

Victoria's Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt



Overlooking the Gowlland Range, Saanich Inlet, the heart of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, Juan de Fuca, and the Olympic Range. Photo by Garth Lenz.
Taken from *Beautiful B.C. Magazine's* story on the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt Campaign in the upcoming Spring, 2000 edition of *Beautiful B.C. Magazine*. Used with permission.

A bigger CRD Parks and Trails System needed to keep Victoria one of the most beautiful and liveable cities in the world

Victoria, with its surrounding still-natural Capital Regional District (CRD) lands, is renowned for being one of the most beautiful and liveable cities in North America. But will it remain that way?

The CRD has spectacular wild forests, rich marine ecosystems and an excellent regional park system. But all of these wonderful features are now threatened by the region's rapidly growing population and expanding urban development.

The public and planners alike recognize that the existing regional parks and trails are inadequate to meet our area's growing demand for green space and recreational opportunities. Protection of additional natural areas must be pursued if Victoria is to retain its scenic beauty and the healthy lifestyle it offers today.

A concerted effort has to be made now to secure the land base and develop the trail infrastructure to meet our needs. Delay is not an option because the lands will likely be gone--lost to development --or too expensive if we wait. Today we have a "once only" opportunity to expand our protected area system. It will only cost about \$30 million over the next decade -- not much in comparison to the cost of community indoor recreational facilities!

This \$30 million will enable the purchase of the remaining private lands needed to complete the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt (see story, map and photos inside). It will also enable the purchase of

other threatened lands adjacent to some well-known regional parks and support development of a world-class network of hiking and backpacking trails.

On some ballots in this November's municipal elections, voters will be polled as to whether or not they agree to a small levy--about \$6 to \$10 a year per average household--to cover the cost of expanding the park system for the CRD.

This vote is non-binding. But it's important, because it will send a clear message to the city and regional elected officials that citizens are saying ***"Yes, I want a healthy, beautiful and liveable region for our children and future generations. Yes, I'll pay the tiny price it takes to buy the needed green space."***



Already the Capital Regional District has less green space protected than many other regions. A major effort must be made now to secure the needed new parks and park additions...before development forecloses opportunities and it is too late.

Aerial photo of Greater Victoria. Photo by Smiles Photography.

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Overlooking Shields, Crabapple and Grasse Lakes nestled in the Sooke Hills above Sooke Basin at the south end of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt. These privately owned lands must be purchased and protected. Photo by Jeff Barber.

PROTECTED GREEN SPACES BRING ECONOMICS BENEFITS

Tourism provides lots of jobs and brings significant revenues into the Capital Region. In B.C. the tourism industry employs about 250,000 people and currently generates \$8.5 billion a year. Tourism is the fastest growing industry in B.C.

"Tourism is the world's biggest industry and annually injects over a billion dollars into Greater Victoria's economy. Adventure and eco-tourism are the fastest growing sectors of the industry. We have the perfect setting to benefit from this growth, both in terms of increased

economy and quality of life."

(Former Tourism Victoria President, Stewart Johnston)

Victoria was rated number one in the world for "environment/ambience," by the Conde Nast Traveller magazine. The high ratings are in large part due to the Capital Region's wild forest backdrop and its surrounding marine areas, which are beautiful to the eye and soothing to the soul.

Green spaces not only bestow tourism benefits but also expand recreational opportunities for residents and raise property values. It is

estimated that properties adjacent to protected greenways sell for 5 to 33 percent more than those without access to greenways. For example, in Boulder, Colorado values of homes adjacent to green spaces are up to 32 percent higher than those a kilometre away. There the total property value for the neighbourhood next to the greenbelt was estimated to be \$5.4 million higher than it would have been without it.

Green spaces increase the overall appeal of a community to prospective tourists, new business and new residents.

REGIONAL PARKS

- Protect regionally significant natural environments. They are places where nature is allowed to flourish and evolve.
- Provide people with opportunities to participate in a range of outdoor activities.
- Are places where people go to experience and learn about nature. They foster appreciation and respect for a region's natural environment.
- Attract people and contribute to a region's liveability, health and economy.

