



Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Newsletter Issue 6

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

December/2002

Eelgrass Stewardship Project Underway on Sunshine Coast

by Dianne Sanford

The BC Coastal Eelgrass Project, sponsored by the SCCA and other groups, is a plan to locate, map and quantify eelgrass beds, and educate the public on their importance. The goal is to promote local stewardship within coastal communities and to carry conservation efforts on into future years.

Eelgrass plays a vital ecological role in nearshore, shallow-water areas of the coast. The meadows form a rich habitat for many species of fish, birds, crustaceans and other invertebrates. Eelgrass provides spawning sites for adult herring and shelter for juvenile herring, salmon, cod, sole and flounder. These fish in

continued on page 2



Dianne Sanford, Sunshine Coast co-ordinator for the BC Coastal Eelgrass Project, assesses an eelgrass meadow in Sargeant Bay. *Andrew Scott photo*

Good News for Ruby Lake Lagoon

by Dale Jackson

Many of you will be familiar with the "Save the Lagoon" campaign launched by the newly minted Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature Reserve Society at the Ruby Lake Resort's Wood Duck Festival earlier this year. Passersby can hardly have missed the banner emblazoned across the lagoon by the Cogrossi family asking to "Help Us Save the Lagoon!" The SCCA and the Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society (PHDWS), as well as many of the SCCA's other member groups, threw their support behind the campaign, and with their help we are extremely pleased to report that the campaign has been successful.

The 88 hectares encompassing Ruby Lake Lagoon were up for sale by

continued on page 2

Gambier Island Faces Renewed Logging Threats

by Maria van Dyk

Gambier Island, the largest and greenest island in Howe Sound, faces increased and more unsightly logging because the visual quality objectives (VQOs) of the island have been downgraded by the Sunshine Coast administrator of the provincial Ministry of Forests (MoF).

MoF defines VQOs as criteria that "define, describe or otherwise measure for each situation the notion of a level of acceptable landscape alteration"—that is, how much the view of the area can be affected by timber harvesting. The ministry classifies the objective within six Visual Quality Classes: Preservation, Retention, Modification, Maximum Modification and Excessive Modification.

In July, MoF provided the Gambier Island Conservancy with a draft of the proposed VQOs for Gambier and Anvil Islands. The Gambier Island Conservancy in their response to the Ministry voiced their serious concerns to the draft proposal, highlighting the following points:

In the new proposed VQO for the west side of Gambier, large areas have been downgraded from a Retention classification to Partial Retention, allowing a more than 400 percent increase in the disturbance of the visual landscape. For the east sides of Gambier and Anvil, the map was very incomplete. These islands, with their mountains and steep terrain, are highly visible from the surrounding water and land, BC Ferries routes, Sea-to-Sky Highway, etc. The current provincial bid to host the winter Olympics here (with its resulting wide international exposure) makes the relaxing of visual quality standards in this area seem ill advised.

We asked how was this inventory was done and what methodology was used? Were Gambier and Anvil circumnavigated by boat to establish adequate viewpoints? At what distance from shore? Were viewpoints established on land to reflect the visual quality enjoyed by the many hikers and campers using these islands?

continued on page 3

Inside This Issue

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Good Logging Practices Praised | 3 |
| Other Noteworthy News | 4 |
| Executive Director's Report | 5 |

continued from page 1

Good News for Ruby Lake

court order, and prospects of a huge, 360-pitch campsite loomed. Aldo Cogrossi, who has been a tireless supporter of conservation in the surrounding area and helped to establish a healthy breeding population of wood ducks around the lagoon, was horrified. With funds from PHDWS, a report was compiled on the ecology of the lagoon and its particular importance as a waterfowl refuge and a fine example of a healthy, shallow freshwater lagoon.

To the astonishment of the new society, in less than six months the lagoon was purchased and saved from the risk of harmful development! A nature lover visiting from Toronto had noticed the banner and, after seeing the report, was convinced that there was no time

to lose. This benefactor, together with the Cogrossi family, offered to contribute the required amount to ensure the sale. The acquisition was completed shortly afterwards and will ensure the protection of the lagoon habitat for all bird lovers on



Ruby Lake Lagoon's future as a wildlife sanctuary was assured earlier this year with the preservation of an 88-hectare property next to the resort. Andrew Scott photo

the coast for many years to come. The society and the Cogrossi family are planning to manage the reserve as a prime attraction for visiting nature lovers and hope to establish a field studies centre on the land.

