



Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Newsletter Issue 7

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

July/2003

Ambrose Lake Logging Halted; Interfor Abandons Cutblocks

by Dr. Michael Jackson

The Sunshine Coast Conservation Association and the Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society have thwarted a renewed threat of logging on lands adjacent to Ambrose Lake Ecological Reserve. To gain a permanent solution to the problem, we are continuing to work to secure the addition of these lands (specifically Crown lots 5399 and 5400) to the reserve, as originally proposed in 1989.

The Ambrose Lake Appeal was launched in September, 2002, to solicit support and donations to help us work towards these goals. We are enormously gratified with the response

continued on page 2

Chapman Creek Watershed Closer to Community Control?

by Daniel Bouman

In an unexpected email to SCCA directors in May, Interfor General Manager Gerhard Pokrandt announced the company's decision to voluntarily give up its logging and road-building permits in the Gray and Chapman community watersheds. The announcement followed an informal request by the SCCA that Interfor make a gesture of goodwill to the community by surrendering its logging approval on Chapman Creek.

Logging in these watersheds has been intensely controversial from the day that the Sunshine Coast Regional District was incorporated in 1967. Logging was stopped in the watersheds in 1992 as a result of legal action undertaken by the

regional district. Since then there have been several major expressions of the public will that the watershed should not be subject to management by the Ministry of Forests. Voters overwhelmingly opposed MoF's management plan in a referendum in 1997. Last year, a 5,000-signature petition opposing watershed logging was presented to MLA Harold Long and tabled in the legislature.

Interfor never backed down from its contention that responsible logging would not harm water quality or quantity. They had completed a coastal watershed assessment, received all the necessary permits and spent money on block boundaries and road layouts. However, taxpayers have seen millions of dollars spent on watershed restoration and millions more spent on infrastructure to deal with turbid water. They were never going to accept treatment of the watershed as a "working forest." With this move Interfor lays legitimate claim to a bit of Sunshine Coast moral high ground and creates a little room for the community to find its own solutions. SCCA directors and members of the Water First Society are very pleased and relieved about this news. Who knows? Perhaps it signals the beginning of a new era.



Working on an ecological survey at Ambrose Lake. From right to left: Bob Brett, Maria Hunter, Adriane Carr, Dr. Karel Klinka. Daniel Bouman photo

Praise for Canfor's Habitat Management

by Maria Hunter

While preparing to participate in the land use planning process for the Howe landscape unit, SCCA members recently asked Canfor forester/biologist John Deal how the company's current logging plans were protecting habitat for species at risk. What we found out was good news: in December, 2002, Canfor had voluntarily dropped 10 cutblocks—eight in marbled murrelet habitat and two in deer winter range—and had adjusted the boundaries for two blocks that were overlapping mountain goat winter range.

continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

- Shellfish Alliance news 3
- New WMAs at Brittain River 3
- Eelgrass Day on Sechelt Inlet 4
- Executive Director's Report 5

continued from page 1

Ambrose Lake Logging Halted

from the community on the Sunshine Coast and beyond. Thank you all for your contributions and help. Volunteers have put hundred of hours into this project, and numerous letters have been sent to the government by individuals and groups. We even had five volunteers helping to dig soil pits and take tree-core samples in the rain in December!

Since September, our activities at Ambrose Lake have included: legal research; a request to the Forest Practices Board for administrative review of the approval to log given by the district manager of the Sunshine Coast Forest District;

preparation of a renewed proposal to Minister Joyce Murray of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP) to add the disputed lots to the reserve; on-site meetings with Interfor and government employees; co-ordination of an ecological assessment of the lots by a forest ecologist; a formal complaint to the Forest Practices Board; and a complaint to Interfor's certification auditor KPMG.

On November 1, 2002, Interfor decided to defer harvesting and road-building until 2005. This was a step forward, but the



On guard at Ambrose Lake. From left to right: Bob Brett, Maria Hunter, Dr. Karel Klinka, Kye Goodwin and Rick O'Neill.

