



# Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

## NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2009

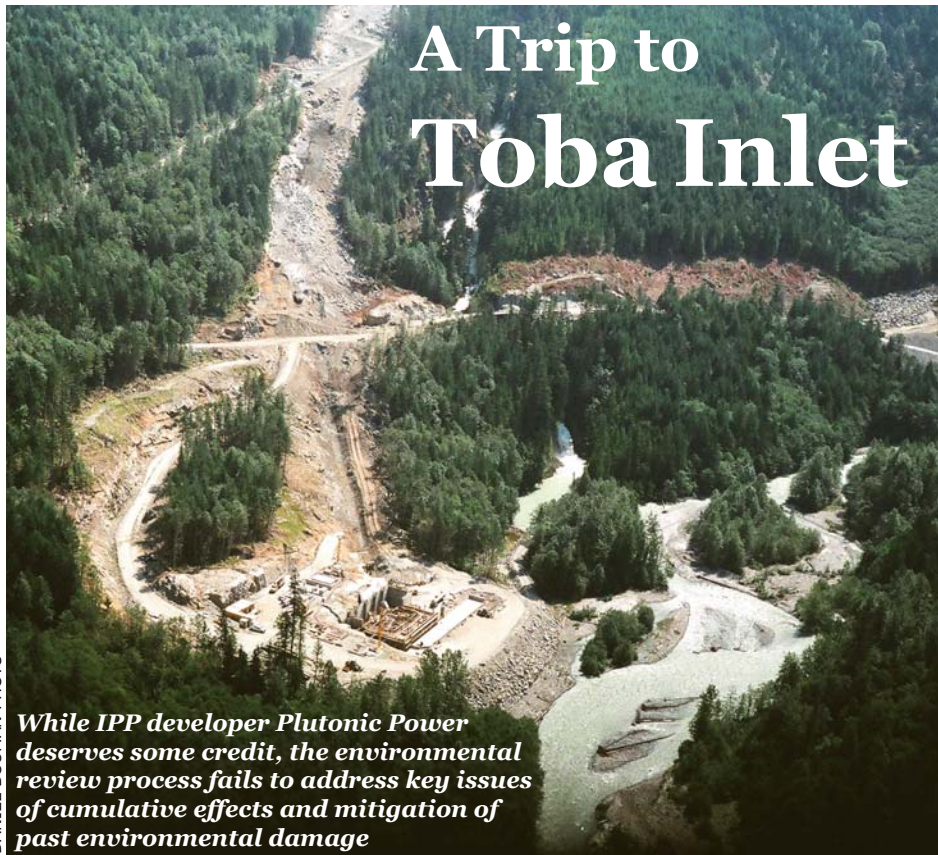
Issue 18

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www.thescca.ca



## A Trip to Toba Inlet

By Dan Bouman, Executive Director

I was fortunate last July to be able to get on board a helicopter with Plutonic CEO Donald McGinnis and others for a tour of Plutonic's East Toba Montrose Creek hydroelectric project. Here's my report and a few comments.

First, a bit of history. The head of Toba Inlet and its watersheds have been extensively exploited in the past by logging companies. In the mid eighties the Klahoose First Nation tried but failed to negotiate with Interfor for better logging practices, so they cut off industrial access to the valley. Interfor subsequently abandoned the area, leaving a legacy of trash and toxic materials behind. They eventually sold their tree farm licence to the Klahoose. In subsequent years substandard roads and culverts deteriorated and caused even more environmental damage. For lack of money, many years passed with very little remediation taking place. Enter Plutonic Power. They have deep pockets, expertise and approvals for a new land use: run-of-the river hydroelectric power.

(report continues on page 3)

*While IPP developer Plutonic Power deserves some credit, the environmental review process fails to address key issues of cumulative effects and mitigation of past environmental damage*

*Toba generating station under construction, showing buried penstocks and transmission line right of way.*

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Hidden Grove protected.....	2
Directors tour eco hot spots.....	2
The People's Water .....	3
A burning issue .....	4
Petition launched to protect Bear Bay forest.....	4
Unanswered questions, questionable practices.....	5
Fighting for Eagle River fish .....	5
Environmental hot spots – northern Sunshine Coast...	6
IPPs raise environmental concerns.....	7
SCRD takes action on climate change.....	8
Gibsons geo-thermal plan a first for Canada .....	8
Rain harvesting: A plan whose time has come.....	9
Should Elphinstone trails be shared with ATVs?.....	10
The battle for Gospel Rock.....	10
Sunshine Coast Trail gets \$3M boost .....	11
Pardon Me, River (a poem) .....	11
Sechelt church becomes first "green parish".....	12



*Leeann Johnson, Gertrude Pacific, Barbara Demotte and Dan Bouman celebrate the 100th Eco-Gift in Canada, August 21, 2009. Using the federal Eco-Gifts program, Barbara's gift of ecologically significant land will be added to the Francis Point Marine Park.*

DANIEL BOUMAN PHOTO

MICHAEL DAVIDSON PHOTO

# Hidden Grove Protected

***Proponents of Hidden Grove had cause to celebrate this spring, winning a nine year battle to save this area of prime forest land, a story that moves from confrontation to cooperation.***

In 2000, the residents of the Sandy Hook neighborhood of Sechelt were suddenly warned of plans to clearcut 52 hectares of crown forestland, valued for its scenic nature, biodiversity and stands of old growth timber, reports veteran campaigner, Michael Davidson. "Trails were hastily built so that everyone could witness what was about to be lost to Interfor's chainsaws.