University of British Columbia shallow-lake researcher Michael Jackson, chair of the Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature

Reserve Society, said, "I am delighted that we have succeeded in protecting the lagoon for future generations, and I think it shows how anything is possible if you put your mind to it. But we could not have achieved this without the enthusiastic support and generosity of the local community, and we would like to offer our sincere thanks to you all for making our dream come true.

"With so many people behind us, and with the incredible

passion of the Cogrossi family for conservation, I always had a feeling we would win through. We all owe the Cogrossi family and the kind benefactor from Toronto a huge round of applause for their efforts."

continued from page 1

Eelgrass Stewardship Project

turn are a major food source for a wide range of birds: shearwaters, gulls, alcids, loons, cormorants and grebes.

In the past, muddy and sandy shorelines with eelgrass beds were dismissed as wastelands. Today they are known to be the most productive nearshore environments along the coast, as fertile as terrestrial cropland. They help prevent erosion, stabilize river deposits and slow water flows so that organic matter can settle and small creatures thrive.

Nikki Wright, executive director of the SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, has been instrumental in getting the coastal eelgrass inventories going. She made the following comments on the project:

"The project had its beginnings in the Fall of 2001. SeaChange was part of a newly formed Eelgrass Conservation Group, a consortium of scientists, stewardship groups, Environment Canada, Ducks Unlimited, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and consultants who are concerned with the protection of eelgrass habitats along the BC Coast. Our name has changed and is still in flux, but we are now calling ourselves the Seagrass Conservation Group and meet about every other month. At these meetings, it soon became evident that there was a need to inventory eelgrass beds and monitor them to see what changes

human activities were having on them.

"I was encouraged by Environment Canada to submit an EcoAction proposal for funding for a project that would encourage coastal community groups to map, monitor and create education and stewardship programs within their areas for the protection of this critical habitat for birds, fish, shellfish and other marine life. At the end of two years, twenty groups will have been trained in eelgrass mapping and monitoring, and each will have begun to use that information to further protect and conserve the beds."

My specialty is environmental education, and many of your children may have met me during various beach, forest and salmon education programs. My primary roles as the contractor for the eelgrass project are to co-ordinate volunteer mappers, ensure accuracy of mapping data, schedule and co-ordinate monitoring and site visits, contact public and media about the project, and develop stewardship and education programs.

To date, with volunteer assistance, initial (level one) surveys have been done at Sargeant Bay and the south end of Porpoise Bay to establish eelgrass locations and estimate eelgrass density. More intensive study and further mapping along the coast are yet to come.

If you would like to become involved, or if you have information on eelgrass beds, please contact me, Dianne Sanford, at 604-885-6283 or email moonstone@sunshine.net.

continued from page 1

Gambier Island Logging Threat

The proposed inventory for the east half of Gambier is not consistent in its classification of highly visible areas with what currently exists for the west side. Nor is it consistent with the August, 1983, Landscape Sensitivity Map produced by MoF, which indicates large areas of high sensitivity. Significant areas around all the lakes on Gambier should be classified as Preservation, as they are heavily used for recreation by the various youth camps on the island, YMCA Camp Elphinstone and the Sea to Sky Outdoor School. The creation of a Preservation area around Gambier Lake is especially important, as no watershed assessment has been done.

The whole concern for visual quality is pressing because Canfor is proposing five cutblocks on Gambier in their current Forest Development Plan. Three and a half cutblocks are in areas where existing 1997 VQOs are "known information." What insurance can be provided that these VQOs will be followed before Category A approval is granted?

On November 10, 2002, MoF gave notice that the VQOs for Gambier and Anvil Islands have been established. The finalized map did not incorporate any changes from the original draft in spite of protest from the local government (the Islands Trust), and from local residents and conservation groups.

Allowing MoF to downgrade landscape-preservation



Will ecotourists come near Anvil (above) and Gambier islands if they're scarred with clearcuts?