Daniel Bouman photo

designation of the watershed lots as an Old Growth Management Area (OGMA) was still being impeded. Finally, in early March, 2003, Interfor applied to change the status of the cutblock to Category I (Information); in other words, it is asking to have the logging approval rescinded.

We are hopeful that OGMA designation and official addition to the reserve can now be obtained more easily. Currently an inter-ministry committee (IAMC) is investigating our request for the addition.

In order to achieve this, we'll need to continue our participation in the Sechelt landscape unit plan and continue to work with WLAP. We've been advised that we should also prepare a hydrological assessment of the importance of the two

lots to the bog. Bob Brett, the forest ecologist who wrote the ecological assessment report, came back for a second site visit in the spring of 2003 with UBC forestry professor Karel Klinka to document the deciduous plants and plant associations.

We're relieved that this huge collaborative effort has brought useful and positive results. We're hopeful that with your continued help and support we will be able to achieve the official addition of the watershed lots to the reserve before the end of 2003.

continued from page 1

Praise for Canfor

In our view, accounting for the needs of dependent species is a prerequisite of ethical forestry. Murrelet nesting habitat and ungulate winter ranges are two of the important building blocks needed for adequate conservation planning in this district. In voluntarily dropping these cutblocks Canfor is signalling that they are committed to responsible solutions for conservation problems. We are happy to recognize Canfor's efforts.

We were not surprised to learn also that John Deal was awarded forest stewardship recognition from Wildlife Habitat Canada. He was co-author, along with Steven Wilson, of a 2002 report titled "Mountain Goat Winter Range of the Howe Landscape Unit," and has incorporated this comprehensive research into Canfor's operational planning. He was able to explain clearly to SCCA members the company's reasons for not allowing any logging in winter range forests. Quite simply, these forests are *all* necessary for the goats' survival. Even with all the winter range intact, deer and mountain goats can lose up to half

their populations in harsh winters.

It's great to learn about rigorous, scientific studies and leading-edge forest management right here in our backyard. We appreciate John's willingness to share information and cooperate with us. We look forward to working with Canfor during the Howe landscape unit planning process.

Another crucial aspect of ethical forestry practice concerns a forester's obligation to uphold the public interest. In this regard we would like to recognize Warren Hansen, also a Canfor forester. Last summer there was a public outcry over Canfor's proposed logging in the Dinner Rock area north of Powell River. Warren responded by changing the status of the relevant blocks from Category A to Category I. This new status allows time for information to be gathered and potential conflicts addressed.

Important issues remain to be dealt with in the Howe landscape unit, including logging on Gambier Island, visual quality objectives, old-growth preservation and the connectivity of wildlife habitats. We are optimistic that with Canfor's consultative approach and responsible stance these issues can be resolved constructively.

Powell River Group Lobbies for Responsible Shellfish Farming

by Brad Benson

The Alliance for Responsible Shellfish Farming, an SCCA member group, was formed to respond to the sudden growth planned for BC's shellfish industry. The group's membership includes residents from Cortes Island, Baynes Sound and Powell River's Okeover Arm—all areas of Georgia Strait where a high nutrient content has created ideal growing sites for shellfish.

Not so long ago, shellfish leases were made up of low-impact Ma & Pa operations. However, today's large-scale shellfish farms are floating industrial processing plants. The high volume, noise, feces pollution, predator netting and vehicular use of beaches create serious environmental and social concerns, both on the foreshore and in the ocean. This increased industrialization not only threatens the previously peaceful lives of nearby upland residents but also the viability of local tourism operations. In order to resolve these issues, meaningful regulations need to be developed to help provide a buffer between residents and the industry, and to deal with siting criteria, noise and visual concerns. So far, however, there has been little assurance from government that residents' concerns will be adequately addressed.

On the environmental side of this controversy, Dr. Leah Bendell-Young of Simon Fraser University has been conducting a five-year study on the shellfish industry's ecological impacts.



The clear, high-nutrient waters of Okeover Arm, north of Powell River, are ideal growing sites for shellfish.

