



FREE!

PROTECT *the* SOOKE HILLS

Wilderness now or never!

NDP says Sooke Hills Park a fantastic idea if GVWD agrees

The Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD) Board is made up of 8 people appointed from Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt and Saanich municipal councils. It controls the fate of a key part of the *Sooke Hills Wilderness*, 45 km² of "off-catchment" lands (lands "catching" water that does not drain into the reservoirs providing the region's tap water).

The Sooke Hills are special lands, part of an endangered ecosystem with a number of rare and threatened species. More than 99% of this vast ecosystem's ancient Douglas fir forests have been logged. Some of the last oldgrowth stands left are in Victoria's Sooke Hills.

The unprotected Sooke Hills naturally link Tod Inlet, the Gowlland Range, Goldstream, Sooke Mountain, and East Sooke Parks. With the simple stroke of a pen, not costing taxpayers a dime, the GVWD Board could designate its Sooke Hills lands as a park, a critical link in creating a sea-to-sea greenbelt stretching from Tod Inlet to the Sooke Basin. It would preserve the natural beauty of the Greater Victoria region, protect biodiversity, and allow for a 35 km long world-class wilderness trail with trailhead just 15 km from downtown Victoria.

According to Elizabeth Cull, British Columbia's Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks,

"the Sooke Hills would be a fantastic addition to the Commonwealth Legacy. If there's some way we can encourage the Water Board to make this land available it would be wonderful."



LARRY WELLS

Garry Oak grove with purple shooting stars on Mt. MacDonald.

WCWC initiates Sooke Hills scientific studies

When WCWC began its campaign to preserve the Sooke Hills Wilderness last fall, high on the list of things to do was to gather all the scientific information available about the area. It quickly became apparent that, although the Sooke Hills is part of one of the most diverse and endangered ecosystems in British Columbia (the Nanaimo Lowlands), little in the way of specific studies, including inventories of the flora and fauna, had been done.

WCWC needed expert help to inventory the plants and animals found in the Sooke Hills. All it took was the asking. Without hesitation, many of B.C.'s most renowned biological scientists came forward to volunteer.

It was not as easy to get permission from the GVWD to enter its off-catchment Sooke Hills lands. But finally WCWC had jumped through all the hoops. With WCWC's insurance and Workers Compensation in place, official approval came in late April, and the first of many expeditions began.

It is still too early to say what the results will be. But WCWC has no doubt that hitherto undetected rarities will be found: plants, animals, birds, mosses, lichens, and insects that rely on the Sooke Hills remaining wild for their survival.



WCWC FILES

Dr. Adolf Ceska of the Royal B.C. Museum and Adriane Pollard look for rare plants on Wolf Hill.



SUPPORT FOR PROTECTING THE SOOKE HILLS

Scientists to Study Biodiversity

Biodiversity is a new buzz word. It is a grand concept that encompasses the full range of variation found in the living world. This includes genes (the individual units of inheritance found in every living creature); species (all the different kinds of plants and animals); and ecosystems (the unique associations of plants and animals which interact together and occupy a certain area).

The amount of biodiversity found in the natural world is staggering. No one even knows how many species there are—the estimates range from 10 million to 100 million. This remarkable range of biodiversity gives lifecosystems on Earth great flexibility, allowing them to evolve to face changing conditions.

But due to human activities such as clearcut logging, urban and agricultural expansion, and toxic pollution, biodiversity is diminishing around the world at an alarming rate.

Currently the loss of biodiversity world-wide is estimated to be over 25,000 species a year. Most of these species are inconspicuous insects not yet named by scientists. Their importance to the well-being of the biosphere is unknown. The only way to reverse this scary trend is to work to protect biodiversity at the local level.

Southern Vancouver Island has the highest concentration of rare plants in British Columbia. Yet less than 1% of this ecologically unique region (the Nanaimo Lowlands) is protected in parks. According to Environment Canada's recent publication, *Biodiversity in British Columbia: Our Changing Environment*, the city of Victoria is at the heart of one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America.