Terminal Forest Products Ltd: Doing it the Right Way

by Daniel Bouman

Those environmentalists will never be satisfied! No matter what you give them, they always want more. They never have a good word to say. Fortunately, we only hear these kinds of statements occasionally, though they still remind me that sometimes we fail to recognize progress when it is made in forest stewardship and other areas. In consideration of the obligation to give credit where credit is due, let's take a look at what Terminal Forest Products is doing on the Sechelt Peninsula.

Good forest stewardship begins with recognition of the non-timber resources in the area in which forest development is to be undertaken. This recognition must be accompanied by a sincere and effective effort to ensure that these resources will be ad-

equately managed and conserved. Three years ago the SCCA began discussions with Terminal Forest Products. We had a number of concerns ranging from old growth protection to foreshore impacts from log dumps. It turned out that Terminal had already initiated a Total Use Plan for their tenure on the Sechelt Peninsula and was responding to every issue that we had raised, including the desperate need to maintain inventories of low-elevation old growth. A key point here is that Terminal was willing and able to resolve landscape level biodiversity issues before deciding where and how to design actual cutblocks. This is a radical departure from the approach taken by most licensees, who expect their development foresters to ignore or evade these issues until after category "A" logging approvals are granted. In looking at Terminal's landscape scale planning it is apparent



Gambier's New Brighton dock. A Scott photos

The proposed VQOs should be a concern to all of those who use Howe Sound or travel the scenic highways adjacent to the Sound. Howe Sound is one of the most spectacular and important recreational areas

near Vancouver. Its stunning scenery attracts boaters, hikers, walkers and other recreational users. Views of Howe Sound are among the first that visitors to the Sunshine Coast see from the ferry and help make the Sea-to-Sky Highway the world-renowned corridor that it is. Any downgrade in the VQOs for the Howe Sound islands will have a serious impact on these visual qualities and on the appeal of this area to recreational users and tourists.

equately managed and conserved. Three years ago the SCCA began discussions with Terminal Forest Products. We had a number of concerns ranging from old growth protection to foreshore impacts from log dumps. It turned out that Terminal had already initiated a Total Use Plan for their tenure on the Sechelt Peninsula and was responding to every issue that we had raised, including the desperate need to maintain inventories of low-elevation old growth. A key point here is that Terminal was willing and able to resolve landscape level biodiversity issues before deciding where and how to design actual cutblocks. This is a radical departure from the approach taken by most licensees, who expect their development foresters to ignore or evade these issues until after category "A" logging approvals are granted. In looking at Terminal's landscape scale planning it is apparent

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

Terminal Forest Products

that they recognize the need to limit environmental impacts and maintain biological diversity as a basic professional obligation.

Everyone knows that talk is cheap. It's what a cutblock looks like after harvest that matters. Last spring, SCCA directors



Dave Lasser of Terminal Forest Products rallies a group of visitors for a tour of company operations at Oyster Bay in Sechelt Inlet.

Andrew Scott photo

toured Terminal's cutblock at Oyster Bay in Sechelt Inlet to see the actual results of the company's work. From about 300 meters out in the inlet the harvesting was invisible. Closer to shore, I could only barely see where the logs had been dumped. (An earlier dive on the dumpsite had confirmed the absence of bark accumulation on the seabed.) The haul road from the beach to

the first cut patch was a study in minimalism—narrow, with excellent drainage and no side casting of debris or shot rock. This was the case throughout the cutblock.

Inside the cutblock the first thing that jumped out was that the veteran trees were still standing. Reasonable buffers protect all the watercourses. As well, Wildlife Tree Patches (WTPs) captured small groups of old growth trees and contained other features as well, such as snags and large sound trees. These patches will actually function to support biodiversity in the managed environment. By way of contrast, most WTPs in the Sunshine Coast Forest District are designed to avoid harvesting of non-merchantable pockets and meet percentage requirements for WTP retention, but not necessarily to have qualities that are actually relevant to the maintenance of biodiversity.