Katherine Johnston photo

New Wildlife Management Areas Designated in Jervis Inlet

by Daniel Bouman

There's both good news and disturbing news for BC's red-listed marbled murrelets. Some progress has been made in protecting habitat for this threatened species, but there is still a great deal of work yet to be done on this issue. First the good news.

In a decision dated April 7, 2003, Gordon Macatee, the Deputy Minister of Water Land and Air Protection (WLAP), with the support of Chief Forester Larry Pedersen, announced designation of twelve new Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) in Jervis Inlet's Brittain landscape unit for marbled murrelet nesting habitat.

Two of these WHAs are in areas that were successfully contested by the SCCA in a BC Supreme Court case and in a Forest Practices Board Administrative Review. Eleven of these areas have superior qualities for murrelet nesting habitat, but the twelfth has none of the habitat attributes needed by murrelets. The total area of these WHAs is about half the minimum recommended for protection by the federal Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team and the Fish & Wildlife Habitat Protection

According to the *Powell River Peak*, "preliminary findings from her research suggest that higher-yield production methods disrupt beach ecosystems and threaten native birds and mammals by blocking access to traditional feeding grounds." She adds that "she's not opposed to the industry, but says its ambitious growth plans could overtax ecosystems and ultimately reduce productivity." So far, however, government has indi-

cated that it will not wait for the completion of these studies before finalizing its expansion plans.

Members of the Alliance for Responsible Shellfish Farming deserve a salute for stubbornly continuing to deal with government over these issues.

Branch. The SCCA is pleased, though, that these limited designations have been made.

The disturbing news is that the Deputy Minister has offered the opinion that the plight of this small seabird does not warrant any further interruption of logging activity in the Brittain landscape unit. The previous policy of WLAP was to maintain the original range of the species and to prioritize for protection areas known to be actively used by the murrelets. It now appears that the BC government is unwilling to maintain habitat for the murrelet if it is inconvenient for the BC Timber Sales Program. With this decision, forests in the Brittain drainage, where active nests have been documented, will now be open to logging.

There are a number of other disturbing aspects to this decision. The two landscape units adjacent to Brittain also have significant populations of murrelets, which are dependent on stands currently under logging approval as well. If the government is unwilling to overturn these approvals, the welfare of the birds will be left entirely to the voluntary discretion of logging companies. Will our logging companies choose to do what the government has so far failed to do? The SCCA will continue to raise this issue directly with both the BC government and with the forest industry.

Celebrating Eelgrass at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park

Photos by Daniel Bouman

Through the sponsorship and assistance of the SCCA, Dianne Sanford and the BC Coastal Eelgrass Project organized a successful workshop at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park on Sunday, May 18, 2003.

An enthusiastic group showed up to learn more about this important foreshore environment, which forms a rich and essential habitat for many species of fish, birds, crustaceans and

other invertebrates. The eelgrass beds provide shelter for juvenile fish; they also prevent erosion and slow water flows so that organic matter can settle.

The Eelgrass Project is a coastwide initiative designed to locate, map and quantify BC's eelgrass beds and educate the public about their significance. Work has so far been done at Sargeant Bay and the south end of Porpoise Bay.



Top left: Conservationists young and old examine the contents of a beach seine after it has been retrieved from the eelgrass beds at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park. Plenty of crabs and other creatures were found to be alive and well.

Top right: SCCA director Dr. John Field demonstrates the approved method of handling a monster Dungeness crab. Reports that John is now missing part of a finger are vastly exaggerated.



Bottom left: Bringing in the seine. Or is that taking out the seine? Bottom right: Eelgrass coordinator Dianne Sanford holds up a marine organism. At the workshop she emphasized the importance of the eelgrass beds and discussed the many animals and plants that thrive there.



Ethics and Accountability . . . The Executive Director's Report

by Daniel Bouman

In the last issue I described the current government's retreat from representing the public interest in forestry and environmental affairs, and the need for us to develop new strategies for seeking protection of critical environmental resources. Here are two new approaches that are currently underway.

The international market place doesn't necessarily accept any government's word that environmental resources are being adequately managed and conserved. Consequently, various environmental certification systems have sprung up over the last 10 years seeking to provide independent verification of sustainable practices.