"The result was 128 letters of protest to the Ministry of Forests, something of a record for a single cut block," Michael recalls. He credits the foresight of the local OCP committee, which in 1995 had convinced the District of Sechelt to designate the land 'Parks and Open Space'. Even though jurisdiction technically resided with the Ministry of Forests, this made it easier for Mayor and Council to come on side, especially, says Michael, when faced with a packed meeting of residents from all over the coast.

In 2002 the Sandy Hook Community Association was asked by Council to form the Hidden Grove Plan Steering Committee in order to create a long-term recreation template for the area. There followed endless pleas to various branches of government to protect this small slice of paradise, supported by MLAs, the Sechelt Indian Band and many others.

By 2006, public pressure convinced the newly formed Community Forest to place a moratorium on harvesting in the Hidden Grove for five years, although the threat of extensive harvesting just outside the boundary remained. Then in January of this year, Elise Rudland used her brand new appointment to the Community Forest board of directors to convince them to protect the Hidden Grove solely for recreation for the duration of their long-term tenure.

"In an instant everything had changed," says Michael. "Now, instead of fighting, we find ourselves on the same side, working towards the common goal of implementing our plan to develop the recreational potential of Hidden Grove."

For more in depth background on the nine-year struggle, visit: [www.hiddengrove.info](http://www.hiddengrove.info).



MICHAEL DAVIDSON PHOTO

## Directors tour eco hot spots



DANIEL BOUMAN PHOTO

*SCCA Directors Janet Gender, Katie Janyk and David Moore visit a historically and ecologically valuable parcel of private land in the Stillwater Buffs area south of Powell River. In this issue, David Moore takes us on a virtual tour of the ecological "hot spots" of the northern Sunshine Coast (see story, page 6).*

## GREEN DRINKS

*is returning to the Sunshine Coast*

Please join us for an informal get-together of like-minded folks

at the **Gumboot Cafe**

the last Friday of each month 5-7 pm



# A Trip to Toba Inlet

(continued from cover)

Looking out the helicopter window the view is breathtaking. The Toba River loops its way back and forth across the valley. It has the typical turquoise color of glacial melt water. Still, I found it almost impossible not to notice the enormous environmental damages from logging, particularly to fish habitat. Trees have begun to grow back but it still looks like an abused sad place.

We stop in at Plutonic's 300-bed camp for coffee and a stretch. It's a state of the art bush facility, easily the best I've ever been in. It has Internet hookups in every room, recreation facilities and a terrific weight room. Young people from the Klahoose Band and the Powell River secondary school are working here and getting exposure to the trades. The food's great and I load up on fresh cookies! Back in the chopper we head off to Montrose Creek and the East Toba River looking at head ponds, penstocks and generating station construction sites. We view the worksites from several angles and then head back to Powell River along the new transmission line corridor, which runs primarily through old clearcuts and young second growth.

I can report that Plutonic's generating facilities are entirely within very steep non-fish bearing Toba River tributaries and involve relatively short penstocks of 5-6 kilometers. Clearly there are environmental impacts to wildlife and the Toba River's fish producing capacity but these pale in comparison to the large-scale pervasive impacts of industrial forestry. This project compares very favorably to other run-of-the river projects I've looked at. For example, the McNair project near the Port Mellon pulp mill is situated entirely in 100% fish occupied stream and has a penstock stretching over 11 kilometers in length. In my opinion, CEO Donald McGinnis's position that Plutonic is generating social, environmental and economic benefits is not unreasonable, all things considered. Still, there are major impacts and unresolved issues with this and hundreds of other similar projects.

The Toba project was subject to a *BC Environmental Assessment Act* process. In my opinion, it systematically evaded consideration of the extremely degraded condition of the Toba River watersheds. It also failed to consider the implications of a large number of other hydro-projects planned for this area. No remediation was mandated and no one is accountable for past damages. The assessment process was managed to assist the proponent and ensure that government and proponent obligations were minimal. It was not an open, independent or accountable process. This is exactly what the SCCA doesn't want to see happening in the future. If these developments are so important to society, why has the provincial government crippled environmental assessment and limited public and local government involvement in the approval process?

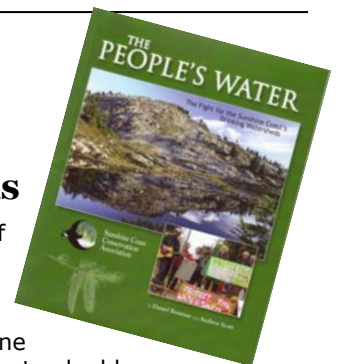


DANIEL BOUMAN PHOTO

*Penstock pipes at Toba Inlet camp. These 10 foot diameter pipes carry water from the head pond to the generating station. The penstock pipes are usually buried.*

In the context of Plutonic's massive and highly controversial Bute Inlet project, which will undergo a federal environmental assessment process, our intention is do everything we possibly can to ensure that existing as well as future environmental impacts in the study area are recognized and effectively addressed. And, please note, we will undertake every possible effort to make the federal process understandable and open to your participation. Regular updates will be provided on our website ([www.thescca.ca](http://www.thescca.ca)). Stay tuned!

## The People's Water: The Fight for the Sunshine Coast's Drinking Watersheds



If you haven't already got yourself a copy of **The People's Water**, we urge you to do so. This is an inspiring narrative of all the things Sunshine Coasters have done over many years to protect our most valuable and important environmental asset – drinking water! It will also give you an in-depth understanding of issues currently under contention in the watershed.

The book is available for \$20 at the following locations, or directly from us (see contact information on the back page of this newsletter).

