



Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Newsletter Issue 5

PO Box 1969, Sechelt, BC, V0N 3A0; www.thesc.ca

July 2002

Malaspina Peninsula's Ecological Treasures in Need of Our Help

by Maria Hunter

"Sustainable development = parallel care and respect for people and the environment" — Anthony Hodge

Dinner Rock Park, Powell River Greenways Corridor and Atravida Loop are three of the ecological treasures found on the Malaspina Peninsula, just north of Powell River at the top of the Sunshine Coast. These features, and the forested ecosystems that surround them, provide many benefits to residents, including recreation, alternate transportation, water filtration and wildlife habitat. They also represent an incredible

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Dinner Rock recreation site, with the plaque commemorating the wreck of the Gulf Stream. Dinner Rock itself is in the background. Andrew Scott photo

Ambrose Lake Watershed to be Logged?

by John Field

The Sunshine Coast's only ecological reserve, at Ambrose Lake on the northern Sechelt Peninsula, is threatened by a new proposal to log a large area immediately adjacent to it. The cutblock recently laid out by Interfor lies mostly within the lake's watershed and appears to target areas of mature forest and patches of old growth right against much of the reserve's northern boundary. This is the same area that faced a similar threat more than 10 years ago, and the Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society, a member group of the SCCA, successfully argued then that logging could not be done without affecting the reserve.

Ecological reserves enjoy the strongest protection of all conservation areas,

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Results-Based Code Reveals Forest Privatization Agenda

by Colin Campbell

Since the Ministry of Forests released its discussion paper entitled *A Results-Based Forest and Range Practices Regime for British Columbia* on May 1, 2002, there has been a profoundly thoughtful body of response from industry, academia and the environmental movement (for details, see www.resultsbasedcode.ca). Despite obviously different agendas, there is interesting overlap in criticism between stakeholder groups. What is really striking is what is missing, namely a recognition of the true implications of the softwood issue, and what is obscure, namely the government's incompletely declared privatization agenda.

A brief prepared by the BC Government and Service Employees' Union reveals the context of privatization intended for all future resource management in the province. It does this by reviewing four policy documents addressing Sustainable Resource Management Planning, the Working Forest, the Forest Investment Account and Sustainability Principles for Resource Management. It is revealing that the sustainability principles presented to Open Cabinet on May 21 exclude any reference to ecological limits and community well-being. They are selected solely to encourage economically effective governance. The list of principles says it all: integration, shared responsibility, accountability, efficiency, science-based decision-making, transparency, innovation, continuous improvement, competitiveness and certainty. No equity, precaution, community participation or conservation mentioned. Talk about stunningly blatant greenwash!

Sustainable Resource Management Planning (SRMP) is described up front as "generally a more technical, design-oriented process, not a consensus-based process," the latter unnecessary because "government has already made most of the broad social choices through previously approved

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Ambrose Lake Watershed Threatened

even stronger than Class A provincial parks. They are usually created for the perpetual protection of examples of ecosystems in their natural, undisturbed state, and as such are for the plants and creatures that live there, not for the enjoyment of humans. The only allowed uses are related to non-intrusive scientific investigation and education. A permit from the Parks Branch is techni-



The Ambrose Lake Ecological Reserve, BC's finest example of a coastal bog ecosystem, is supposedly protected by tough legislation. John Field photo.

cally required to enter an ecological reserve.

Ecological Reserve #28, Ambrose Lake, is one of the province's oldest, created in 1971 to preserve a small coastal lake, adjacent bogland and surrounding forest. The lake and sphagnum bog ecosystems are in near-pristine, climax state. They are characteristically acidic and nutrient-poor, and as a result are unusually sensitive to disturbance. Even something as invisible as an increase in nutrients (due to increased runoff and decreased capture of nutrients by terrestrial plants following logging) would likely alter the chemical balance of the bog. Also likely are elevated summer water temperatures, as well as a change in seasonal runoff patterns, typical after logging because

soils are less able to retain moisture for slow release as groundwater seepage during the dry summer months. A more visible problem is that this area is subject to strong winds, as evidenced by many recently blown-down trees in the forest adjacent to the lake. A fresh edge of non-windfirm trees right along the boundary of the reserve will undoubtedly result in a considerable increase in blowdown within the reserve.

Unfortunately, much of the lake's northern watershed was for some unknown reason left out of the reserve when it was created. In fact, the northern east-west boundary lies so close to the lake that in one place it passes within 60 metres of the sphagnum boglands that surround it. The Pender Harbour Wildlife Society made a formal proposal in 1990 to the then-Socred government to have Crown land in district lots 5399 and 5400 added to the ecological reserve to more adequately protect its vulnerable northern watershed. No formal answer to this proposal was ever received.