REGIONAL TRAILS

- Are established in natural settings to provide a range of recreational opportunities.
- Connect the region's communities and its protected areas.
- Connect the CRD to other parts of Vancouver Island.
- Provide natural corridors that link habitats and provide additional habitat and travel routes for animals and plants.

Adapted from the CRD Parks Master Plan - The Vision for Regional Parks and Trails

CRD Park Land Acquisition Priorities

Add Needed Lands to Existing Regional Parks and Trails:

- Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt
- Thetis Lake (View Royal), Mill Hill (Langford), Francis-King (Saanich), Mount Work (Highlands)
- Mount Wells (Langford Electoral Area), Sooke Hills (Langford and Metchosin)
- Horth Hill (North Saanich), Island View Beach (Central Saanich), Elk/Beaver Lake and Bear Hill (Saanich)
- Witty's Lagoon (Metchosin) and East Sooke (Sooke Electoral Area)
- South and West Salt Spring Island (Salt Spring Island)
- Regional Trail

Establish New Regional Parks:

- vicinity of Galiano Bluffs, Mount Galiano, and Mount Sutil (Galiano Island)
- along Millstream Creek from Mill Hill Park to Esquimalt Harbour (Langford, View Royal and Colwood)
- land adjoining Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site and land in Royal Roads University (Colwood)
- land from Gowlland Point to Brooks Point (South Pender Island)
- land surrounding Ford Lake, Cusheon Lake, and Fulford Creek (Salt Spring Island)
- land adjacent to Sooke River (Sooke Electoral Area)

Comparing Protected Land Base in Different Jurisdictions

Capital Regional District	- 8%
Greater Vancouver Regional District	- 26%
Auckland Regional Council (Auckland, New Zealand)	- 15%
East Bay Regional Park District (east side of San Francisco Bay)	- 17%

Note: Protected lands are National, Provincial, State and Regional Parks, Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy Lands, Ecological Reserves, Wildlife Management Areas, Islands Trust Fund lands, and Municipal Parks with nature conservation focus.

Facts about the Capital Regional District Parks

Total Area: 8,582 hectares
(refers to Regional Parks--45% of all CRD parklands)

No. of Regional Parks: 25 + one trail

No. of Visitors: 2.2 million (1998)
(Most visitors are from the region. About 20% of the visitors to some parks during the summer are not residents. Visitors are of all ages.)

Activities: Most popular are hiking, cycling, horseback riding, nature study and swimming.

Years ago Ray Zimmerman (shown in the photo on the right among giant Douglas firs in the new Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park he helped create) envisioned and proposed the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt. Photo from WCWC photo file.





A small and rapidly closing WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Growth experts in the Capital Regional District are projecting a 25 percent population increase over the next ten years—400,000 people by the year 2010. This will crowd the city and surrounding area. Many current green spaces that are not in parks or protected areas will not be green any more as they are gobbled up by growth.

Look around. It's the green spaces and the nearby wildlands that now make this region so beautiful and liveable.

To take a quote from the CRD's new Parks Draft Master Plan ***"It is essential to plan now for a regional parks and trails system that will meet the needs of present and future residents. A critical part of that process must be to acquire the appropriate land base of natural areas, before they are lost to urban and suburban development."***

This Draft Master Plan identifies properties that are crucial to achieving the Region's Green Blue Spaces vision. The Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is an important component of this plan.



Unprotected Shields Lake in the Sooke Hills at the south end of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is a backpacker's paradise. Photo from WCWC file.

Other acquisitions are also required to protect the integrity of existing parks to complete the region's trail system. According to this Plan the cost of purchasing the lands is estimated to be between \$25 and \$30 million.

Blue component just as important as Green in the Sea-to-Sea Belt

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CAMPAIGN TO CREATE THE SEA-TO-SEA GREEN BLUE BELT

The Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign aims to establish a 20,000 hectare corridor of protected land and marine areas linking existing parks from Salt Spring Island to Juan de Fuca Strait.

