



Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Rockfish Conservation Areas Announced for Sunshine Coast

by Andrew Scott

In March 2004, after a six-month consultation process, Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced the establishment of 89 Rockfish Conservation Areas in BC. Eight are on the Sunshine Coast, with others nearby. FOC also pledged to reduce the total harvest of inshore rockfish and lingcod, improve catch monitoring and establish a stock assessment framework for these species. No hook and line fishing will be permitted in an RCA, as catch-and-release techniques are invariably fatal for rockfish. Seine, gillnet and trap fisheries will still be allowed, however, as will scallop trawls and mid-water groundfish trawls.

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Deregulation will Reduce Public Oversight of Forestry Operations

by Jay Forsyth

Since the BC Liberal government swept to power in the spring of 2001, the province has seen widespread deregulation, privatization and massive layoffs in the civil service. The forestry sector is certainly no exception, as the government has acted swiftly on their industry-driven campaign platform. Some results include elimination of 30 percent of government resource professionals, closure of almost 30 district and regional Ministry of Forest offices (including the Field Road office on the southern Sunshine Coast), intensive deregulation of environmental enactments through numerous amendments, and creation of new pro-industry legislation.

The results of these numerous and hasty policy changes are still difficult to comprehend, as much of the new legislation is only now being implemented. However, it is apparent that one such legislative change will significantly impact the SCCA's ability to engage in effective forest management consultation.

As of May 2003, over 5,000 regulations were removed from existing legislative enactments under the ministries of Forests, Sustainable Resource Management, and Water, Land and Air Protection. These deregulations were part of a flurry of legislative changes in which new enactments were created and others amended several times over. One of the most significant of these new acts is the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA), which replaces the Forest Practices Code Act (the Code) with a so-called "results-based" forest management regime.

The "results-based" nature of the FRPA departs completely from the stricter environmental regulatory requirements that were brought in by the Code. Under the FRPA, the forest industry is now able to write its own environmental rules.

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The Howe Sound landscape unit, seen here from the ferry, is one of many areas where the SCCA is contributing to land-use planning. Daniel Bouman photo

Ruby Lake Lagoon's New Nature Centre

by Dale Jackson

A major conservation initiative is underway on the Sunshine Coast. The inspiring new Field Studies and Interpretive Centre is being built by the Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature Reserve Society. Named in honour of late local naturalist Iris Griffith, the project has received enormous support and encouragement, both financial and volunteer, from all aspects of the community. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed so far.

The centre is designed to be enjoyed by conservationists of all ages. Inter-

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Rockfish Conservation Areas

Rockfish and lingcod populations have plummeted in BC, especially in the Strait of Georgia, where the commercially valuable stocks are at about five percent of what they were 50 years ago. Some of the 36 colourful rockfish species—black, copper and quillback, for instance—have almost been extirpated from the strait. Rockfish live a long time (120 years for yelloweye rockfish or “red snapper”) and don’t reproduce until almost age 20. Now that most of the mature fish have been harvested, breeding populations are at an all-time low.

Three of the Sunshine Coast

RCA's are located in and near Desolation Sound: around Kinghorn Island, the Copeland Islands and Gifford Peninsula. Another protected zone covers the northwest shore of Nelson Island. A Halfmoon Bay RCA includes Jeddah Point and Welcome Pass, while the McNaughton Point coastline between Secret Cove and Pender Harbour has also been designated. RCA's adjacent to south Lasqueti and around Pasley Island in Howe Sound are technically in our area also.

Probably the most useful RCA in the wider region will be



Welcome Pass, near Halfmoon Bay, is one of the new Rockfish Conservation Areas in Georgia Strait. Chocolate lilies bloom in the foreground.

Andrew Scott photo

the one covering the Ajax and Achilles banks, formerly rich fishing zones located in the Strait of Georgia between Texada and Vancouver islands. Other protected areas are mostly clustered around the Gulf Islands, the south and west coasts of Vancouver Island, and near Johnstone and Queen Charlotte straits.

Are these RCA's enough to save the rockfish? Recent FOC staff reductions are making it difficult for the department to monitor the RCA's and enforce the new fishing regulations. Commercial rockfish fisheries will continue to operate in BC, including—amazingly—a small one in Georgia Strait.

Outside the RCA's, sportfishers are still allowed to catch one rockfish a day, though lingcod fishing is now banned everywhere in the Strait of Georgia. (Ironically,

juvenile lingcod are beginning to proliferate in parts of the strait and become an additional threat to the beleaguered rockfish.)