What has changed since 1991 that would now allow logging to proceed? And how can it proceed in a way that won't affect the reserve (a legal requirement)? According to a letter from Interfor's area engineer, Jeff Pollock, road-building and logging practices are much better now; also, partial retention methods will be used, rather than clearcut logging. We are asked to accept Interfor's word on this, without any supporting assessments or site studies. The Ministry of Forests has given preliminary approval to the cutblock in principle, again without documentation of Interfor's ability to leave the ecological reserve unaffected. (It has, however, stipulated that Interfor must meet with Parks Branch and wildlife society representatives to address their concerns before a cutting permit can be issued.)

By contrast, there are specific expert opinions written in October, 1991—one by a MoF hydrologist and the other by a forest ecosystem specialist—which clearly support our continued conviction that any human development within the watershed has significant potential to affect Ambrose Lake. Both reports conclude that the best use of the land would be to add it to the ecological reserve. We agree.

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Results-Based Code Agenda Revealed

strategic land-use plans." This "new consolidated approach to planning at the landscape level" will effectively "establish broad provincial Crown land-use zoning and objectives."

Furthermore, the development of SRMPs is intended to be done with partners who contribute financially and take on increasingly more landscape-level planning responsibilities. This is where the "results" in results-based forestry will come from! Clearly, the intention is that decisions over the publicly owned resource base will become the responsibility of the very corporations who exploit them.

Government, in partnership with licencees developing their own sustainable Forest Management Plans, will provide "on-the-ground definition to the Working Forest." Despite sound public rejection of a Working Forest in 2000, the government

plans to hand over responsibility for the collection and analysis of timber supply information and maintenance of forest health to companies with timber harvesting rights. Timber-cutting targets will become inputs to (not outcomes of) SRMPs, in violation of the most elementary notion of ecologically based sustainability. With this strategic shift it is apparent that social, community and environmental concerns have achieved permanent secondary status.

The Forest Investment Account (FIA) replaces Forest Renewal BC with a reduced budget totaling \$146 million, \$80 million of which is to enable licencees to cooperatively develop SRMPs. This blatant financial subsidy will be managed by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, while Forintek Canada Corp will do the same for research, product development and international marketing campaigns. Government staff will have no direct role

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Results-Based Code

in setting priorities, approving projects or certifying satisfactory project completion. It's hard to call this anything other than privatization of public property.

An impressively consistent response has emerged from the environmental movement. The land and its resources are owned by the citizens, including First Nations, not the government. Despite this, the government shows no intention of recognizing the rights of the public to determine the goals of land-use planning. Results clearly favour timber values, and SRMP will favour tourism, settlement and water resources over biodiversity. There is no recognition that the "results" must address improvement in all values. The government appears oblivious to *Haida vs Weyerhaeuser* and the need to consult with First Nations on land-use decisions. Since landscape-level planning has not been completed in any Higher Level Plans, clear, concise, measurable goals cannot yet be established. Any proxy goals with lower generic standards will ensure irreversible damage to forest ecologies. The public is being excluded from any constructive participatory role.

Once corporations take over fundamental management, inventory and monitoring roles, we can be sure that the notion of ownership will flourish in their minds. Any future options

will be constrained by claims for compensation—"after all, we paid for the planning." The real mystery is how such a model can succeed in any sense. Ecologically, it ensures rapid loss of remaining old-growth forests and biodiversity as the AAC is maintained or increased. The wood products of this strategy become pulp and low-grade timber, for which there are already cheap, abundant competitive sources. Many of these strategies will legitimately be called subsidies by the US coalition.

It seems that industry cannot envisage anything except the past, and in this blinkered vision lies economic, social and environmental disaster. Rural resource communities, and many others, want a real voice in the utilization of their common heritage. Log exports, depopulated ghost towns and bankrupted families are one choice; devolving tenure and starting the new wave of truly sustainable forestry is the other. The refusal to perform forest economic calculations on the full spectrum of values hides the potential success of a major shift in policy, tenure structure and product profile, a shift that would restore profitability and engender sustainability. The government will find very little approval for the regime it proposes. How thoroughly it rejects the truncated vision of industry and moves toward genuine restructuring with community and environmental values uppermost will determine if sustainability is truly the goal and the outcome.