- **Coast Books**, 287 Gower Point Road, Gibsons
- **Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives**, Gibsons
- **Windsong Gallery**, 5721 Cowrie Street, Sechelt
- **Talewind Books**, 5494 Trail Ave., Sechelt
- **Fresh from the Coast**, 104-5697 Cowrie Street, Sechelt
- **Iris Griffiths Field Studies Centre**, Pender Harbour
- **Breakwater Books**, 6812 Alberni Street, Powell River

We hope you enjoy these episodes of our community history and maybe even see yourself in this wonderful story!

We'd like to thank the Vancouver Foundation for their generous support of this project.

## A Burning Issue

# Clean Air Society seeks to ban large scale slash burning by developers

A presentation by the Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society urging the District of Sechelt to ban large scale slash burning by developers got a warm reception by the mayor and council at a regular meeting last Spring.

"The Official Community Plan draft recommends that the air quality be monitored closely and the burning bylaw be expanded to include land clearing sites," said Heather Waddell, who presented the brief on behalf of the Society. "Our hope is that our representatives will take the lead to restore the once clean air of the District of Sechelt."

Council voted unanimously to strike a committee, including the Sechelt Fire Department, to study the development of a draft bylaw.

The brief emphasizes the danger to health of fine airborne particles that are not always visible to the naked eye. These particulates pose a serious threat to residents' health, especially those suffering from respiratory conditions such as asthma.

"Acute asthma is considered the most common cause of medical emergencies in children, and is linked to an increase in deaths and hospitalization."

The brief noted that the OCP draft recommends that air quality be closely monitored and that the existing burning bylaw be expanded to include land clearing. While this bylaw is considered progressive, homeowners are puzzled by the fact that they are not allowed to burn their garden waste while corporations release large clouds of smoke into the environment.

HEATHER JEAL PHOTO



*Coming to a neighbourhood near you? Particulate-laden smoke from a slash burn drifts on the wind.*

Because of the local inversion-prone topography, wind direction and population density, Sechelt is one of the smallest areas in B.C. to be designated by the Ministry of Environment as Category A – "a place where smoke could have a high impact." At present, local developers must obtain a burning permit issued by the Sechelt Fire Department, based on a "Venting Index" measured on Vancouver Island.

Air quality problems resulting from the burning of debris – including illegal substances such as car tires used as accelerants – has increased in recent years along with the size of new housing developments. The gravel pit is also a significant element.

The brief notes that there are other methods of dealing with clearing debris, including chipping and composting slash as was done by a West Sechelt developer in response to the pleas of nearby residents. The Society also wants closure of an open pit burning site on the east side of Sechelt Inlet.

"It all comes down to the fact that as a community we cannot afford to burn, for the costs to the respiratory health of the residents are too great not to seek alternative ways of dealing with land clearing."

## Petition launched to protect Bear Bay forest



PHOTO COURTESY BEAR BAY STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

*Marinus Logtenberg, John Field, Ryan Logtenberg, and John Dafoe at The Two Towers, Bear Bay Forest.*

The campaign to protect the last remaining easily accessible old-growth ecosystem in the Pender Harbour area from clearcut logging by BC Timber Sales is close to its second anniversary.

Formed in the past two years, the Bear Bay Stewardship Alliance has launched a petition calling for the designation of the area, which is close to Sakinaw Lake, as a park.

"The BBSA believes that the trails, diverse ecosystems and 100 year old steam donkey engine are recreational, ecological and historical characteristics of Bear Bay forest that deserve to be protected," said organization co-founder, Ryan Logtenberg.

The proposed cutblock is in close proximity to Mixal Creek, an important and historical salmon spawning ground, and threatens the survival of endangered Sakinaw Lake sockeye, Ryan said.

Part of the area is designated as "old forest ecosystem" on the Ministry of Environment's Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory Map, accessible through the website of the Sunshine Coast Regional District. An independent ecological study has been commissioned by the Alliance.

For more information, and to sign the petition, go to [www.bearbay.ca](http://www.bearbay.ca).

**Sechelt Community Forest****Unanswered questions, questionable practices**

Operations of the Sechelt Community Forest continue to be of concern to the SCCA. Old-fashioned clear-cuts, harvesting of immature stands, raw log export, lack of respect for environmental assets, and the stark absence of openness and transparency are all issues of concern. While the SCCA does not participate in the community forest's "advisory committee" we are aware that people's experience with this function has been frustrating in the extreme and that pertinent information is routinely withheld from committee members.

The SCCA filed a Freedom of Information request on June 9 seeking records about raw log exports, benefits to directors, and staff salaries, benefits and/or contracts. We received a reply on August 14 from the Community Forest president stating that companies owned by community forest directors are not involved with the community forest and that the Community Forest has no employees or staff. They state that the community forest is administered entirely through a "third party" contract with Anik Consultants, which is owned by Community Forest manager Kevin Davie, and that the specific information we requested is therefore unavailable through FOI request. We have made a request to the FOI Commissioner for review of this response. Check our website for more information about the SCCA's FOI request.

As most people are aware, the SCCA has a very high regard for the Joint Watershed Management Agreement (JWMA) that was signed by the SC Regional District and the Sechelt Indian Band on October 1, 2005. Last May, the SCCA sent a letter to each Regional District director and the Sechelt Indian Band stating our opinion that under this Agreement, the Sechelt Community Forest needs the permission of the JWMA Committee prior to undertaking any activity in the Chapman or Gray community watersheds. We received a reply from the Sechelt Indian Band thanking us for the letter. The JWMA Committee was scheduled to meet with the Community Forest on September 21, 2009. More information will be posted to the website as it becomes available.

concerned that this process is taking place behind closed doors. We are particularly concerned that the process outcome may not result in legally enforceable minimum flow requirements. In our view, "habitat compensation funding" for an area not within the Eagle River watershed would not, by itself, be sufficient. The Eagle River's fish stocks may be small but are highly significant; we believe that protection of this resource is legally required and in the public interest.

