



Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Newsletter Issue 3

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October/2001

Marbled Murrelet Soars into the Supreme Court

by Maria Hunter

A decision by the Ministry of Forests to proceed with logging in one of the best remaining forest habitats for the marbled murrelet on the Sunshine Coast will be challenged in court. On September 18, the law firm of Arvay Finlay filed for a judicial review in the Supreme Court of British Columbia on behalf of the SCCA and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

The ministry, in approving and offering for tender Timber Sale A48271 (140,700 cubic meters) in the Brittain Landscape Unit, will fragment and destroy the known occupied habitat and nest sites of an endangered population of this threatened BC seabird.

The sale's marginally economic high-elevation forest
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Quick Response by SCCA to New Timber Supply Review

by Linda Williams

Timber Supply Review 2 (TSR2), the timber inventory forecast used by the chief forester to set the annual allowable cut in the Sunshine Coast Timber Supply Area, was released by the Ministry of Forests in June, 2001. The report does not acknowledge that Sunshine Coast communities depend on local forests for a host of goods and services other than timber supply. Goods and services provided by local forests include water and air purification; animal, plant and mycorrhizal food sources; building materials for human shelter; microclimate stabilization; and recreational and aesthetic resources for residents and local tourism operations. These non-timber values, which are fundamental to sustainable communities, have been systematically undervalued in this analysis. Wildlife habitat needs are similarly unaccounted for.

Since 1990, in response to timber shortages, the ministry has dramatically reduced minimum harvest ages instead of reducing the allowable annual cut. Stands with as little as 300 m³/ha at age 150 are now considered viable for logging. These standards indicate a radical downward trend in timber quality and volume. Current practices encourage the "borrowing" of old growth from biodiversity accounts enacted just five years ago under the Forest Practices Code. Both the ministry and the forest industry have known since 1997 that old-growth logging is being allowed today in areas with severe old-growth deficits.

Protection of ungulate winter ranges ceased on October 15, 1998. Since then, these ranges have been riddled with approved cutblocks. No constraints on logging in remaining marbled murrelet nesting habitat have been accounted for under TSR2, although required under the Forest Practices Code since 1995.

The ministry's 1990 TSR Options Report predicted a significant increase in recreational

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Marbled murrelet country: looking south down Jervis Inlet's Prince of Wales Reach from the estuary of the Brittain River. Roger Lagasse photo

A New Park for the Sunshine Coast

by Peter Robson

The Francis Point Marine Park Society (FPMPS) is proud to announce the creation of BC's newest provincial park. The FPMPS and the Nature Conservancy of Canada worked tirelessly for several years to acquire more than 80 hectares of waterfront, known as the McQuarrie property, which covers approximately one-quarter of Francis Peninsula/Beaver Island in Pender Harbour. The new Francis Point Provincial Marine Park is one of the last large undisturbed and easily accessible parcels of waterfront on the Strait of Georgia and is already proving an exciting new recreational destination for residents and visitors to the Sunshine Coast.

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Murrelet Soars into Supreme Court

lands include the best remaining large patches of suitable, actively occupied marbled murrelet nesting habitat in the Brittain Landscape Unit (the west side of Jervis Inlet). The marbled murrelet is recognized as a threatened/imperilled species by both the provincial and federal governments and by international wildlife organizations.

Marbled murrelet populations are of particular concern in the Sunshine Coast Forest District, as the bird's original range has become seriously fragmented and is at present well below the 10 to 12 percent figure recommended by the Federal Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team.

This subsidized sale is proceeding despite the well documented concerns of designated environment officials in the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection Branch. The stumpage price of \$2.23/m³ will cover less than half the amount of money required to plan, supervise and reforest the cutblocks.

"We are confident that the extensive documentation we have received through Freedom of Information, and the clear misinterpretation of provincial law by the district manager in this case, will enable us to obtain a legal remedy that protects this critical habitat," says Dan Bouman, executive director of the SCCA. "Government biologists have emphasized the crucial importance of this area in preventing extirpation of the birds in the Brittain Landscape Unit, and this information must be incorporated into the logging approval process."