Sechelt's Hidden Grove Moves Closer to Park Status

by Andrew Scott

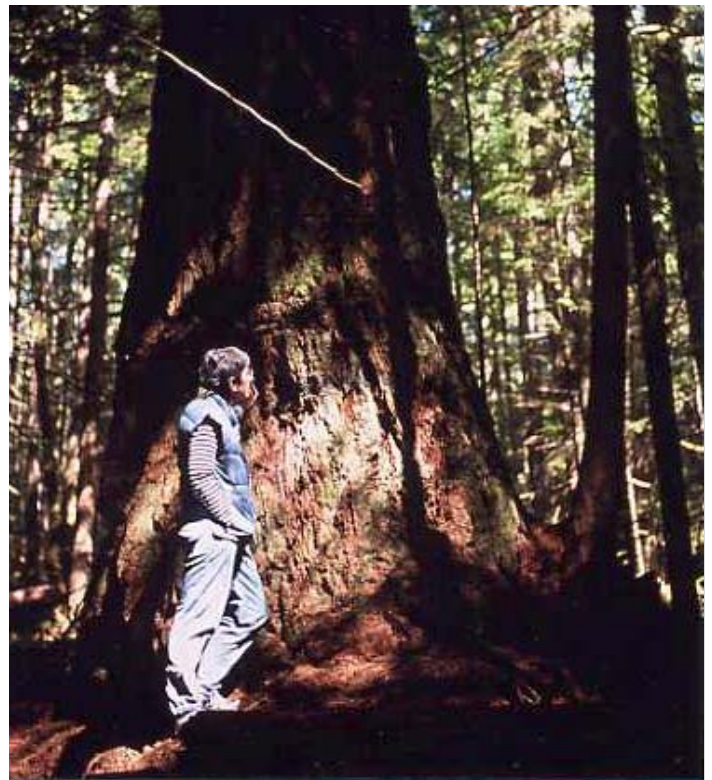
The SCCA has initiated a complaint to the Forest Practices Board asking that Interfor and the Ministry of Forests be directed to update their inventory maps to reflect District of Sechelt boundaries established in 1986. This is important because provincial forest land within a municipality is generally given a special ownership code that removes it from the Annual Allowable Cut.

The complaint originates over a 40-hectare logging plan for Hidden Grove, a forested area with old-growth cedars and Douglas firs adjacent to upper Sandy Hook within Sechelt's municipal boundaries. A popular trail system leads through the forest from Inlet Road to giant trees, a maple wetland and rocky bluffs with views over Porpoise Bay to Sechelt.

In 1994, Interfor intended to log part of the Grove, but its forest development plan was rejected by the Ministry of Forests after protests by District of Sechelt officials. In 1998, the area was reserved for "parks and open space" on Sechelt's official community plan. Two years later, after being advised that their maps were incorrect, Interfor again ignored Sechelt's boundaries to include almost the entire Hidden Grove in their plan as Block 350.

Throughout 2001, SCCA members worked to publicize Hidden Grove, organizing tours for district and industry officials and the public, printing a brochure/map of the area and signposting trails. The Ministry of Forests received more than 125 letters opposing Interfor's plans. The District of Sechelt again requested a ban on cutting, and Interfor changed Block 350 to "information" status.

In March, 2002, Interfor was back with a revised plan



One of Hidden Grove's ancient fir veterans. Andrew Scott photo

that retained 13 percent of the forest for wildlife habitat, trails and old-growth trees but took the same amount of timber from the cutblock. Those who want Hidden Grove preserved in all its biodiversity and added to adjacent Sechelt Heritage Forest, were not impressed. In May, Sechelt council took the first important steps in the planning process to acquire the area for a park under the jurisdiction of the district municipality.

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Malaspina Peninsula's Treasures

opportunity for ecotourism and sustainable development.

Dinner Rock Park is a forest service recreation site where visitors can walk through a rare coastal Douglas fir forest and enjoy a picnic looking out onto Savary Island and historic Dinner Rock, an offshore islet where five lives were lost in the 1947 shipwreck of the *Gulf Stream*. The Greenways Corridor, planned and constructed over a 10-year period to incorporate heritage trails and ecological features, is wheelchair accessible, with no more than a seven-percent grade. This corridor links up to Atrevida Loop trail, adjacent to a delightful guesthouse where visitors can go hiking with pack goats. Residents of the area have taken the initiative to build on this low-impact infrastructure and realize economic benefits based on the sustainable use of the area's resources.