Currently there are over 700 pink salmon spawning in the Eagle River. A new Eagle River section for the SCCA website will be available shortly



JOHN BEBBINGTON PHOTO

**Forestry from the past century:** *A traditional clear cut from the Sechelt Community Forest. This cut of immature trees features a high degree of wood waste, carbon emissions and loss of carbon storage capacity in forest soils. We currently have only one way to remove carbon from the atmosphere: trees!*

**Fighting for Eagle River Fish**

by D. Bouman and Nadja Hocking

Completion of a year-long flow study signals a new phase in the fight to maintain and possibly enhance stocks of salmon in of the Eagle (Lois) River just south of Lang Bay in the Powell River Regional District.

SCCA member and local resident Nadja Hocking filed a complaint to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in December 2007 that alleged a massive fish kill occurred when Brookfield Power Company diverted approximately 95% of the river's water into hydroelectric generators. An inspection by DFO supported the allegation. There is also concern that the power company may have been diverting more water than its licence allows. Brookfield Power responded with the now completed flow study that has cost approximately \$100,000. Currently Brookfield Power is refusing to release the flow study to the public.

The SCCA engaged in this issue at the request of local residents. Summary legal advice was obtained from West Coast Environmental Law which strongly indicated that the power company is obligated to comply with the *Fisheries Act* regardless of the size of the water licence or the date that it was issued (1929). All the facts and documentation relevant to the situation have been provided to the Sechelt First Nation, whose territory includes the Eagle River, its estuary and adjacent lands.

Unfortunately, DFO's response to date has not involved enforcement actions. A negotiation between the Power Company, provincial government, DFO and the Sechelt First Nation will get underway this fall. The SCCA is

# Environmental “hot spots” on the northern Sunshine Coast

By David Moore (with files from Daniel Bouman)

**Editor's note: The mandate of the SCCA includes both the upper and lower portions of the Sunshine Coast Forest District. Last April, at the Annual General Meeting two new directors were appointed to represent the Powell River section. They are David Moore and Denise Reinhardt. In the foregoing article, David paints a vivid picture of the many environmental issues that face concerned residents of the community. It turns out that they are similar in almost all respects to what is happening on the Lower Sunshine Coast.**

Let me take you for a little road trip and I'll introduce you to my personal laundry list of environmental hot spots, moving from the Saltery Bay ferry terminal to Lund.

**Saltery Bay** – An electrical substation is under construction, bringing attention to the major power projects (IPPs) now under construction or planned by Plutonic Power Corp. at Toba and Bute inlets to the north. The local residents are concerned that the substation construction will impact several creeks



DAVID MOORE PHOTO

Protesters rally at Island Timberlands logging site next to Eagle River.

**Eagle River** – Marked Lois River on official maps, Eagle River flows from Lois Lake through a rocky canyon to the sea just north of the Stillwater Bluffs. It too rates high on the scale for natural beauty with crystal clear pools fed by waterfalls surrounded by deep forest. The pools, cliffs and overlooks are a popular summer recreation zone that all age groups in the district use and care about. This natural landmark too deserves action by government to preserve it for public enjoyment. The Friends of Eagle River and a large number of Powell River

residents have been trying for some time to protect the canyon-like river valley and forests on both sides of the river. However the vision of a greenway corridor along the river up to the Lois Lake hydro dam has been heavily compromised by Island Timberlands. Focus has now shifted to the fate of the river's substantial salmon runs (see page 5: "Fighting for Eagle River fish.")

*Stillwater Bluffs south of Powell River, an ecologically sensitive and scenic treasure at risk of logging.*

**Jefferd Creek** – A small but highly controversial community watershed just north of Saltery Bay. Residents of Stillwater have worked hard over many years to protect their drinking water's source area, with some success. Although BC Timber Sales backed out under pressure in 2007, they are back and intending to log in sensitive areas this fall. Residents are organizing to oppose this logging. Current legislation only requires BCTS to implement protective measures that don't reduce the supply of timber. The threatened water system serves over 100 households.

## Myrtle Creek



DAVID MOORE PHOTO

Clearcut logging near Myrtle Creek - critical salmon habitat.

This comparatively slow moving watercourse has been established by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as an indicator stream to gauge the health of pacific salmon populations. There is no fish hatchery or other artificial enhancement. This fish habitat is under constant threat by disturbance on the forest lands and private properties that border it. In 2008, public protests were sparked by large scale logging in close proximity to the creek by Island Timberlands and BC Timber Sales. Adding to the risks to fish habitat is the apparent reluctance on the part of the Powell River Regional District to enforce the provincial Riparian Area Regulations.

## Stillwater Bluffs

This rocky headland is an area of unique unspoiled beauty, a superb natural botanical garden. The area was formerly part of a regulated tree farm license (TFL) held by MacMillan Bloedel and later sold to Weyerhaeuser, who was successful in lobbying the BC government to have this and other private holdings deleted from the TFL. It is now owned by Island Timberlands Ltd., part of the Brookfield Assets empire. They can virtually clear-cut the entire forest and then sell all the valuable waterfront to real estate developers, if they wish. The Friends of Stillwater Bluffs are working to create a positive solution such as acquisition of the Bluffs by the Regional District for a nature park.