Canadians are committed to preserving biodiversity under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity which Canada ratified in 1992. Now is the time to act on that commitment.

This spring, WCWC, recognizing that little was known about the rare and threatened plants and animals in the Sooke Hills Wilderness, launched a scientific inventory project in the area. WCWC believes, as in the case of Carmanah Valley, that greater knowledge of the biodiversity found in an area can lead to wider recognition of its importance and increased public and political will for it to be preserved.

Among the many well-known scientists who are volunteering their time to accomplish WCWC's biodiversity survey of Sooke Hills are Dr. Adolf Ceska, Royal B.C. Museum; Dr. Chris Pielou, ecologist and naturalist; Alison McCutcheon, ethnobotanist, University of British Columbia (UBC); Dr. Nancy Turner, Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria; Dr. W.B.



"Research [in GVWD off-catchment lands] has a high probability of yielding information of worldwide value on genetic diversity. Keeping them untouched will do much to conserve the genetic diversity of Vancouver Island."

Dr. Chris Pielou, Professor Emeritus, UBC



WCWC FILES

"Don't Make the Same Mistake Twice"



Frank Planes, Hereditary Chief of the T'Sou-ke Nation

Frank Planes, a 72 year old hereditary chief of the T'Sou-ke Nation describes the Sooke Hills, his traditional territory.

The Sooke area was one of the great places. It had an abundance of anything that you would have. There was deer and grouse in the hills, the lakes and streams. The salmon in the rivers were just loaded with salmon.

We use the land for everything. The land is everything. It encompasses everything we do. Everything we do, we get it from the special places on land.

When I was a teenager, I guess from Nanaimo well, the place was just an ocean of stumps, logged right off. When this southern end of Vancouver Island was logged off we used to get floods, we ever get floods. I've seen houses coming down the River end over end. With the flash run-off the



PROTECTING THE SOOKE HILLS

Study Biodiversity

It is a grand concept that encompasses the living world. This includes genes (the building blocks of life found in every living creature); species (all the plants and animals); and ecosystems (the unique communities which interact together and occupy a particular area).

Biodiversity in the natural world is staggering. No one knows exactly how many species there are—the estimates range from 10 million to 100 million. A wide range of biodiversity gives lifecosystems on our planet the ability to evolve to face changing conditions.

As clearcut logging, urban and agricultural development increase, biodiversity is diminishing around the world at an alarming rate.

World-wide is estimated to be over 25,000 species of insects, many of which are inconspicuous insects not yet named. The loss of biodiversity and the well-being of the biosphere is unknown. The current trend is to work to protect biodiversity at all levels.

The highest concentration of rare plants in the world is found in the Sooke Hills (the Sooke Mountains) in British Columbia. According to Environment Canada's *Biodiversity in British Columbia: Our Changing World*, the Sooke Hills are at the heart of one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world.

Protecting biodiversity under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity which Canada ratified in 1992. Now is the time to act.

That little was known about the rare and unique Sooke Hills Wilderness, lunched a study of the area. WCWC believes, as in the case of the Sooke Hills, the knowledge of the biodiversity found in an area is of great importance and increased public and private awareness.

Scientists who are volunteering their time to study the Sooke Hills are Dr. Adolf Ceska, ecologist and naturalist; Alison Hogg, ecologist and naturalist; University of British Columbia (UBC); Dr. Nancy Turner, ecologist, University of Victoria; Dr. W.B. Bond, ecologist, UBC; Dr. Richard Hebda, Curator of Botany, University of Victoria; Dr. Kirkvold, Biologist, B.C. Ministry of Parks. The study is completed this summer and an interim report is expected to be published in the fall.



"Don't Make the Same Mistake Twice"



WCWC FILES

Frank Planes, Hereditary Chief of the T'Sou-Ke Nation.