Conservation organizations such as the Sierra Club of BC and Living Oceans Society have identified a lack of scientific credibility in RCA selection and slow progress in meeting harvest rate reductions. They are calling for a moratorium on all directed rockfish fisheries in the Strait of Georgia. Please observe fishing regulations around local RCA's and encourage others to do so as well. It's not too late to save the rockfish in our region.

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Forestry Deregulation

This “log-first-and-ask-questions-later” approach puts any environmental values that compete with timber, such as wildlife habitat and drinkable water for community watersheds, at significant risk. In a sense, the fox is now guarding the henhouse.

Another alarming aspect of the FRPA is the elimination of the requirement for vital information to be disclosed in forest management plans. Under the FRPA, forest management plans that are presented to the public no longer require the identification of the specific location of planned cutblocks or new roads. Instead, licensees are simply required to identify “forest development units,” within which access roads and cutblocks will be located. In addition, the site level plans (silviculture prescriptions), which have historically described the detailed location and ecological rationale for individual cutblocks, are no longer required for approval by government.

Whereas traditionally the SCCA has played a key role in reviewing planned harvest areas and having such plans modified or simply eliminated to accommodate environmental concerns,

the FRPA is designed to limit such participation. Now licensees and timber sale managers are neither required to consider public comments on site plans nor to notify the public when site plans are available. Therefore, it is likely that the SCCA will not even be able to identify environmental concerns for an area until after logging operations have commenced.

This manoeuvre by the Campbell administration has certainly not gone unnoticed. Recently the BC Forest Practices Board produced a special bulletin after reviewing the opportunities for public consultation under the FRPA. “Overall,” the Forest Practices Board concluded, “FRPA’s requirement for public involvement in operational planning are minimal and do not or cannot meet or address many of the principles of effective public consultation. Following the minimal requirements of FRPA will not achieve effective consultation in most cases.”

As BC is embarking on this “new era” of results-based forestry, it’s troubling to see the avenues of public consultation closed. One has to ask, if this is indeed a better approach to forest management, then why keep those most concerned—the citizens of BC—in the dark? Rest assured, the SCCA will continue to shine a light into such dark corners.

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Ruby Lake Lagoon

pretive displays, specialist courses, training days and workshops will be offered, while hiking and birdwatching begins right outside the door. The centre will benefit Sunshine Coast residents and their families and visitors by contributing to regional conservation awareness and encouraging long-term, sustainable economic growth and employment through low-impact ecotourism and environmental education programs.

The proposed state-of-the-art, 420-square-metre building will highlight numerous “green” features, including recycled materials, a reed-bed septic system and solar and wind power sources. The interpretive part of the centre will be open to all, and the field studies portion will offer a wide range of courses and programs. Facilities will include a wet laboratory, lecture room, library, office and gift shop.

The Lagoon Society is pleased to be working with the SCCA and The Land Conservancy as joint holders of a conservation covenant to protect the 10-hectare property in perpetuity. To help this process, local experts and enthusiasts met at Ruby Lake Lagoon in June for a two-day inventory of the area’s flora and fauna and the lagoon’s special features.

The construction of the centre will be partly funded by \$275,000 from the federal Softwood Industry Community Economic Adjustment Initiative (SICEAI). Matching contributions are already in place. The Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature Reserve Society—a registered charity authorized to issue

tax receipts for your donations—is now seeking the remaining funds and pledges needed to activate the SICEAI funds and get this non-profit venture off the ground. A rezoning application for the project is in its final stages, and construction work is scheduled to begin this fall.

To make a contribution or for more information, please contact Dr Michael Jackson (chair, 604-883-9853), Dr John



An artist's impression of the soon-to-be Iris Griffith Field Studies and Interpretive Centre, overlooking a restored wetland area of Ruby Lake Lagoon.

Field (treasurer, 604-883-2807) or Catherine J Johnson (director, 604-883-0655). Visit the website at www.lagoonsociety.com or write to the Nature Reserve Society at RR#1, S20, C16, Madeira Park, BC, V0N 2H0.

SCCA Welcomes New Directors

At the 2004 annual general meeting of the SCCA, held in April at Sechelt's Seaside Centre, four new directors were elected to the board, joining returning directors Brad Benson, Tish Davis,



The SCCA marine protection committee meets with Sabine Jessen, centre, from CPAWS. Brad Benson photo

John Field, Michael Jackson, Marianne Larsen, Andrew Scott and Linda Williams. Former directors Patricia Braithwaite, Colin Campbell and George Smith have stepped down from the board, and we thank them heartily for their major efforts on behalf

of the organization. Pat will remain active in committee work, while Colin and George have agreed to serve as special advisers to the board. In the meantime, please welcome:

☉ John Dafoe, a guide and 35-year resident of the south Sunshine Coast. John has been providing public wilderness tours in the region since 1990 and is occupied at present with the Coastal Eelgrass Mapping Project. He is a founding member of the Friends of Caren and helped create Spipyus Provincial Park in the Caren Range on Sechelt Peninsula.