DAVID MOORE PHOTO



*Davie Bay, on the west coast of Texada Island, is threatened with major industrial development.*

**Catalyst Paper** – The paper mill which is the founding industry of Powell River is now owned and operated by Catalyst Paper Corp. The workforce has diminished to about 500 employees in recent years. Of current concern is the impact on air quality of a planned increase in the burning of hog fuel in the mill's generating plant. Making matters worse are plans to dispose of the resulting waste in a huge above ground landfill in a residential neighborhood. Adding insult to injury, the company has taken the highly provocative action of withholding municipal taxes to the City of Powell River (along with Campbell River, Port Alberni, and North Cowichan) putting these towns into economic freefall. Large cities such as Burnaby are entering the debate because this bullying behaviour sets worrisome precedents if they're allowed to get away with large scale corporate civil disobedience.

**Sunshine Coast Trail** – This decades-long project by Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society recently received substantial provincial funding to make improvements and build a series of huts along the trail. Yet this maturing tourist attraction is continuously facing the relentless indifference of industrial logging and there is little formal protection or mandatory buffers. More public voices are needed to recognize the interests, priorities and the values of the hiking public.

**Texada Island** - The small community of Blubber Bay near the northern tip of Texada Island, a short ferry ride from Powell River, is the site of a proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal and electrical generating plant. The proposal, by Westpac, faces strong opposition from local residents and communities all around the Strait, who fear the prospect of LNG tankers moving through our inland sea.

Although the project appears to be in abeyance, perhaps because natural gas prices have dropped so low, another industrial development looms.

A German controlled company (Lehigh Cement) plans a huge limestone mine on the western side of the island. Their intention is to ship raw product from a barge loading terminal at scenic Davie Bay. Residents of Texada Island are concerned about the prospects of yet another massive scar upon the landscape. The Lehigh project is a classic land use conflict. It proposes heavy industrial use of Crown land at the centre of the island best suited to conservation for recreational eco-tourism and accessible wilderness parkland. Additionally, there are already 3 active limestone quarries at the northern end of the island which are performing well below capacity. The new mine serves only foreign corporate interests for 'vertical integration'.

## Independent Power Projects raise serious environmental concerns

The Sunshine Coast Forest District has become an epicentre of activity for private development of run-of-river hydroelectric projects.

Although the government decision to privatize all new energy development has created political debate, our primary concern focuses on the environmental impact of these projects, which, as well as river diversion, involves extensive deforestation related to hundreds of kilometres of transmission lines, roads and pipelines.

Of particular concern is the potential cumulative effects of large numbers of IPPs. Six river diversion projects have been approved and are now under construction by Plutonic Power and its partner, G.E. Energy Financial Services on rivers that flow into the Toba Inlet north of Powell River. The company has mounted an extensive public relations campaign to market these projects as renewable energy and examples of corporate responsibility. These Toba projects are now approved and under construction; for the sake of environmental protection they should be monitored and evaluated closely (See *A Visit to Toba Inlet* report, page 1).

**Bute Inlet** – Plutonic Power also has plans to construct 17 hydroelectric generating facilities on 17 tributaries flowing into Bute Inlet rivers, a rugged mountain fastness that includes Canada's highest peak – Mt. Waddington – that many believe to be unmatched in scale, beauty and wilderness values anywhere in Canada. To put this \$4 billion project in perspective, the total potential generating capacity is 1,027 megawatts, compared to 900 MW for BC Hydro's highly controversial Site C Peace River dam. West Coast Environmental Law notes that the approval process for Site C is a multi-year, multi-stage evaluation involving hearings in the major provincial cities. The Bute Inlet project is huge and the federal government has initiated an environmental assessment at the Full Panel Review level. This is the highest level of assessment available in Canada. Terms of reference for the review panel are already in place. The federal guidelines for the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement are now available on the website of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency: [bute.review@ceaa-acee.gc.ca](mailto:bute.review@ceaa-acee.gc.ca). The SCCA plans to participate fully in the process. A documentary film about the Bute Inlet wilderness area and the potential impact of the power project is planned.

## ***Carbon Neutral by 2012***

# **SCRD takes action on climate change**

As a signatory to the B.C. Climate Action Charter, the Sunshine Coast Regional District has committed to the goal of carbon neutral operations by 2012.

"Communities must plan to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to changes resulting from climate change," says Dion Whyte, SCRD Manager of Sustainable Services, noting that there is overwhelming scientific evidence in support of human-induced global warming.

In addition to the Climate Action Charter, the SCRD has also voluntarily joined the Partners for Climate Protection program, a network of over 150 Canadian municipalities committed to reducing climate change impacts both internally and at the community level. Last year, the B.C. government passed Bill 27 (*Green Communities Statutes Amendment Act*), which requires local governments to incorporate greenhouse gas reduction targets into Official Community Plans by March 31, 2010.

***In June 2009, the SCRD, in collaboration with the Town of Gibsons, District of Sechelt, and Sechelt Indian Government District, initiated a process to develop community level energy and greenhouse gas emissions inventories, forecasts, targets and action plans for each of the municipalities and rural OCP areas on the Sunshine Coast.***

In July of 2008, the SCRD adopted its Climate Action Work Plan, which established priority tasks and timelines for meeting its voluntary commitments and legislative requirements, Dion notes.

First up was the completion of the SCRD's Corporate Energy and Emissions Plan, which calls for a 27 per cent reduction of its own greenhouse gas emissions from 2008 levels by 2018. The various initiatives required to meet this goal are estimated to cost \$1.85 million and result in annual energy savings of approximately \$190,000, for about a ten year payback, Dion said. The plan also identifies additional investments needed to offset remaining operating emissions to zero in order to fulfill commitments under the Climate Action Charter

"The Regional Energy and Emissions Sustainability Plan will satisfy legislative requirements under Bill 27 and is intended to provide the communities of the Sunshine Coast with a roadmap that will guide energy and emissions management in the residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, land use and solid waste sectors," says Dion. Some projects, such as the Sechelt Landfill Gas to Energy Innovation project, are already being implemented.