As is the case on the lower Sunshine Coast, timber companies also have chart areas covering most of the Crown lands on the peninsula. When residents realized the scale of proposed and approved timber harvesting in the region, they organized a public response to forest development plans by Canfor and Northwest Hardwoods (a Weyerhaeuser subsidiary). Canfor has incorporated this input and accommodated residents' concerns by temporarily removing a proposed block near Dinner Rock from its plan. At the time of printing, we have not yet heard of similar commitments from Weyerhaeuser/Northwest Hardwoods.

The challenge of sustainable development on the Malaspina Peninsula is the same as it is everywhere: to plan economic activity without degrading the structure and function of the ecosystem. The clearcut logging with reserves that is planned for the area is not compatible with this goal. Residents have been in discussions with representatives from Weyerhaeuser/Northwest Hardwoods to find acceptable methods of harvesting that would protect veteran trees, species at risk habitat, unique ecological features and visual quality, and provide adequate buffer zones.

Two groups are actively working to find solutions for this region: Friends of Dinner Rock and Eco-Care Conservancy of the Powell River Region. The Friends formed in 2002 to seek formal legal protection for the Dinner Rock forest and its immediate surroundings. Eco-Care Conservancy has been active since 1995 in the Powell River area, advocating sustainability through a number of initiatives, including preparation for a Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). Faced with cancellation of the LRMP and the extent of the proposed cutblocks, Eco-Care approached the SCCA for advice and help, as did Friends of Dinner Rock.

Already, public input seems to have produced positive results, and both groups should be congratulated for their efforts. A great deal of work remains to be done, however. With the help of the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI), the habitats of rare and endangered plant communities must be identified and mapped, so that they can be legally protected. Some logging approvals are in treaty settlement lands negotiated as part of the agreement-in-principle between the Sliammon First Nation and the BC government and are

protected by an order-in-council until January, 2003. The legal status of these areas after that date is not clear and requires research. The Forest Practices Board has indicated a willingness to mediate in local issues, if required.

Much is on the drawing board. The SCCA will be supporting Eco-Care and Friends of Dinner Rock as much as possible during the next year. As Patricia Keays of Eco-Care says, "In this crisis we also realize that there is opportunity to reach out and make contact with other groups on the lower Sunshine Coast who are working on similar issues." The SCCA



Fishing from the shoreline at the Dinner Rock recreation area provides fine views over to the resort community of Savary Island. Andrew Scott photo

hopes to combine resources with Eco-Care and Friends of Dinner Rock to access SEI data and document and map both the lower and upper Sunshine Coast concurrently.

How can you help?

Write to our MLA, Harold Long, and Premier Gordon Campbell (see page 6 for addresses). Ask them to protect Dinner Rock, the Greenways and Atrevida Loop—world-class assets that form part of our biodiversity heritage and can contribute to a sustainable economic base for the Sunshine Coast. Ask them to designate Dinner Rock as a park and initiate an LRMP that will provide a fair and adequate plan for the resources of the region.

Donations to the rare and endangered plant communities identification project can be made out and sent to the SCCA to receive an official tax receipt. To donate directly, become a member of Eco-Care or Friends of Dinner Rock, or offer to help in some other way, please contact:

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6848 Courtenay St, Powell River, BC V8A 1X2
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Email: patriciakeays@shaw.ca

Friends of Dinner Rock
C-4, RR #2, Powell River, BC V8A 4Z3

Hikers Haven Bed and Breakfast
Ph: 604-483-4665, Fax: 604-483-2350
Website: www.hikers-haven.com

A Report from the Association's Executive Director

by Daniel Bouman

Good news! The Forest Practices Board has finally released a finding on the "Failure to Protect Biodiversity" complaint filed by the SCCA in March, 2000. Readers will recall that this complaint was discussed in the SCCA newsletter. It was also reported on in the local papers, presented to the SCR D and to numerous government ministers and officials, and circulated around the province. We contended that the district Ministry of Forests office had failed to protect deer and goat winter range, had failed to protect marbled murrelet nesting habitat and had refused to maintain proper old growth inventories. As well, we held that wildlife habitats and old growth areas were being targeted by logging companies.

Here's the essence of the finding. The Forest Practices Board agreed that the Ministry of Forests had unreasonably failed to recognize and "make known" deer and goat winter range in this district. The FPB also agreed that the approval of three Interfor Forest Development Plans was unreasonable, as these plans did not adequately manage and conserve the resource of deer and goat winter range. The board's recommendation is for changes to the Forest Practices Code's *Operational Planning Regulations* to allow Category A approvals in ungulate winter range to be overturned on review by district managers.