Frank Planes, a 72 year old hereditary chief of the T'Sou-Ke Nation describes the Sooke Hills, his traditional territory:

The Sooke area was one of the great places in the world. It had an abundance of anything that you would ever wish to have. There was deer and grouse in the hills, trout in all the lakes and streams. The salmon in the rivers were, well, the rivers were just loaded with salmon.

We use the land for everything. The land is our staff of life. It encompasses everything we do. Everything you want to do, we get it from the special places on land.

When I was a teenager, I guess from Nanaimo down, pretty well, the place was just an ocean of stumps, I mean it was logged right off. When this southern end of Vancouver Island was logged off we used to get floods. Oh, did we ever get floods. I've seen houses coming down the Sooke River end over end. With the flash run-off there was no root system to hold the water back...This don't happen any more because of the roots of the second growth holding the water back--this is the way we want to keep it. So we got to be awful careful now that we don't make the same mistake twice. So we better start looking at doing things so we don't repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Tsou-Ke Nation's traditional territory includes the drainage areas of the Jordan, Sooke, and Charters Rivers and Veitch and Ayum Creeks.

Once I went to the hills with hollows. I stood with hollows beneath my feet. I went to the hills with hollows beneath my feet. I went to the hills with hollows beneath my feet. I went to the hills with hollows beneath my feet.

- Four
writ



Hikers take in the beauty of the Sooke Hills.

Sooke Hills Wilderness Proposal

- Existing Parkland
- 1. Goldstream
- 2. Sooke Mountain
- 3. Gowlland Range
- 4. East Sooke





NANCY DOLAN

One of the most significant populations of Satin flowers in B.C. is on Mt. MacDonald.



WICWC FILES

"Amphibians (are)...an important link in the energy flow of wetland ecosystems."
Stan Orchard, Herpetologist

The pockets of ancient coastal Douglas fir in the Sooke Hills are some of the only stands of their kind left in the 342,000 hectare Nanaimo Lowlands ecosystem. Less than 1% of this ecosystem's original forest remains intact.

While most of the Sooke Hills Wilderness has been logged once, many veteran Douglas fir seed trees were spared. Over the vast majority of the area the Douglas fir forest has naturally regenerated. If protected from logging, the young Sooke Hills forest, with its interspersed pockets of oldgrowth, can recover its natural grandeur and wild biodiversity.

Royal B.C. Museum; Dr. Chris Pielou, ecologist and naturalist; Alison McCutcheon, ethnobotanist, University of British Columbia (UBC); Dr. Nancy Turner, Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria; Dr. W.B. Schofield, Professor of Botany, UBC; Dr. Richard Hebda, Curator of Botany, Royal B.C. Museum and Sherry Kirkvold, Biologist, B.C. Ministry of Parks. The field work will be largely completed this summer and an interim report is due out this fall.



GRAHAM OSBORNE

Old Growth coastal Douglas fir in Niagara Creek. Keystone species in one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America.

Island was logged off we used to get floods ever get floods. I've seen houses coming down the River end over end. With the flash run-off system to hold the water back....This don't because of the roots of the second growth back--this is the way we want to keep it. So awful careful now that we don't make the same mistake twice. So we better start looking at doing to repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Tsou-Ke Nation's traditional territory includes drainage areas of the Jordan, Sooke, and Clifton Veitch and Ayum Creeks.

Sooke Hills Wilderness

- Existing Parkland**
 1. Goldstream
 2. Sooke Mountain
 3. Gowland Range
 4. East Sooke
- Proposed Parkland**
- GVWD Surplus Lands**
 5. Niagara Creek
 6. Veitch Creek
 7. Waugh Creek
- Crown and Private Lands**
 8. Ayum Creek
 9. Charters River
- Trails**
 - Proposed Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail
 - Galloping Goose Trail
 - - - Goldstream, Gowland and Tod Inlet Trails
- Rivers and Shorelines**
- Major Highways**
- GVWD Water Supply Area Boundary**





SOOKE HILLS WILDERNESS IS GROWING

Make me Twice"



WCWC FILES

the T'Sou-Ke Nation.

ry chief of the T'Sou-Ke
a traditional territory:

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Once I went into a misty wood with hollow trees where bats stood. I looked to see right beneath me a long river that went to the sea. There were witch's hair fronds so long, skunk cabbage drenched by rain and slimy logs of evergreen; it was the prettiest sight I have ever seen. It was so quiet and dark you could hear the water drops.