Dion said the process will involve extensive public education and consultation.

In terms of SCRD's corporate operations, examples of potential energy saving initiatives include:

- **Building retrofits, including solar heating for water and air, process heat recovery and geothermal heat exchange;**
- **Fuel efficient vehicles;**
- **Water/waste water infrastructure retrofits, including high efficiency pumps.**

At the community level, Dion cites potential initiatives such as:

- **Anti-idling campaigns;**
- **Green building and development guidelines;**
- **Promotion of residential and commercial energy retrofit incentives;**
- **Small to medium scale renewable energy projects.**

On the strength of these initiatives, there seems little doubt that local governments on the Sunshine Coast are serious about meeting global climate change challenges.

## **Gibsons geo-thermal plan a first for Canada**

**The Town of Gibsons is set to become the first in Canada to establish a geo-thermal energy system as a neighbourhood utility.**

**The geo-exchange system will extract energy stored in the ground by heat pumps and distribute it through a network of pipes to homes and businesses in the Upper Gibsons area.**

**The system will be owned by the Town of Gibsons and operated as a utility, with homes and business being charged to connect to the system, says Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer.**

**Although heat pumps have been in use for many years, this is believed to be the first neighbourhood utility installation in Canada, and is expected to be a showcase for other local governments.**

**According to a feasibility study by Geo-Xergy Systems of Winnipeg, the Upper Gibsons system will result in annual savings of over \$60,000 for Phase 1 – a 55-unit subdivision – and \$350,000 for a full build-out, expected in 2026. As well as domestic or business energy savings, the system will greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide long term revenues to the town.**



## Rain Harvesting

# A plan whose time has come

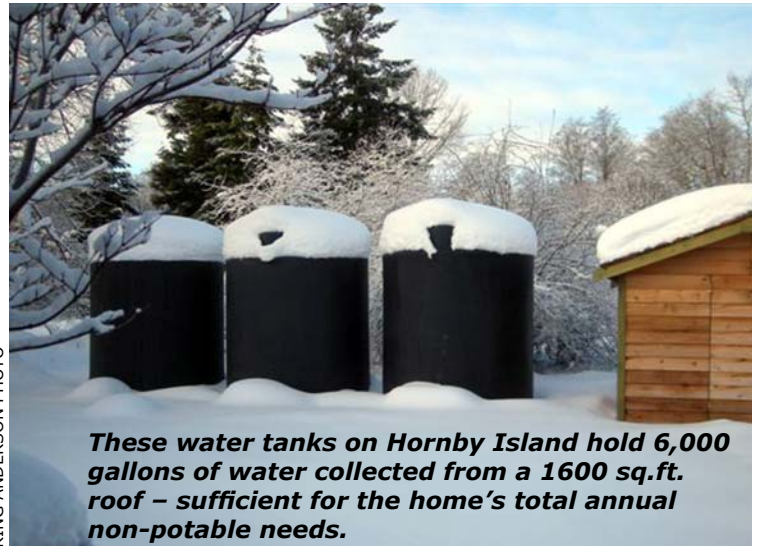
**Study finds rainwater capture can save taxpayers major expenses and inconvenience at relatively little cost.**

Even as the population of the Sunshine Coast continues to grow, the existing water supply is already nearing its limits and the infrastructure is showing signs of distress. The water treatment plant is operating at full capacity and water use conflicts are emerging.

But there are ways to deal with the problem without adversely impacting the existing watersheds and requiring costly infrastructure development, namely conservation and rain harvesting.

The SCCA recently completed a study of the rain harvesting potential on the Sunshine Coast. The idea is essentially quite simple: rain water from a roof is directed into a storage tank, or cistern, for uses ranging from garden irrigation to non-potable uses within the home. Funded by the Sunshine Coast Community Foundation, and researched and authored by Angela Kroning and Dan Bouman, the study found that compared to the cost of developing infrastructure for a new water source area, rain harvesting is remarkably cost effective. For example, a basic system involving a gravity-fed 2000 gallon storage tank and a small pump for irrigation would cost as little as \$2500. If only 6000 such systems were installed in rural areas, the volume of captured water would equal 12 days' supply for all the Chapman/Gray system users. And as an added advantage, this water would be available at the lowest flow time when irrigation needs are at their peak.

KING ANDERSON PHOTO



**These water tanks on Hornby Island hold 6,000 gallons of water collected from a 1600 sq.ft. roof – sufficient for the home's total annual non-potable needs.**

Even without population growth, there is likely to be need for the development of costly new sources and infrastructure, a situation likely to be made worse by the predicted effects of climate change. This will be costly to taxpayers; new infrastructure upgrades are already in the planning stages. Cost saving measures are also being implemented; water metering in lower Gibsons is helping to reduce frivolous use and incidentally, is saving thrifty water users' money. There is clearly good reason for local government to advocate for rain harvesting approaches.

The SCCA report, ***Rain Harvesting for the Sunshine Coast***, provides a comprehensive review of various rain harvesting options and concludes with a series of recommendations for local government, primarily advocating for public education and various forms of incentives. Representations to local government so far have been well received and further meetings are in the works.

The complete report is online at [www.thescca.ca](http://www.thescca.ca).

Please mark your calendars now for  
The Sunshine Coast Conservation Association's

## *Celebration of Conservation*

**Saturday October 17th**

Seniors Centre • Sechelt

Doors open: 7 p.m.

- Silent and live auction
- Tapas and appies
- No host bar
- Entertainment
- Dancing-kick up your heels to the toe tapping music of

*Sweet Cascadia*

If you can help either before the event or on the evening,  
please call Marianne @ 604.885.6431

Please check the website at [www.thescca.ca](http://www.thescca.ca) for updates





Deer fenced out of Gospel Rock property.

