection.

If you feel strongly that creeks carrying community drinking water need greater protection, please take action now by writing to the minister of forests and to our MLA.

Honourable Pat Bell, Minister of Forests and Range
PO Box 9049, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Fax: 250 387-1040 Email: pat.bell.mla@leg.bc.ca

Nicholas Simons MLA, Powell River–Sunshine Coast
Room 201, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Fax: 250-387-1040 Email: nicholas.simons.mla@leg.bc.ca

Tell those in power that no environmental assessment has been made on the impact to community water sources, and that we need to put a hold on logging around the creeks. Send a copy of your letter to the Elphinstone Forest and Water Ad-hoc Community Group at cottagealsole@yahoo.ca.

Friends of Davie Bay go to Court over Texada's Latest Mine

by Margot Grant

On July 23, 2010, a delegation went to Texada Island in support of the Friends of Davie Bay. LeHigh Hanson Materials Ltd wants to open a big new quarry on Texada. The Friends have filed a court challenge. They want a provincial environmental assessment first.



The Friends of Davie Bay and a delegation from the SCCA and Powell River picnic on the proposed site of the new LeHigh quarry. James Mack photo

The case is important for two reasons. Firstly, if the judge rules in favour of the Friends of Davie Bay, it could change the way the provincial government issues mining permits and make it more difficult for projects to be approved without an environmental assessment. Secondly, the most important system of karst caves along the BC coast between Washington and Alaska could have a better chance of protection.

In May 2009, LeHigh applied to open a limestone quarry on 30 hectares of private and Crown land above Davie Bay, on the south side of the island. A 433-metre-long conveyor, seven metres above the ground, would transport the crushed aggregate over the causeway and island in Davie Bay to a barge-loading facility. The ramp would extend 15 metres beyond the shoreline to enable 10,000-tonne barges, over 100 metres long, to load.

In its application, LeHigh stated that it would not produce more than 240,000 tonnes of aggregate a year. An environmental assessment would automatically be required for annual production over 250,000 tonnes. However, with indicated mining reserves of 100 million tonnes, a quarry size of 75 hectares and a loading ramp capable of processing 2,500 tonnes per hour, the proposed mine would clearly be capable of producing more than a million tonnes a year. A major quarry, in international terms. The mine would only need to operate eight hours a month to produce 240,000 tonnes a year. The Friends of Davie Bay, wondering why LeHigh would propose infrastructure for a million tonnes a year, have asked the judge to require the minister of the environment to order an environmental assessment.

If the judge rules in the group's favour, the province will have to change its procedures. Not only will it have to consider the

stated output of mining operations, but also the proposed production capacity, thus necessitating more environmental assessments. According to Andrew Gage, staff counsel at West Coast Environmental Law, this could affect a number of projects in BC. "Production output of projects is now often tailor-made to avoid environmental assessment. We hope that will change," he says. The firm finds the issue important enough to fund 80 percent of the legal costs, for which the Friends of Davie Bay are grateful.

On our trip to Texada, we saw an eelgrass meadow in the area right beneath where the proposed conveyor would be. Eelgrass beds are protected under the Federal Fisheries Act as a critical fish habitat. Davie Bay is also the centre of a Rockfish Conservation Area.

"We are concerned about Davie Bay being impacted by a loading dock," said John Dove, retired geologist and one of the Friends of Davie Bay. "An operating quarry produces an awful lot of dust. We anticipate that it will result in quite a lot of limestone dust and particulate matter ending up in the ocean."

The proposed quarry is in the middle of a sensitive karst area. Directly north of the site are known underground water courses and caves. And directly south are Stromberg Creek, Stromberg Falls and the most important cave entrance. During our visit, we saw water trickling from the cave entrance. "We are very much concerned about the effect of a quarry on water systems and caves," Dove said. Caves and waterways in karst systems are usually connected. The area around the quarry site has not been assessed. Only part of the caves has been explored. However,

based on what little is known, experts already call the caves "the most important ones between Seattle and Prince Rupert," with stalactites of record length for BC and many other unique features. The Friends of Davie Bay fear that blasting will damage the frag-



Cave entrance in sensitive karst area.