- Fourth Grade Student writing on Sooke Hills



IAIN FORBES

Outdoor Classroom: Grade 4 students from St. Michael's University Junior School work on their art during a field trip to Velch Creek.

Imagine a Trail from Sea to Sea

Imagine hiking for two days through some of Earth's last stands of wild coastal Douglas fir forests, through lush valley bottoms and over rocky outcroppings, following streams and ridges in an incredibly diverse and ecologically rich landscape. All this is accessed only 15 km from a major urban centre--Victoria, capital of the most ecologically-diverse province in North America--British Columbia.

Today it is illegal to take this hike. The proposed *Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail* runs through 4,500 hectares of surplus, off-catchment lands controlled and managed by the Greater Victoria Water District Board (GVWD), which severely restricts access to these lands. (WCWC needed GVWD's permission to conduct scientific research there.)

But "trespassing" in the Sooke Hills can not possibly harm Greater Victoria residents' tap water because the lands are "off-catchment"--outside the area that actually drains into the reservoirs that store the region's drinking water.

The GVWD "off-catchment" lands are about half of the 9,300 ha *Sooke Hills Wilderness* which WCWC proposes for protection. WCWC's vision is a protected greenbelt stretching from Tod Inlet to Sooke Basin with a hiking



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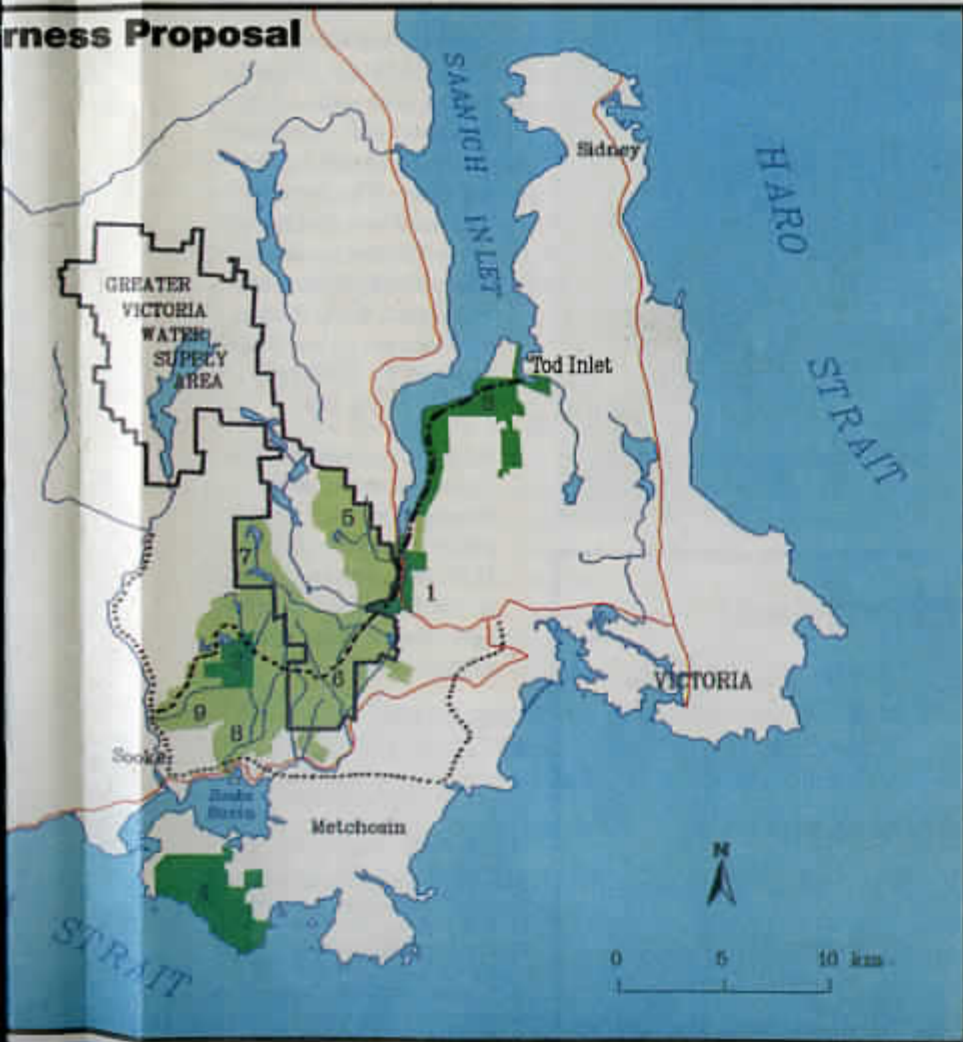
Hikers take in the beautiful view.