☉ Jay Forsyth, who has worked with First Nations communities in BC, Labrador, Indonesia and Nigeria to develop ecosystem-based forest planning models. Jay is a candidate for a MSc in aboriginal forest policy and lives in Roberts Creek.

☉ Joe Harrison, president of Area A Quality Water Association (AAQWA). Joe is a former director for Area A (Pender Harbour) on the board of the Sunshine Coast Regional District and is currently working to protect water quality in the Pender Harbour region, where he lives.

☉ Lois Kennedy, who has a PhD in teratology and has worked at the Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg and at the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan as a research assistant professor. Lois moved to Gambier Island in 1990, helped found the Gambier Island Conservancy and served on the Gambier Island Advisory Planning Commission. She currently lives in Roberts Creek and is an avid weaver.

Chapman Creek Community Watershed in Danger Again

by Daniel Bouman

Sunshine Coast residents were exasperated to read in the July 17 edition of the *Coast Reporter* that the community watershed is again under assault. In a full-page ad, the Sunshine Coast Regional District asked for the public's assistance in halting a proposal to mine sand and gravel in the community watershed near the SCRCD's water intake. The mining proposal was put forward by AJB Investments Ltd, which is owned by SureSpan, a West Vancouver bridge-building company. AJB is the same company that logged sensitive slopes on private land in the watershed last spring.

Response from the public to the SCRCD and the Ministry of Energy and Mines wasn't long in coming. A virtual flood of angry letters were sent and copied to Premier Campbell and our MLA, Harold Long. Some residents have since received a reply from the Premier in which he asks citizens to give the approval process a chance to come to an appropriate conclusion. At press time our MLA was



SCCA executive director Daniel Bouman and Adriane Carr, leader of the BC Green Party, at the site of the Chapman Creek logging. *Andrew Scott photo*

still maintaining that watershed mining is acceptable and that a public landfill, located outside the watershed, possesses a greater danger to drinking water than gravel mining.

Sunshine Coast residents are never easily reassured on this issue. The community watershed has already sustained approximately \$20 million worth of damage from industrial use over the last 30 years (based on the cost of taxpayer-funded restoration activity and investment in facilities necessary to manage

turbid waters). As well, residents are shelling out lots of money for bottled water, as Chapman Creek water is no longer considered safe for all users.

Residents have frequently expressed their desire that the community drinking watersheds be brought under local control and receive protection against any further industrial activity. Both the SCRCD and the Sechelt Indian Band have supported this position strongly, publicly and repeatedly.

The SCCA will be watching events

closely; this may well be the situation that convinces the provincial government to listen to the obvious will of the people. Let's make it happen. Stay tuned!

Noteworthy News and Events

The SCCA has a beautiful new logo (at right), designed by Karen Weissenborn of Grafix Printing & Design Service, in Sechelt. Wouldn't this logo look great on a T-shirt? We'll work on that. Hmm, coffee cups would be good too. Dedicated naturalists will note that the bird is a stylized marbled murrelet. ☺ On June 6, Oceans Day, Christianne Wilhelmson from the Georgia Strait Alliance spoke at an SCCA-sponsored event about identifying and reducing the use of toxic contaminants and pollutants, especially in common household products. Look for more on this subject from the SCCA in future months. After Christianne's talk, Dianne Sanford led a beach seine for naturalists of all ages at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park (see photo on page 5). ☺ The SCCA has developed a privacy policy regarding the use (or, in our case, non-use) of members' personal information. For the complete text of the privacy policy, please see the website (www.thescca.ca). Rest assured that the SCCA does not sell, rent or lend any personal information provided by members. ☺ The SCCA has produced a brochure about private land conservation on the Sunshine Coast. It can also be viewed on the website. If you'd like us to mail you a copy, please write to us at PO Box 1969, Sechelt, BC, V0N 3A0, or email us at info@thescca.ca. ☺ Mark your calendars for the SCCA's

second annual Celebration of Conservation. The first Celebration, known as the Stickleback Social, was such a success, raising about \$10,000 for conservation work on the Sunshine Coast, that we've decided to continue in a similar vein.