Tella Sametz photo

ile calcite formations and affect biodiversity. The perennial cave streams feed fish-bearing waterways below.

In response to the court challenge by the Friends of Davie Bay, the office of the attorney general and LeHigh Hanson Materials Ltd have filed lengthy affidavits in the third week of September 2010. Legal counsel for the Friends of Davie Bay are still analyzing the material. More information will become available at daviebay.com.

Introducing British Columbia's Amazing Glass Sponge Reefs

by Andrew Scott and David Moul

About 20 years ago scientists from the Geological Survey of Canada were astonished to discover vast reefs, formed by colonies of hexactinellid glass sponges, growing deep in Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound off the north BC coast. Individual glass sponges are nothing unusual, but these great creations, up to seven kilometres long and 20 metres high, and found as deep as 250 metres, were an extraordinary sight. Sponge reefs were common on Earth millions of years ago but were only known from fossil records. For paleontologists, the find was akin to running across a herd of apatosauruses in an unexplored corner of the Amazon.

Manfred Krautter of the University of Stuttgart, an expert on Europe's extensive fossil sponge reefs, called these living fossils "one of the most exciting and important scientific discoveries in the world." Environmental alarm bells started ringing at the same time, because the BC reefs, made of delicate accretions of silicon and up to 9,000 years old, are extremely fragile. In fact, half the reefs identified since the late 1980s may already have been damaged by bottom trawlers. In this fishery—a national disgrace, if there ever was one—heavy nets are dragged across the ocean floor, indiscriminately killing all types of species and causing untold damage to marine habitat. In the summer of 2002, fishing closures were announced for the four main northern reef complexes, but it has taken another eight years of study—plus lobbying by conservation groups—for Fisheries and Oceans Canada to earlier this year declare the reefs an "area of interest." This allows for temporary protection and is the first step in establishing Marine Protected Areas.

Now sponge reefs have been discovered in the southern Strait of Georgia. Recent surveys using multibeam bathymetry, a digital technology that collects broad "swaths" of underwater data and is revolutionizing ocean exploration, have identified several reef complexes. Two are located just off the Sunshine Coast (one off Roberts Creek and the other on McCall Bank, west of Sechart). Georgia Strait's reefs are found in slightly shallower waters (90 to 210 metres deep), grow to 14 metres in height, and cover four square kilometres (individual reefs average two to 10 hectares in area). They are also a different shape than their northern siblings. Scientists from Sidney's Pacific Geoscience Centre describe them as streamlined "wave-form" mounds, while many of the northern reefs are considered more "sheet-like" in formation. Sadly, some of the southern reef complexes appears to have suffered massive damage, probably from trawl fishing.

The sponge reefs were explored from Canadian Coast Guard vessels, using both remote-operated and manned submersibles, sidescan sonar, seismic profilers and the new multibeam technology. The resulting images reveal an eerie, ethereal submarine world. Individual glass sponges, which can grow to several

metres, have a delicate beauty. Mostly white or yellow, they form unusual funnel, cup and tubular shapes with strange fingerlike protrusions. They differ from other sponges in that their skeletons remain intact after death, contributing to the ongoing creation of a structure that becomes larger and more complex as new animals cling to old. If undisturbed, individual sponges can live more than two centuries; however, because of their extreme fragility they are easily destroyed. Commercial and sport fisheries drop trap lines on the reefs and drag trawl nets and downrigger "cannonball" weights through them. Some damaged reefs never recover; others take decades to regenerate.

Coral reefs provide vital habitat for thousands of marine species, and scientists suspect that sponge reefs do the same. Complex organic structures are scarce in the deep sea. Sponges, by increasing the complexity and range of available microhabitats, may ultimately enhance the biodiversity of deep waters. Preliminary findings indicate that glass sponge reefs provide refuge, local food webs and nursery grounds for a range of species, including other sponges, worms, shellfish, bivalves and



A rockfish in its sponge reef habitat.