## Should Elphinstone trails be shared with ATVs?

The development of a formal strategy for the management and use of trails on Mount Elphinstone is welcome news, but the process has revealed some major conflicts of interest.

The inaugural meeting of the Sunshine Coast Trails Society was held last May in conjunction with the Roberts Creek Official Community Plan Committee, with the goal of developing an overall trail strategy. It's important that community members have input and that future decisions take into account the shared values of residents, said Elaine Futterman, chair of the RCOCP. Here's where the problems arise: should hiking trails be shared equally with wheeled vehicles, motorized in particular?

SCCA member Ken Dalgleish expressed the concern of many at the meeting, stressing the inherent spiritual values of wilderness, and the need to maintain them. Those values, while difficult to qualify, are even held important to B.C. Timber Sales. "For the spiritual values I seek in the forest, I need silence, I need space and I need nature." He is concerned that multi-use trails would sacrifice these values.

Others felt that hikers should not have exclusive use of the trails. "Everyone is invested into this community, whether it's nature lovers right up to the ATVs. I believe everyone deserves an equal stake," said Gary Jackson, a mountain bike enthusiast and co-owner of Off the Edge Adventure Sports in Sechelt.

Most of the trails on Mt. Elphinstone are on Crown land under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Forests, and Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

While welcoming the formation of a comprehensive trails strategy, the SCCA is concerned that the SCTS is receiving funding from logging companies and undertaking trail development without any obligation to public consultation.

# The Battle for Gospel Rock

*The Gospel Rock neighborhood in Lower Gibsons continues to be one of the most contentious land use issues on the Lower Sunshine Coast, as legislators grapple with competing interests of private owners and the larger community on how best to protect the unique features of this much loved scenic upland and shoreline region.*

Last November, the Gospel Rock Neighbourhood Plan Select Committee presented its report to Council. Option B recommended the exclusion of development of the waterfront and preservation of most of the at-risk Coastal Douglas fir zone. Not surprisingly, this was not well received by property owners, who were also not of one view regarding many more issues than just preservation of special ecological zones.

"It became clear to Council that, even though the Select Committee had made its recommendation, an enormous amount of work still remained before arriving at a plan that would even remotely satisfy the property owners, Town Council, and the greater Gibsons community," says committee member Katie Janyk.

To come up with a plan acceptable to all concerned, Council has constituted the Gospel Rock Neighbourhood Plan Refinement Working Committee, comprised of two councillors, the mayor, a consultant (Art Phillips) representing property, owners and a consultant for the town. Monthly meetings are open to the public, and proceedings are posted on the Town of Gibsons website ([www.gibsons.ca](http://www.gibsons.ca)). The Friends of Gospel Rock, who were represented on the former Select Committee, and strongly supported by the SCCA, were unsuccessful in their bid for a seat on the Refinement Working Committee. Committee chair Mayor Janyk has said, however, that he expects the councillors on the committee to properly represent the interests of all citizens, including Friends of Gospel Rock.

All of Gospel Rock is privately owned and enjoys no protection, although some areas designated 'geotechnical hazard' zones are subject to development restrictions. Some clearing has already taken place, but development permitting is on hold pending the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for inclusion in the Town of Gibsons Official Community Plan.

"Development is still a long way off, since whatever the Refinement Working Committee comes up with will go yet again to the public for information and comment.," says Janyk. "Sometimes it feels like the plan will never be done, but the best plans usually come after long struggles, and a lot of hard work by a lot of people.

"The Gospel Rock Neighbourhood Plan has spurred more community involvement than any other single issue in recent memory," Janyk notes. "This Council and the previous one have put huge energy into 'getting it right' for everyone. Let's help them out by staying involved."

# Sunshine Coast Trail gets \$3 million boost

By Eagle Walz

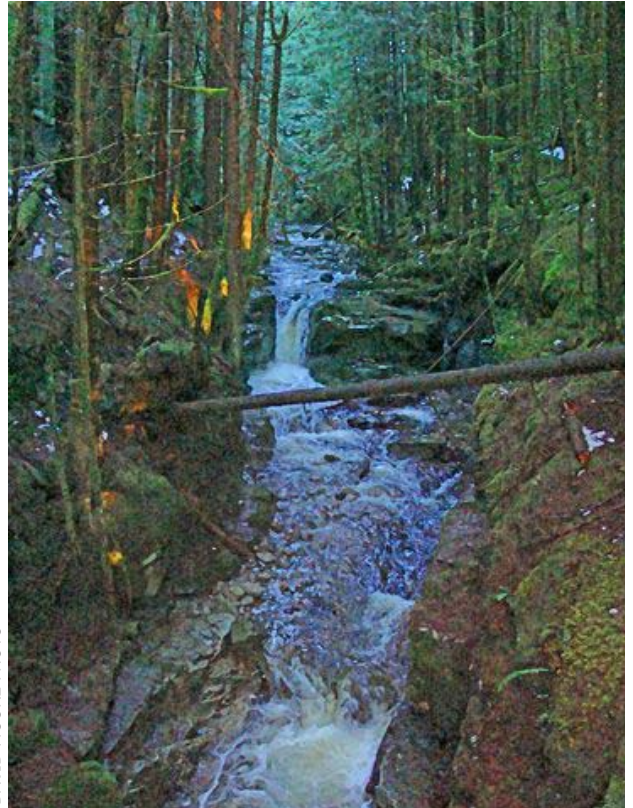
## Disabled, youth to benefit from major enhancement projects for 180 km trail system on northern Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast Trail (SCT) on the Upper Sunshine Coast consists of 180 km of wilderness, lakes and mountains. It runs from Saltery Bay (near the BC ferry terminal) in the south to Sarah Point (at the entrance to the world famous Desolation Sound) in the north. The trail spans the entire length of the Upper Sunshine Coast and affords panoramic views and a diverse variety of ecosystems and wildlife. Hikers may access the trail at a number of points, and there are overnight and day hiking opportunities.