WCWC FILES

The GVWD "off-catchment" lands are about half of the 9,300 ha *Sooke Hills Wilderness* which WCWC proposes for protection. WCWC's vision is a protected greenbelt stretching from Tod Inlet to Sooke Basin with a hiking trail through the Sooke Hills to allow people to experience the spiritual, scenic, and recreational values of a rare and healthy forest ecosystem. Connecting with Goldstream Park and the new Commonwealth Legacy parks to the north, the proposed *Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail* would wind through the Waugh, Veitch, Ayum, and Charters Valleys and link up with the Galloping Goose trail system near Sooke Potholes.

As the demand for parks and hiking trails continues to rise and as the last unprotected wild areas are lost to logging and urban sprawl, wilderness will be recognized as our most precious resource. The *Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail*, now still a vision, must become a reality.

Wilderness Proposal



Parks Boost Local Economy



LARRY WELLS

Looking west from Victoria's Inner harbour, the Sooke Hills Wilderness provides a beautiful backdrop in the distance.

Tourism Victoria, an independent tourist industry organization with 800 business members, has endorsed the protection of the Sooke Hills Wilderness as part of a sea-to-sea Victoria region greenbelt. They appreciate the economic value of large, natural parks and the scenic importance of an unmarred natural backdrop to the city of Victoria.

Bill Turner, Co-Chair of Tourism Victoria's Environment Committee, says that "the sea-to-sea proposal would provide a vital link in a world class network of trails, parks and greenspace which is rapidly becoming a major tourism destination. Natural areas have always been vital to Victoria's tourist industry. As the world continues to become more environmentally conscious, Victoria's natural areas will become even more valuable. Their preservation and protection is critical to sustaining Victoria's only major sustainable industry."

Tourism employs 30,000 people and brings \$800 million in revenues into Victoria every year.

Which future do you choose for the Sooke Hills?

SWAP



Clearcut on Kapoor lands, Victoria Watershed, May'95.

Within the Greater Victoria Watershed are 1,288 hectares of private lands belonging to Kapoor Lumber Company. Active logging on these lands is placing pressure on the GVWD to acquire them. But, despite the fact that the GVWD has \$10 million in a fund set up in 1985 for the purpose of buying private lands in its catchment area, it is considering swapping some of the Sooke Hills Wilderness for the Kapoor lands.

This makes no sense. The tax assessment value of the Kapoor lands is \$1.4 million. Most of the high value timber has already been logged and impending government regulations on private logging in community watersheds will lower the value of the lands. A buy out will surely cost less than \$10 million.

Trading the Kapoor lands for the ecologically and recreationally valuable off-catchment lands in the Sooke Hills Wilderness can only benefit Kapoor Lumber Company and short-change the public.