CPAWS photo

diverse fish species—particularly rockfish. The reefs are only known to exist in Hecate Strait, Queen Charlotte Sound and the southern Strait of Georgia. They have not been found anywhere else in the world. Permanent protection for these unique structures seems a no-brainer. They have already been nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status.

The SCCA, working with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and other partners, is endeavouring to build awareness of these treasures and lobby for their protection and careful management. We have introduced Mr Stinky (a recovered glass sponge) to many groups on the BC coast and to various politicians. A petition to protect the Georgia Strait reefs is being circulated. Articles and pictures have appeared in local publications. The support of local governments is being sought; waterfront signage, for instance, could help create interest in these unique lifeforms. The SCCA supports fisheries closures in glass sponge reef zones and recommends that reefs be surveyed and entered on maps and charts as areas to be avoided.

Public Position Clear on Future of Gospel Rock Waterfront

by Daniel Bouman

Summer and fall have been very busy for the Friends of Gospel Rock Society (FGRS). A public meeting was held on June 28 for people to consider the latest version of the Gospel Rock Neighborhood Plan (GRNP). About 300 people gathered and were loud and clear that protection of the entire waterfront is the only acceptable option. Not a single speaker supported development of the waterfront for housing. Various other environmental aspects of the plan also came in for strong criticism.

The next day, the GRNP Refinement Working Committee (RWC) met to review the results of the meeting. This committee is composed of the mayor of Gibsons, one councillor, the town's development consultant, town staff and the property owners' representative. After some discussion, the committee decided to investigate the possibility of buying the parts of the waterfront that were to be zoned for housing. The SCCA and the FGRS responded with a letter offering to assist the town and the property owners in pursuing this new



View from the "Little Africa" area above Gospel Rock.
Alan Sirulnikoff photo

direction. Our letter also supported higher-density housing in some parts of the planning area if this results in greater protection for natural areas.

Unfortunately, at the RWC meeting on September 21, the owners proposed to delete two hectares of green space, reduce the wildlife corridor from 50 to 30 metres, build an access road through the corridor and raise the number of housing units to more than 800. The town of Gibsons has also taken the position that the purchase of the waterfront property is a private matter between the owners and conservationists. In our view, a positive direction is readily available for all. However, the RWC, which lacks public representation, has lost its capacity to move forward. We believe that the town needs to be actively engaged in negotiating a successful outcome.

Meanwhile, people are pressing forward with their own vision for Gospel Rock. A new video production about the area from songwriter Loretta Macklam and filmmaker Ben Ged Low—entitled "Forever Lost?"—was launched in Gibsons on September 25. It is receiving rave reviews and circulating widely. Check the SCCA website for this video and for regular updates about Gospel Rock.

Some Useful Internet Links

Powell River Water Watch is a coalition of local groups that opposes the privatization of the city's liquid waste-treatment facility. To learn more about this and related issues, go to prwaterwatch.wordpress.com

Powell River's new Sustainability Charter can be downloaded from the district's homepage at www.powellriverrd.bc.ca

For more on Texada Island's mining situation, visit the Friends of Davie Bay website at daviebay.com

For more on Savary Island's threatened dune ecosystems, go to the Savary Island Land Trust Society website at www.silts.ca

Check out www.sustainable sunshinecoast.com, a new website with a lot of great information on sustainability

A Message from the SCCA Chair

by Jason Herz

Many of you have probably noticed the recent rash of articles in the mainstream media about Canadian charities spending huge amounts of money on fundraising contractors. Many of us were a bit irritated by this because very few of Canada's tens of thousands of charities use professional fundraisers or spend excessively on fundraising. The truth is that most charities are underfunded and struggle to pursue their mandates with the help of volunteers and small amounts of cash, as we do.