The area in question has been proposed for two high-priority Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) under the provisions of the BC government's Identified Wildlife Management Strategy. However, a decision has not yet been made for the legal establishment of the WHAs, and logging is imminent, as the sale has been awarded to a Powell River company, Salisbury Forest Products Ltd.

Funding for legal research and counsel has been provided by the Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund of West Coast Environmental Law. For more background on this action, and on marbled murrelets in general, hit the Current Projects and Conservation Links buttons at the SCCA's new website (www.thescca.ca).

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A New Park for the Sunshine Coast

The ability to purchase the \$5-million property came largely from a \$2.1-million donation by the Seattle-based Paul G Allen Forest Protection Foundation and \$2.2 million from Forest Renewal BC. The Sunshine Coast Regional District contributed \$200,000, and the McQuarrie family donated a portion of the land. The FPMPS raised another \$100,000 through donations and pledges from individuals, local companies and other conservation groups, including the SCCA.

During the summer of 2001, basic signage was installed around the park, and a part-time park official was hired to monitor the site. During the fall of 2001, the Parks Branch will be meeting with stakeholders and the public to formulate an official park plan. This plan will deal with such issues as parking, access, facilities, appropriate uses for the park and trails.

Timber Supply Review Response

usage and acknowledged its inability to meet demand for high-quality recreation opportunities. According to TSR2, the ministry has abandoned recreation programs and the allocation of forestland for recreation. Visual quality objectives (VQOs) no longer maintain scenic landscapes in coastal areas. Preservation VQO (1% allowable disturbance) is entirely absent from the Sunshine Coast's "visual quality spectrum"; retention VQO (5% disturbance) has nearly disappeared; and all VQOs have been adjusted to permit the "maximum allowable disturbance."

The issue of community water supply was accorded one sentence of discussion in the TSR report and makes no reference to the fact that the former Minister of Forests had, only four months previously, stated his ministry's intention of "turning over the community watersheds to the community." Thirty years of well-documented regional district concern, ten years of intense public rejection of logging plans in Chapman Creek and Gray Creek watersheds, and recent devastating events involving unprotected community water systems across Canada is not sufficient to deter the ministry from claiming community watershed reserves for timber supply. (For the SCCA's complete response to the TSR, please see the new website.)



Eco-Care Conservancy Joins SCCA

The SCCA is pleased to welcome a new organization to our association. The Eco-Care Conservancy is involved in building and preserving trails and greenways in the Powell River area. A strong supporter of an LRMP for our region, the Conservancy promotes community forestry and ecotourism, and has helped with the formation of an associated group called YES (Youths Encouraging Sustainability). Welcome aboard!

You can get in touch by email with the Eco-Care Conservancy through Lori Kemp at serenity@prcn.org. Tejas Ewing at tejaswin@hotmail.com is the contact for YES.

These meetings will be announced in the local newspaper.

The ecosystem of the park is classified as the very dry variant of coastal western hemlock. Only 1.9 percent of this type of forest is protected in BC. To address this deficiency, a 12-hectare ecological reserve has been set aside. The reserve covers most of what is being termed the Moore Point peninsula. Hikers are asked not to hike in this area.

For those interested in visiting the rest of the park, follow Highway 101 to Francis Peninsula Road. From there, it is approximately three km to Merrill Road (the main access point for now). Turn left on Merrill and keep going until the road dead ends. Cars can park on the shoulder. A trail starts from the end of the road, and it is only an easy five-minute stroll to the ocean. More challenging trails lead left or right from the ocean. Please stay on the trails (even though they are somewhat faint). The campaign website (www.marinepark.francispoint.bc.ca/site/) is no longer updated but still has useful background information.

Executive Director's Report

by Daniel Bouman

Greetings all!

As you're no doubt aware, the lack of protection for wildlife habitat in the Sunshine Coast Forest District has been a dominant concern for the SCCA over the last two years. Our most recent initiative (detailed on page 1) is one result of several years of efforts to track critical habitat as it appears in Forest Development Plans (FDPs). Here's one unanticipated result of our pending court action: after the press release went out on September 18, messages of support and encouragement started to roll in. Lots of folks and many organizations around the Pacific Northwest are aware of the plight of the marbled murrelet, and share our hope that positive changes are possible. We are certainly not alone on this one.