The SCT was conceived in 1992 by a handful of outdoor enthusiasts concerned about the vanishing amount of old growth forest remaining in the region. They formed the Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society (PRPAWS) to set aside protected areas linked by a trail corridor.

Most visitors opt to go on a day hike, choosing a segment that best suits their interest and level of ability. From a wheelchair accessible wilderness trail around Inland Lake, or a ramble along the shore of Jervis Inlet to Fairview Bay, to a climb of Mount Troubridge with its extensive old growth shoulders and awe-inspiring vistas – the Sunshine Coast Trail has it all. It is attracting a growing number of outdoor enthusiasts significantly bolstering the economic diversification of the region.

And now PRPAWS has entered into a partnership with School District #47, Model Communities for the Disabled and secured matching funding from the province's Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET). The partnership has launched a \$3 million project, which will enhance the wilderness trail, build eight backcountry shelters, two wilderness mountain huts, plus a fully accessible wilderness camp at Thornton Bay on Powell Lake, and new facilities for the disabled at Inland Lake.



DAVID MOORE PHOTO

*Sweetwater Creek on the Sunshine Coast Trail*

The 2400 square foot building and wilderness camp, accessible by wheelchair from Inland Lake or by boat/kayak/canoe from Powell Lake, will underpin the overall trail system with a specific focus on persons with disabilities and youth groups.

Scheduled for completion at the end of next year, these new facilities and improvements will serve as a catalyst for increased exploration of the northern Sunshine Coast and will encourage increased visitation, longer stays, expand the available range of visitor activities and help sustain local businesses.

## Pardon Us, River

By Sheila Weaver

How do you do, River?  
Pardon us, but we have  
planes to fly over you, all day  
and long into the night.  
You are so silent, River!  
We can't stand silence!

Besides, you're much too slow a route  
for our business now.

River, you don't mind, do you,  
if we dump waste into you  
from our towns and industries  
along your way?

You can take it right out to sea –  
the sea's so vast, our little bits of waste  
will get thinned out, or sink;  
surely they won't hurt anything!

And you don't mind, do you, River,  
that we build dykes, to stop you  
from flooding over the land in spring?

It costs a lot of money  
to control you!

And that we dig into your bed  
to remove the silt, that builds up fast  
because you can't spread out any more  
in flood?

It's true we've been cutting trees down  
in your watershed –

but then, you always were a muddy river,  
weren't you?

Gosh, River, do these things  
affect your estuary too?

With all that water  
constantly going in and out  
you can handle it, can't you?  
And the log booms –  
why, they're just trees!  
They're natural!

How could they do any harm?

Oh, and River – we depend on you  
for lots of fish –  
our fishermen need jobs!

# Sechelt Anglican church becomes first “Green Parish”



St. Hilda’s Environmental Steward, David Moul (left) and priest, the Rev. Neil Fernyhough accept their green accreditation plaques at the Anglican Synod (Annual General Meeting) May 23, 2009.

St. Hilda’s by the Sea Anglican Church in Sechelt has become the first parish in the 77-church Diocese of New Westminster to become accredited as a “Green Parish” under a program instituted by the 2006 Synod (AGM) to encourage environmental stewardship and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

To qualify under the Green Parish Accreditation Program a church must complete eight action areas: energy conservation, recycling, ground care, transportation, communication, education, worship and environmental justice.

Under the leadership of its Environmental Steward, SCCA Director David Moul, the church’s energy conservation initiatives included using energy efficient light bulbs, installing weather stripping on outside doors, recycling office waste, and installing native plant species in its landscaping to minimize watering.

Environmental themes have been incorporated into the worship and liturgy at St. Hilda’s, including “creation spirituality.” The church’s website ([sthilda.ca](http://sthilda.ca)) has a section devoted to environmental stewardship. The Anglican community mapping project (online at [shims.bc.ca/atlasses/Anglican](http://shims.bc.ca/atlasses/Anglican)) is a unique way of educating the congregation and residents to the whereabouts of green services and areas of environmental concern.

St. Hilda’s is signatory to the Earth Charter for Environmental Justice ([earthcharterinaction.org](http://earthcharterinaction.org)) and is the first faith based community to become members of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association.

Recently, St. Hilda’s, along with partners SCCA and Gibsons United Church, successfully took a World Water Day motion, concerning the human right to have access to clean drinking water and the need to protect drinking watersheds, to the Town of Gibsons, District of Sechelt, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, and to the Sechelt Indian Band.

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*For more information about the SCCA and to view  
 this newsletter on line, please visit our website:  
[www.thescca.ca](http://www.thescca.ca)*

## MEMBERSHIP

☐ Application      ☐ Renewal

Individual Name: _____	Individual Membership      \$20
Other Family Members: _____	Family Membership:      \$30
Group or Business Name: _____	Group Membership:      \$30
Mailing Address: _____	Business Membership:      \$100
	Additional Donation: \$ _____
Phone: _____	Email: _____
Website: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to receive my newsletter by regular mail. (Unless specified, newsletters and other information will be delivered by e-mail.)	
<b><i>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.</i></b>	
As a member of the SCCA, I accept its purpose as stated above.	
Signed: _____	Date: _____
Please mail cheque or money order and this completed application to: SCCA, Box 1969, Sechelt BC V0N 3A0 Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for donations. Registered charity #87322 0446 RR0001	