Just for the record, our main fundraiser each

year is the Celebration of Conservation (coming up on November 13). Please join us! Throughout the year we also get a number of unsolicited but much-appreciated donations, which really makes going to the mailbox fun! The grants we apply for typically require matching funding, so your donations increase our ability to attract revenue from foundations and other sources. Many funders recognize volunteer hours as "donations-in-kind" for matching funding, so the time you spend helping us can thus become doubly valuable.

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Plutonic IPP Results in Loss of Powell River Outdoor Access

by Daniel Bouman

During the approval process for the East Toba Montrose Creek hydropower project in Toba Inlet, Plutonic Power officials offered Powell River residents enhanced backcountry access opportunities. Outdoor recreation plays a major role in Powell River's sustainable economy, providing benefits to residents and tourists alike. Now that the Toba/Montrose project is nearly complete, a different story about recreational access is emerging.

Late last year, Plutonic provoked a public outcry when it began deactivating resource roads that had been used to build the transmission line. In many cases, these were roads that the public had been using for years to get into the backcountry around Powell River. Even major access points to the famous Sunshine Coast Trail were affected.

The Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society (PRPAWS) responded by convening a backcountry access roundtable, with representation from regional government, logging companies, user groups, environmental organizations and provincial agencies. MLA Nicholas Simons also attended. Under the able direction of Powell River Regional District chair Colin Palmer, the roundtable met frequently through the winter of 2009/10 and into the spring. Almost all parties contributed to developing workable solutions. However, according to an October 4 press release from PRPAWS, Plutonic has again not followed through with its commitments. Now additional recreational access has been lost.

A solution may require the intervention of the province. At last weeks UBCM conference, Premier Gordon Campbell

announced that "the province will develop a practical and cost-effective program that will help stop the unabated decommissioning of resource roads so that citizens can continue to safely use them as links to the backcountry."

The access problem has its roots in the BC environmental assessment process that Plutonic went through in order to gain the right to begin construction. In this process Plutonic was only required to produce a "recreational access management plan" just before the project was completed, rather than at the beginning of the process, when the public might have been able to provide input. "We would have known then how inadequate the



An example of Plutonic's road deactivation on Mount Troubridge.

Eagle Walz photo

plan was," said PRPAWS chair Eagle Walz, "and could have begun to address the access issues then." On the subject of community benefits from IPP development, Walz offers this advice: "Get it in writing."

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Of course, the real question is: what do we actually do with money donated to the SCCA? To start with, we do have some administrative costs, because we must meet the Canada Revenue Agency's stringent spending and accounting requirements. Secondly, we assist others wishing to pursue their environmental goals and help them respond to emergencies. What to do when a giant multinational sets up camp in a nearby vital ecosystem? Give us a call; we work with individuals and groups to develop strategies, get technical and legal aid, use the Freedom of Information system, participate in public processes, publish, communicate and more.

Another important SCCA activity fits under the heading of "acting as a liaison." We work to give conservation a public

voice, speaking to local, regional, provincial and even federal governments. The SCCA typically participates in land use processes, environmental assessments, reviews of new legislation and the like. And then there's our "watchdog" role; we've been before the courts and in quasi-judicial venues quite a few times now. We have the support and expertise required to effectively hold decision-makers accountable, if necessary. Finally, we work to protect lands and waters with significant biodiversity values.

It all boils down to this: the SCCA exists because you and other concerned members of the public support it. As long as this is the case, we will continue the work of protecting biodiversity.

We also like to put on a darned good party every once in a while! And on that note we hope to see you all in Sechelt on November 13 at the annual Celebration of Conservation. Entry is by donation at the door.

Third Annual Environmental Film Festival

In conjunction with the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, One Straw Society and St Hilda's Anglican Church, the Gibsons United Church Green Team is pleased to announce the program for our third annual Environmental Film Festival, "One Can Make a Difference." This year, we have expanded our sponsorships and venues.