DEMO



Seymour Demo Forest, N. Vancouver, June'95.

The Association of B.C. Professional Foresters (ABCPF), the society that all foresters must belong to in order to practice their profession in B.C., has an "axe to grind". It proposed that the Sooke Hills Wilderness become a "demonstration forest". When public support for protecting this area increased, the ABCPF renamed their proposal a "community forest". Now it's being touted as an "educational park".

Don't let the name changes fool you. They all mean logging the last large fragment of an endangered forest ecosystem. You can't preserve an endangered ecosystem as wilderness and log it at the same time.

In Vancouver, there is a move to make the Seymour Demonstration Forest a park because people realize that logging is "demonstrated" on the vast majority of B.C.'s landscape, and protected green space near their city is a rare, valuable and irreplaceable asset.

SPRAWL . . .



WVCWC FILES

Housing development near Sooke Hills, May'95.

The Victoria Capital Regional District is projected to have a population of 400,000 by the year 2010. That's a 25% increase over today's population. Even with careful planning, it will be difficult to avoid losing the green spaces and wildlands that now make this region so beautiful and liveable.

Some say we could supply more water for the projected larger population by raising the height of the Sooke Reservoir Dam to capture more winter rain. Selling parts of the Sooke Hills Wilderness for new housing developments is one proposed way to pay for this dam.

But this would only further encourage urban sprawl, increase traffic congestion and pollution, and decrease greenspace and biodiversity. This is a fool's choice. Water conservation measures could provide the needed "extra" water. Keeping the Sooke Hills Wilderness wild is the wiser, quality of life choice.





...or Keep it Wild!

WCWC FILES

Overlooking Veitch Creek Valley and Sugar Loaf Mtn. from Mt. MacDonald.

Letters let'em know the importance of saving the Sooke Hills Wilderness

The provincial government says it will accept a gift of the Sooke Hills off-catchment lands from the GVWD Board and make them part of the Commonwealth Legacy protected lands. So what's the hold up?

The Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD) Board is made up of municipal mayors and councillors. So far it has refused to take a stand on protecting its "surplus" (off-catchment) lands. They are the keystone of the Sooke Hills Wilderness Proposal. The Board has promised public meetings. When will they be? Will the Board take up the B.C. Government's offer to make Sooke Hills a park?

Write to:

Chairman David McLean and Board
Greater Victoria Water District
479 Island Highway, Victoria, BC V8W 1P6
Fax: 361-0348

And send a copy to:

Honourable Elizabeth Cull
Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks
Legislative Buildings, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Fax: 387-1356

The current GVWD board members are: City of Victoria Councillors David McLean, Jane Lunt and Geoff Young; District of Saanich Mayor Murray Coell and Councillors Robert Gillespie and Ian Cass; District of Oak Bay Councillor John Pallett; and Esquimalt Municipality Councillor James King.

Not Such a Wild Idea

In 1958, the Greater Victoria Water District Board sold some of its "surplus" (off-catchment) watershed lands to the province. The price - \$1. The land was to be used for a "higher good"—the creation of Goldstream Provincial Park. Today, Goldstream is loved and enjoyed by thousands of people every year.

Will the current GVWD Board show the same foresight and wisdom in dealing with the Sooke Hills off-catchment lands as the Board did 37 years ago when it helped create Goldstream Park?

CREDITS

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Yes! I will help save the Sooke Hills Wilderness!

I am writing a letter to the GVWD Board and sending a copy to Environment Minister Elizabeth Cull telling them how important I think it is for the GVWD Board to donate the entire Sooke Hills Wilderness off-catchment lands to the B.C. government for a provincial park.

I will contribute to your campaign to save the Sooke Hills Wilderness.
Here is my tax deductible gift of \$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 other to help you win.

I want to renew my membership become a WCWC member. Enclosed is my \$30 annual membership fee.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Send in to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee - Victoria Chapter, #301-19 Bastion Sq., Victoria, BC V8W 1J1.