Two frequently encountered environmental certification programs are the International Standards Organization (ISO 14001) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). These programs require that subscribers maintain a functional Environmental Management System (EMS) and achieve sustainable standards of operation. A subscriber must answer to a "performance auditor" to maintain these certifications.

Last March, as a new strategy, the SCCA filed a complaint to KPMG (the performance auditors for these programs) about Interfor's ISO 14001 and SFI certifications. Basically we argued that Interfor did not actually have a functioning EMS because they had failed to incorporate important information from the Forest Practices Board, the Fish & Wildlife Habitat Protection Branch, the Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team and other bodies. KPMG responded by initiating an investigation that is now nearing completion. So far, we are pleased with the effects of this complaint. We have had a series of exchanges with Interfor, some of which have been very positive and productive. As well, the complaint puts the performance auditors on notice that we expect them to do a credible job and not function as another rubber stamp agency. Whatever the specifics of the eventual findings are, we're confident that this effort will result in more accountability and better management of critical wildlife habitats here on the Sunshine Coast.

Another key aspect of accountability in the BC forest economy involves the role of the Registered Professional Forester (RPF). Professional foresters manage publicly owned lands, are accountable to their professional association and must

practise forestry in a manner that is competent, ethical and in the public interest. The RPF's *Code of Ethics* and *Standards of Professional Practice* are very clear about this. Failure to comply with these requirements apparently can result in disciplinary action. There is also a complaint process that is open to the public. Last winter government revised the *Forester's Act*, giving foresters more authority than they previously had.

Does the Association of BC Professional Foresters (ABCPF) actually hold foresters accountable as other professional bodies do? We intend to find out. In July the SCCA sent a major complaint off to the ABCPF about an RPF working in this forest district who has a history of proposing logging in sensitive habitats and has been implicated in a review panel finding and two publications of the Forest Practices Board.



SCCA executive director Dan Bouman beside one of the gigantic Douglas fir veterans located in the Ambrose Lake watershed.
Daniel Bouman photo

With this complaint we seek to remedy conduct that we consider to be unethical. We also think that the public deserves to know if foresters really are accountable. In general, we would like foresters to know that their conduct can be brought under scrutiny. Considering the newly revised Forester's Act, which allows for greater professional authority, we believe that these are fairly urgent priorities. In my opinion, there are many

foresters in BC and here on the Sunshine Coast whose conduct and practices are ethical beyond dispute. Still, we believe that more professional accountability is needed to ensure steady progress toward a sustainable future. For now we will have to wait and see how the ABCPF responds to our complaint.

We'll keep you posted as things develop!

Noteworthy News and Events

Mauro Vescera of the Vancouver Foundation spent a day with SCCA directors in June and toured environmental hotspots around the Sunshine Coast. ☺ Executive director Daniel Bouman chaired the environment table at Roberts Creek's Community Policy Review, spoke at the Earth Day Forum in April and has been appointed to the SCRDP's Natural Resources Advisory Committee. ☺ Blair Hammond of the Canadian Wildlife Service attended the May SCCA board meeting and offered invaluable advice about setting up land trusts. ☺ And, finally, a huge thank you to the Tides Canada and Endswell foundations for timely recent grants.

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

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

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

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

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

* Inquiry BC: 1-800-663-7867
By calling this toll-free number
you will be connected by tele-
phone 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
Tish Davis tishd@telus.net
Dr. Michael Jackson acroloxus@dccnet.com
Marianne Larsen mlarsen@sd46.bc.ca
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
Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society
Carlson Point Property Owners
Eco-Care Conservancy of the Powell
River Region
EcoTech Youth Service Program
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
Okeover Ratepayers Association
One Straw Society

Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society
Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature Reserve Society
Sechelt Inlet Heritage Trails Society
Sargeant Bay Society
Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society
Sunshine Coast Natural History Society
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 (\$20)
Mailing address: _____ Group membership (\$25)
_____ Group representative _____
_____ \$ _____ 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 _____

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