On Friday, November 5, *Gasland* will show at 7 pm at the Gibsons Heritage Playhouse. This documentary, directed by Josh Fox, explores the dire consequences of hydraulic fracturing, the drilling technology developed by Haliburton to exploit natural gas reserves. This could very well be the next big environmental issue. The film is being screened around the province and will be introduced by Karen Campbell of the Pembina Institute, who will facilitate discussion afterwards. Tickets for the event \$10 and may be purchased at Gaia's in Gibsons, Windsong in Sechelt or at the door.

On Saturday, November 6, attend one or all of the events! Saturday morning will be a screening of

King Corn, directed by Aaron Woolf, at 10 am at Gibsons United Church. This is a humorous documentary about the history of corn in America and how it has made its way into almost all of the products in our grocery stores. Admission by donation.

Also at Gibsons United Church—and back by popular demand—is the highly popular *Eat Local Lunch* at 12 noon, Saturday. Capably catered by Yvette Nelson, local produce will be featured, included wild sockeye salmon. Tickets for this event are \$12 at Gaia's, Windsong in Sechelt or at the door. Luncheon speaker Dave Ryan of Gumboot Gardens will talk about how much land is needed to feed our local population.



Sunshine Coast
Conservation Association

Come join us as we celebrate another year in the ongoing campaign to preserve our precious environment.

Celebration of Conservation

Silent Auction & Dance
Music by Sweet Cascadia
Wonderful Food • Cash Bar

Get in the spirit of the season, dance, enjoy yummy finger foods, with cash bar, door prizes, and bid on fabulous items at our silent auction.

Everyone
welcome!

Entry **by
donation** at
the door.



Saturday, November 13/10

7 pm Sechelt Senior's Centre
Trail Ave and Medusa St

www.thescca.ca

Attendees will have the chance to check out our environmental trade show, set up in the hall, which will be jam-packed with great displays. An afternoon program of short documentaries will be screened at Gibsons United Church.

In the evening, the action moves to St Hilda's Church in Sechelt with a screening of the documentary *Fresh*, directed by Ana Sofia Joanes, at 7 pm. *Fresh* celebrates the farmers, thinkers and business people who are re-inventing our food system after witnessing the terrible consequences of the industrial model in use for some years now. It offers a re-*Fresh*-ing vision for our food future. Admission is by donation.

Environmental Assessments: The Executive Director's Report

by Daniel Bouman

As regular visitors to our website are aware, the SCCA is frequently engaged in environmental assessment (EA) processes which, if properly carried out, are a key tool for protecting biodiversity and achieving sustainability. Right now there are three situations in our region that involve environmental assessment. The Burnco mining application at McNab Creek is up for a federal EA. The Stl'ixwim hydroelectric project at the head of Narrows Inlet is currently in a provincial EA process. And Lehigh's Davie Bay limestone mining project on Texada Island will, thanks to the Friends of Davie Bay, be the subject of a judicial review in the BC Supreme Court to determine whether or not a provincial EA is required. The SCCA will participate in the first two EAs and, if the Texada case is successful, we'll take part in that one as well. This is how life gets too busy around here!

Environmental assessment is about determining what the environmental impacts of a given project might be, what can be done to reduce those impacts and, ultimately, whether or not the potential benefits of a project outweigh its negative impacts.

Both the province of BC and the government of Canada have EA legislation. The provincial Environmental Assessment Act was gutted in 2003. It now lacks scientific independence and, in my opinion, functions as an instrument for promoting government policy. The province has made the conditions that trigger the assessment process more stringent, which means that fewer projects will be assessed. There are four different types of federal EAs: screenings, mediations, comprehensive studies and review panels. The last two are much more onerous and effective exercises than provincial EAs. If citizens raise concerns, there is a high probability that the federal process will fairly assess those concerns before making a recommendation on the project. Unfortunately, the federal government is also raising its EA "trigger" threshold and narrowing the scope of its EA processes.