Here's a brief update on some of our other initiatives to protect critical wildlife habitat. Our Failure to Protect Biodiversity complaint (#000234) to the Forest Practices Board (FPB) in March of last year is now drawing to a conclusion. The FPB investigator has posted a "draft response" to us and to all the named parties of the complaint. A few weeks ago Linda Williams and I burned some serious midnight oil writing a reply to that draft. Unfortunately the draft is confidential so I can't discuss it, but I will say that I'm guardedly optimistic that the FPB will use the complaint to make some much-needed recommendations affecting the treatment of critical wildlife habitats by the MoF. We're hoping for a result before the year is out.

Meanwhile, Interfor's 2001-

2005 North Jervis FDP was recently approved by the district manager of the Ministry of Forests. It contains six new logging approvals in documented murrelet nesting habitat. Shortly after this approval, the SCCA asked the FPB to seek a review/appeal of this plan from the Forest Appeals Commission. The FPB investigated our request and has agreed to move it forward. Hopefully, we will have the results of this initiative in time for the next newsletter. I'll keep you posted.

Here are a few other developments. Our new website is up and running! Check it out at www.thescca.ca. If you look under Current Projects, you will find most of the documentation supporting the initiatives mentioned above. Susan Moore of Future Trac is our webmaster, and I'm very grateful for the spectacular job that she has done. Incidentally, if you check out the SCCA submission to the Timber Supply Review (also under Current Projects), you

will see some excellent graphic presentations that are a good example of the technological capacity that we are developing to support participation in the coming Land and Resource Management Plan process.

One final note. My friend and comrade of many campaigns, Brad Benson, has resigned as chair of the SCCA, but will continue to be available as a special advisor to the board. Thanks, Brad, and good luck.

Our new chair is Maria Hunter of the Sunshine Coast Species Survival Network. She brings a great deal of community experience and a strong background in biodiversity law and policy to bear on the responsibilities of the position. Maria's extensive skills with children will doubtless be very useful also in bringing order to our always passionate, sometimes chaotic board meetings! Welcome, Maria.



A well attended all-candidates' meeting on the environment was organized by the SCCA in Sechelt. Liberal Harold Long dropped out at the last minute. Brad Benson photo

Test Drive our new Website

The SCCA's new website is now fully functional at www.thescca.ca. Why not take it out for a spin? You'll find the association's constitution and bylaws, biographies of the directors, our newsletters, links to other conservation groups, and directions on how to join and donate to the SCCA. The Current Projects button will take you to essential background information on the judicial review of the Brittain LU timber sale, the Forest Practices Board complaint, the Drinking Water Protection Plan, the Timber Supply Review response and more.

One of the best features of the site is the opportunity for SCCA member groups to have their own page, or a link to their

website. The Halfmoon Bay Greenways group, for instance, is posting electronic maps of its trail systems. Thanks a megabyte to Susan Moore and Future Trac for a fine looking site.

Correction

In a story in our last newsletter, it was misreported that Terminal Forest Products would be seeking Forest Stewardship Certification for some of its local timber and forest products. In fact, Terminal is seeking certification under International Standards Organization (ISO) Standards #14,001 and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) administered by the American Forester and Pulp Association. We apologize for the error.

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Newsletter of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

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Native Plant Society of BC,
Sunshine Coast Chapter
Pender Harbour and District
Wildlife Society

One Straw Society
Sargeant Bay Society
Sunshine Coast Heritage Society
Sunshine Coast Natural History Society
Sunshine Coast Species Survival Network
Sunshine Coast Water First Society
Tetrahedron Alliance
Tuwanek Ratepayers Association

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

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

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

" \$10 - Group membership

Mailing address: _____

• SCCA representative/contact: _____

Phone: _____

• Alternate: _____

Fax number: _____

" \$10 - Affiliate membership (individuals)

Email address: _____

Website: _____

" \$ _____ Donation

I accept the purpose of the SCCA. Signature: _____

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