Terminal has also provided another benefit to our community that deserves recognition: leadership among timber licensees and other resource professionals. The SCCA has spent the last three years using the Forest Practices Board and the courts to convince ministries and licensees there is a duty of care owed to populations of dependent wildlife. Meanwhile, without any prompting from us, Terminal has pushed, in a non-confrontational way, that the requirements of forest stewardship mean that resource managers must deal with Marbled

Murrelet, Mountain Goat and other biodiversity issues. The company has taken the lead in bringing all stakeholders to the table to accomplish this task. That's leadership, and I, for one, am grateful that Terminal is committed to being a part of the Sunshine Coast community and economy.

In my books, they're loggers and they're okay!

Noteworthy News and Events

The SCCA has been busy lately. Among local events we've cosponsored since the last newsletter were Rivers Day at the Chapman Creek salmon hatchery, the Report Card on Sustainability in Sechelt in October and a State of the Strait presentation by the Sierra Club of BC on the dramatic decline of groundfish stocks in Georgia Strait. ☺ By popular demand, we held another Green Issues Forum just before the November election, at Greencourt Hall in Sechelt. The candidates showed up, as did an attentive crowd, and environmental matters received a public workout. ☺ A number of green-thinking local politicians were elected on November 16. Congratulations to John Marian (Halfmoon Bay) and Adrian Belshaw (Roberts Creek) on the Sunshine Coast Regional District; Barry Janyk (mayor), Angela Letman and Andrea Goldsmith (council) in Gibsons; and Patrick Brabazon (Malaspina Peninsula/Savary Island) on the Powell River Regional District. ☺ We're continuing to work on the threat to the Ambrose Lake Ecological Reserve. Thank you all for your feedback and support. Now Interfor isn't planning to log in the lake's watershed until 2005, so we will keep trying to get this area protected. ☺ Princess Louisa Inlet, world-famous for its stunning wilderness scenery,



More than 800 hectares of land have been protected at the head of Princess Louisa Inlet (see below).

Andrew Scott photo

has seen more than 800 hectares of forest permanently preserved recently, thanks to a \$1.5-million donation from Ontario's Tula Foundation. The deal was announced in November by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Princess Louisa International

continued on page 5

The More Things Change . . . Executive Director's Report

by Daniel Bouman

The last issue of the newsletter had an article from Colin Campbell on the new "results based" Forest Practices Code. The new act is called the Forest and Range Stewardship Act (FARSA) and is now being rammed through the legislature with no debate and very little public input. In discussing these changes, I would like to back up about 10 years and consider what happened with the old Forest Practices Code.

The Forest Practices Code Act of BC was brought in during the NDP's first mandate and promised to create the highest standards of forest practice in the western world. The new act accounted for all forest resources and established legally binding obligations to "adequately manage and conserve" these resources. The framework for the protection of biodiversity and the needs of rare, threatened and endangered species was strong and was intended to be applied through Landscape Unit Planning and the Identified Wildlife Management Strategy (IWMS). Of particular note were the requirements to maintain minimum inventories of old-growth in each biogeoclimatic sub-zone of each landscape unit.

During the NDP's second mandate, implementation of the entire biodiversity strategy was put on indefinite hold while the FPC was "streamlined." Eventually Landscape Unit planning began to proceed under a radically watered down set of priorities. The NDP government decided to allow a draw-down of old growth reserves to one-third of the original targets in 45 percent of the landscapes of the province. Currently, landscape planning is underway on this highly restricted basis and the IWMS is hopelessly mired in confusion and obstruction.

Now comes the "results based code," which I can not help but refer to as FARSE. The government has decided that old growth inventories will only be maintained where they do not conflict with timber supply targets. I fully expect that the same criteria will also be applied to the IWMS. Also note that the government has committed \$7,000,000 to the promotion of

BC forest practices in the international market place as being the best in the world.

There are many other aspects to the new act that are deeply troubling. Without going into great detail I offer my opinion that the public's access to information about forest development planning is being radically curtailed. As well, the grounds for any possible legal actions against resource managers, public or private, are being eliminated. There will be no possibility of anyone mounting an effective complaint to the Forest Practices Board, either.

So all this sounds pretty grim.