The situation at Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) in BC's western Chilcotin gives a good example of the difference between the two approaches. The Taseko Mining Co has proposed a

"prosperity project" for the region and plans to use Teztan Biny as storage for mine tailings. The lake has 25,000 trout in it that would not survive. The project sailed through the BC assessment without a hitch, received an environmental certificate and the full support of the provincial government. However, it was also subject to a federal full review panel. The panel found the environmental impacts to be far greater than the potential benefits. It also determined that the impacts to First Nations were too extreme to tolerate. The panel has recommended that the federal government not allow the project to go forward. We will have to wait for government to make the final decision, but the implication is pretty clear that a project with a strong business case will have few problems getting by the provincial EA process.

Lately I've been hearing a lot of very alarming talk about harmonizing federal and provincial EA processes. To me, what this indicates is that industrial interests are organizing to get the federal process reduced to the vastly inferior standards of the provincial assessment. In fact there was a motion to this effect



ED Bouman contemplates a busy season of EAs.

Rosi Hunter photo

before the Union of BC Municipalities convention during the last week of September. I am pleased to report that BC's elected regional and municipal officials voted the motion down by a large margin. Of course, what we really need is to have the provincial environmental assessment standards dramatically raised. Hope springs eternal! We'll keep you posted.

Thank You to All our Volunteers!

The directors of the SCCA really value our volunteers! In July we held a "Friends of the SCCA" appreciation party at the Sechelt Arts Centre, preceded by a public event featuring Dr Jim Pawley. His talk was on climate change, especially its implications for the environment and people of the Arctic.

If you're interested in getting more involved with the work of the SCCA, please contact membership chair Gayle Neilson at glnilson@gmail.com. We'd enjoy some assistance with the November 13 Celebration of Conservation. Volunteers could

make finger food, sell 50/50 tickets, work the bar, auction or door, and take shifts in the kitchen or serving folks. If you'd like to help solicit auction items, please get details from Jason Herz at hertiger@dccnet.com.

We're also looking for members to sit on our fundraising, membership, publicity and events committees, to work on our website and newsletter, to assist with research and campaign organization, and to staff our information booth. Do you have a specific area of professional expertise that might help advance our goals? Please let us know! — Marianne Larsen

Published by the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Box 1969, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0

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Tella Sametz, Janice Talbott, Linda Williams

Executive Director: Daniel Bouman

For more information about the SCCA and to view this newsletter online (in colour), please visit our website at: www.thescca.ca



Grey whales on Sunshine Coast! For details, go to Sargeant Bay Society website at www.sargbay.ca (under marine life). *Tella Sametz photo*

Member Organizations:

- Association for Responsible Shellfish Farming
- BC Spaces for Nature
- Committee for Protection of Jefferd Creek Watershed
- Council of Senior Citizens Organization
- East Porpoise Bay Ratepayer's Association
- Eco-Care Conservancy of Powell River
- Elphinstone Living Forest
- Friends of Caren
- Friends of Gospel Rock Society
- Friends of Homesite Creek
- Friends of Stillwater Bluffs
- Gambier Island Conservancy
- Gibsons United Church Social and Environmental Justice Team
- One Straw Society



- Pender Harbour and District Wildlife Society
- Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society
- St Hilda's by the Sea
- Sandy Hook Community Association
- Sargeant Bay Society
- Savary Island Land Trust Society
- Sechelt Village Residents Association
- Sunflower Utopia
- Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society
- Sunshine Coast Natural History Society
- Sunshine Coast Water First Society
- Sunshine Heights Owners and Residents Association
- Tetrahedron Alliance
- Tuwanek Ratepayers Association
- West Sechelt Community Association

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Individual name: _____

Individual membership: \$20

Other family members: _____

Family membership: \$30

Group or business name: _____

Group membership: \$30

Mailing address: _____

Business membership: \$100

Additional donation: \$ _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Website: _____

I prefer to receive newsletters by regular mail. (Unless specified, newsletters and other information will be sent by email.)

The purpose of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) is to preserve the natural biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast region for the present and future benefit of humanity and all life.

As a member of the SCCA, I accept its purpose as stated above.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please mail cheque or money order with this completed application to: SCCA, Box 1969, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0

Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for donations of \$25 or more. Registered charity #87322 0446 RR0001