The second Celebration will be called the Ocean Commotion and is scheduled for November 27 at Sechelt's Seaside Centre. As before, expect great entertainment, food and drink, a silent auction and educational displays. ☺ SCCA researchers are moving forward with a host of marine-protection and forestry-related initiatives, including submissions to a series of alarming forest development plans proposed for the Halfmoon Bay and Mount Elphinstone areas. More on this later. ☺ The SCCA has recently entered into an agreement with the Pacific Salmon Foundation to undertake work related to habitat stewardship and recovery. ☺ And, finally, a massive thank you to the Bullitt Foundation for recent financial support.



Marbled Murrelet Update . . . The Executive Director's Report

by Daniel Bouman

Hi everyone! As many of you know, the SCCA has been working aggressively over the past five years for the protection of marbled murrelet nesting habitat. This small ocean-going bird relies on old growth forest limbs for nesting platforms and is federally listed as threatened due to loss of breeding habitat. Here's the current situation.

The murrelet has all but disappeared from several landscape units (LUs) in the southern portion of the Sunshine Coast Forest District. Very low numbers of individual birds and very small inventories

of available habitat remain in the Howe, Chapman, Sechelt, Salmon and Narrows landscapes. Our efforts to date have brought logging of the remaining habitat to a halt in these LUs. Most of the northern landscapes still have good numbers of birds and significant options available for habitat protection.

We are now focused on the landscapes of Jervis Inlet (Brittain, Skwawka and Jervis LUs, including Deserted River, which is a high biodiversity sub-unit of the Jervis LU). There are still significant murrelet populations in Jervis Inlet but these are directly threatened by a large (and growing) number of logging approvals.

Earlier this summer, we were informed by Interfor that they had dropped all of their logging approvals in the Slaney Creek area of the Brittain LU. This is a critical area of premium quality nesting habitat. At least 85 percent of the Brittain LU nesting

habitat is now under protection or available for designation and not threatened by logging approvals. So far so good!

Interfor still retains a large number of approved logging proposals in critical habitat in both the Skwawka LU (head of Jervis Inlet) and the Jervis LU (east side of the inlet). This summer Interfor proposed more logging in murrelet habitat. It claims that these new proposals are in areas of surplus habitat and that it has habitat inventory information to support this approach. We are aware that Interfor has had habitat mapping for the Jervis and Skwawka LUs for about two years and also that it has developed a draft Jervis LU Plan. Despite the fact that the relevant habitat inventories were publicly funded, Interfor has consistently refused to allow us access to them. The SCCA has objected formally and strenuously

to all new logging approvals in marbled murrelet habitat and will continue to oppose them to the full extent of the law.

Currently BC Timber Sales (formerly the Small Business Program) is proposing extensive logging in premium quality nesting habitat in the Deserted River area. These proposals appear to also ignore core mountain goat winter range values and grizzly bear habitat.

The position that we have taken is that it is legally and ethically unacceptable to log in murrelet nesting habitat in

Jervis Inlet at this time and until the recommended measures and strategies of the federal Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team have been fully achieved for this aggregate of landscapes. I'm pleased to tell you that several publications of BC's Forest Practices Board strongly support this position.

Looks as if we have our work cut out for us!



SCCA eelgrass expert Dianne Sanford led a beach seine at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park as part of June's Ocean Day festivities.
Daniel Bouman photo

Sakinaw Sockeye News

Three federal salmon recovery teams (RTs) are currently working in BC: the Sakinaw Lake Sockeye RT, the Cultus Lake Sockeye RT and the Interior Fraser Coho RT. The Sakinaw Lake team, on which the SCCA has representation, operates in our area and has a mandate to develop a plan to bring the sockeye back from the brink of extinction. Fisheries and Oceans Canada will hold a series of "community dialogue" RT sessions in key communities around BC in October and November 2004. The sessions will combine a full-day meeting with local First Nations, an evening public open house and a second full-day

meeting with local stakeholders. Information will be provided and feedback sought on recovery strategies developed by the teams. This is an opportunity for the public to offer ideas directly to team members. Representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada and Parks Canada will also be on hand to answer questions about the Species at Risk Act and how it will be implemented in local areas. First Nations sessions will be held in Sechelt and Sliammon on November 8; a public open house will take place in Pender Harbour on the evening of November 8; the stakeholder session, also in Pender Harbour, is scheduled for November 9. Additional public sessions will be held in November in Vancouver, Victoria and elsewhere.

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Newsletter of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

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

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA)

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

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

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

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL

Name: _____ Affiliate (individual) membership (\$20)
Mailing address: _____ Affiliate (family) membership (\$30)
_____ Group membership (\$25)
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Phone: _____ \$ _____ Membership Fee
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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 RR001