On old growth issues, the FPB agreed that this resource has not been adequately managed but did not fault the MoF. Instead the board notes that the code lacks a clear and legal definition of old growth and recommends that government establish one. The investigation did not uncover evidence that logging companies were targeting wildlife habitat and notes that, even if they were, there is no law or regulation against it. (We'll accept this finding with a wink and a nod.) As for the murrelet issues, the investigation concluded that, considering the state of knowledge at the time of the logging approvals and the published intentions of government to resolve the problem, it was reasonable for the MoF to approve Interfor's logging plans. (Since filing this complaint in 2000, we did establish, in the Supreme Court of British Columbia

and through the Administrative Review Panel of the FPB, that the MoF and Interfor broke the law with regard to adequate management of marbled murrelet nesting habitat.)

Of course, the value of the complaint and the finding is not in determining who is right and who is wrong. The point of the exercise is to see progress made in protecting critical habitats and in fostering sustainable practices. In my view the recommendations of the report are all noteworthy and will contribute to a sustainable future for the Sunshine Coast.

I would like to expand on the moral of this story at some later date, but for now I'm pleased and relieved that the outcome is positive and the SCCA's investment of time and resources has been justified. Our method of combining careful research, participation in available public venues and big doses of publicity is slow and labor intensive but seems to work pretty well. I think we should continue with this approach. Meanwhile, the MoF must respond to the FPB regarding the complaint findings and detail the measures that will be undertaken to remedy the situation. You can bet that we will be watching and making responses of our own, if necessary!

You can read the entire decision on the website of the Forest Practices Board at www.fpb.gov.bc.ca or check our website at www.thesc.ca for the official press release.



SCCA executive director Daniel Bouman hands 5,000-signature watershed petition to unenthusiastic MLA Harold Long. *Will Koop photo*

Other Noteworthy News and Events

The SCCA and the Council of Canadians gathered more than 5,000 signatures on a petition opposing logging or mining in the Sunshine Coast watershed. On May 29, Daniel Bouman of the SCCA, Don Murray, chair of the Sunshine Coast Regional District, and Rick August of the Sishalh First Nation (in photo) presented the document to the government representative for the Sunshine Coast, Harold Long. ☺ The Carlson Point Property Owners have succeeded in getting the Ministry of Forests to amend a logging approval on Sechelt Inlet and ban cutting within 100 metres of any intake for their watershed. ☺ Jervis Inlet issues continue to simmer. A "redetermination" process in the Brittain River resulted in interim protection measures being

granted to one of two proposed Wildlife Habitat Areas, pending its official designation. ☺ Executive director Bouman was part of an NDP-sponsored public forum on "Jobs and the Environment" in May. ☺ The first draft of the Sunshine Coast Habitat Atlas (see article in Newsletter #4, February, 2002) is ready for public inspection and comment at local government offices (SCR D, District of Sechelt, Town of Gibsons, Sechelt Indian Government District). The draft can also be viewed on the Internet at www.user.dccnet.com/ctrent. ☺ A new partnership of government agencies and stakeholders, including the SCCA, has been formed to resolve the vital issue of habitat protection for marbled murrelets in the Sunshine Coast Forest District and elsewhere. More on this forum in the next newsletter, plus a report on another initiative, the Eelgrass Conservation Project.

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By calling this toll-free
number you will be connected
by telephone or fax to any
individual or department in
the BC government.

Newsletter of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

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BC Spaces for Nature
Carleson Point Property Owners
Eco-Care Conservancy of the Powell
River Region
Elphinstone Living Forest
Francis Point Marine Park Society

Friends of Caren
Friends of Homesite Creek
Gambier Island Conservancy
Gibsons Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre
Halfmoon Bay Greenways
Native Plant Society of BC,
Sunshine Coast Chapter
One Straw Society

Pender Harbour and District Wildlife Society
Sargeant Bay Society
Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society
Sunshine Coast Natural History Society
Sunshine Coast Species Survival Network
Sunshine Coast Water First Society
Tetrahedron Alliance
Tuwaneke Ratepayers Association

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

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"PURPOSE: 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, workshops and access infrastructure (eg. maps and trails to facilitate 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

Name: _____

Group membership (\$10) _____

Mailing address: _____

• SCCA representative/contact: _____

Phone: _____

• Alternate: _____

Fax number: _____

Affiliate (individual) membership (\$10) _____

Email address: _____

Receive newsletter by email? Yes _____ No _____

Website: _____

\$ _____ Donation

I accept the purpose of the SCCA. Signature: _____ Date _____

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