In reality, we are merely seeing a new chapter in the on going conflict between the forces of progressive public interest and the exploiters of publicly owned assets. I'm a little disappointed in these circumstances but not the least bit surprised. Where there is change there are always new opportunities. Our work now is to devise new approaches to achieve the protection of biodiversity. In this pursuit we have many allies and enjoy a broad base of public support. In the next



SCCA directors focused on strategic planning priorities at a recent retreat held near Pender Harbour.
Dan Bouman photo

issue of the SCCA Newsletter I will outline some of the new measures that are being developed to deal with this evolving crisis. In the meanwhile, pay attention and stay tuned!

continued from page 4

Noteworthy News and Events

Society. Weyerhaeuser also donated land and standing timber. ☺ The SCCA signed the "Declaration on the Principle of Parks" along with 54 other ENGOS, protesting the BC government's privatizing plans for our park system. ☺ We have decided to raise group memberships in the SCCA to \$25 a year, effective immediately; individual (or affiliate) memberships will remain at \$10 annually. ☺ Do check out the fine new trail to Crowston Lake in the Halfmoon Bay area. First you must walk in to the Big Tree (this section of trail is wheelchair accessible) from the trailhead parking area, which is 2.8 kilometres along

the Halfmoon-Carlson Forest Service Road from its intersection with Highway 101 just east of Trout Lake. From the Big Tree, the new trail climbs through old and new forest to Crowston Lake and takes about 45 minutes each way. Kudos to all those who worked on this excellent project. ☺ SCCA executive director Dan Bouman has contributed recent articles to both the *BC Naturalist* (FBCN newsletter) and the *BC Environmental Report* (a BCEN publication). ☺ Last but definitely not least, we want to extend huge thank yous to the Vancouver Foundation, the Tides Canada Foundation Wild Salmon Fund, the Tides Canada Foundation Endswell Fund and to many other contributors for making essential donations to the SCCA this year. We could not keep going without your financial help.

Contacts:

Gordon Campbell, Premier
PO Box 9041, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Tel: (250) 387-1715*
Fax: (250) 387-0087*
Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Greg Hemphill, District Manager
Sunshine Coast Forest District
7077 Duncan Street
Powell River, BC V8A 1W1
Tel: (604) 485-0708*
Fax: (604) 485-0799*
Email: greg.hemphill@gems5.gov.bc.ca

Michael de Jong, Minister
Ministry of Forests
PO Box 9049, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Tel: (250) 387-6240*
Fax: (250) 387-1040*
Email: mike.dejong.mla@leg.bc.ca

Harold Long, MLA
Room 201, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Tel: (250) 356-3066*
Fax: (250) 387-9104*
Email: harold.long.mla@leg.bc.ca

Joyce Murray, Minister
Ministry of Water, Land and
Air Protection
PO Box 9047, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Tel: (250) 387-1187*
Fax: (250) 387-1356*
Email: joyce.murray.mla@leg.bc.ca

* Inquiry BC: 1-800-663-7867
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

Newsletter Editor: Andrew Scott

Articles & photos may be submitted by emailing them to
andrewscott@dccnet.com or faxing to 604-885-3082.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this publication.

Executive Director:

Dan Bouman daniel_bouman@hotmail.com

Directors:

Brad Benson bjbenson@sunshine.net
Patricia Braithwaite p_braithwaite@sunshine.net
Colin Campbell forests@bcen.bc.ca
John Field john_field@sunshine.net
Kye Goodwin diedra_goodwin@sunshine.net
Michael Jackson acroloxus@dccnet.com
Marianne Larsen mlarsen@sd46.bc.ca
Pat Ridgway blackbird@uniserve.com
Doug Roy keltara@uniserve.com
Andrew Scott andrewscott@dccnet.com
George Smith georgesmith@dccnet.com
Linda Williams linwil@sunshine.net

Member Organizations:

Alliance for Responsible Shellfish Farming
BC Spaces for Nature
Carlson 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 (SCCA)

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

"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 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

Name: _____

Affiliate (individual) membership (\$10)

Mailing address: _____

Group membership (\$25)

\$ _____ Membership Fee

Phone: _____

\$ _____ Donation

Fax number: _____

\$ _____ Total

Email address: _____

Website: _____

Receive newsletter by email? Yes _____ No _____

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

Group SCCA representative/contact: _____

Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for donations. Registered charity #87322 0446 RR0001