- 1990** - The Saanich Inlet Protection Society proposed that Saanich Inlet be designated a National Marine Park Reserve.
- 1994** - Both the CRD and CVRD Boards and the municipalities surrounding Saanich Inlet voted in favour of supporting the Marine Park Reserve designation.
 - Responding to considerable public pressure, the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks initiated the Saanich Inlet Study.
 - The Gowlland Foundation successfully involved other groups, the CRD and B.C. government in purchasing the \$17 million Tod Gowlland lands for a major park--the heartland of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt.
 - The Sea-to-Sea Greenbelt Society and Western Canada Wilderness Committee's Victoria Chapter launched a campaign to achieve park protection for the Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD) surplus off-catchment lands in the Sooke Hills.
- 1996** - The Salt Spring Island Conservancy purchased the Mill Farm lands, a key part of the "Belt" on southwest Salt Spring Island.
- 1997** - 4,100 hectares of the GVWD's surplus lands were protected as the Sooke Hills Regional Park. Tremendous public support and leadership by the provincial government made this victory possible.
- 1998** - Federal government announced a feasibility study for a Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area which includes Saanich Inlet.
 - The Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek and the Habitat Acquisition Trust, with considerable financial help from the Federal Government, purchased the estuary lands of Ayum Creek, a key south end part of the "Belt".

- In the summer 13 local conservation groups form an alliance to work to complete the "Green Blue Belt".
- 1999** - The Land Conservancy of B.C. purchased a crucial connecting property on Ayum Creek and is now negotiating the purchase of other properties in the south end of the "Belt".
 - The draft CRD Parks Master Plan identified the completion of the Sea-to-Sea Blue Green Belt as one of its land acquisition priorities.
 - With the "Belt" 75 percent completed, the Alliance continues to work with concerned citizens and all levels of government to purchase the remaining private lands to make the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt vision a reality.

Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt Alliance Member Organizations

Assoc. for the Protection of Rural Metchosis
 Cowichan Community Land Trust Society
 Garry Oak Meadow Protection Society
 Habitat Acquisition Trust
 Hagan Creek Restoration Project
 Rural Association of East Sooke
 Saanich Inlet Protection Society
 Salt Spring Island Conservancy
 Sea-to-Sea Greenbelt Society
 Sierra Club of B.C.
 Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek
 The Land Conservancy of B.C.
 Western Canada Wilderness Committee

The Capital Region's coastal marine areas are home to a wide variety of fish and marine invertebrate populations including:

- * Over 400 species of fish.
- * The richest diversity of invertebrates in Canada.
- * A total of over 3,800 known species.
- * Stellar and California sea lions, fur and harbour seals, grey and minke whales, orcas and porpoises.
- * Half a million seabirds breed in this area, including Cassin's auklets, cormorants, gulls, rhinoceros auklets, and storm petrels.
- * A total of about two million shorebirds, diving and dabbling ducks, geese, grebes, loons, and seabirds use these coastal waters as summering, staging and wintering areas.

The 'Blue' in the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt includes spectacular marine areas such as: Sansum Narrows, Burgoyne Bay, Saanich Inlet, Todd Inlet, the Sooke Basin and parts of the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca. They are threatened by pollution from urban and industrial development, overfishing, and by the negative impact of fish farming. The CRD's marine environment is desperately in need of permanent protection.

Our marine areas provide recreational and eco-tourism opportunities that bring economic benefits to communities. By protecting the spawning grounds of our dwindling wild Pacific salmon populations, we can help ensure that sport and commercial fisheries can provide a sustainable living for British Columbians in the future.

Members of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt Alliance advocate designating certain areas such as Saanich Inlet as Marine Conservation Areas. A Marine Conservation Area designation would prohibit ocean dumping, dredging and the exploration for or the development of non-renewable resources. A Marine Conservation Area may protect marine biodiversity, representative ecosystems and special natural features in addition to conserving fishery resources and habitat. If protected, areas like Saanich Inlet could provide tremendous opportunities for recreation, tourism, scientific research and sharing traditional knowledge.

Marine areas within the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt should be protected as part of Canada's Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy. In 1995, the provincial and federal governments made a joint commitment "to preserve and enhance the ecological, cultural, recreational and economic values of British Columbia's coastal and marine environment," through a program called the *Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy*. Nearing the end of this five-year initiative, more work must be done to create a marine legacy that will well serve this and future generations.

PAVING PARADISE THREATS TO GREENSPACE

"Urban sprawl is the greatest environmental threat in the Georgia Basin".

(British Columbia government study)

Green spaces and wildlands make the Capital Regional District a great place to live.

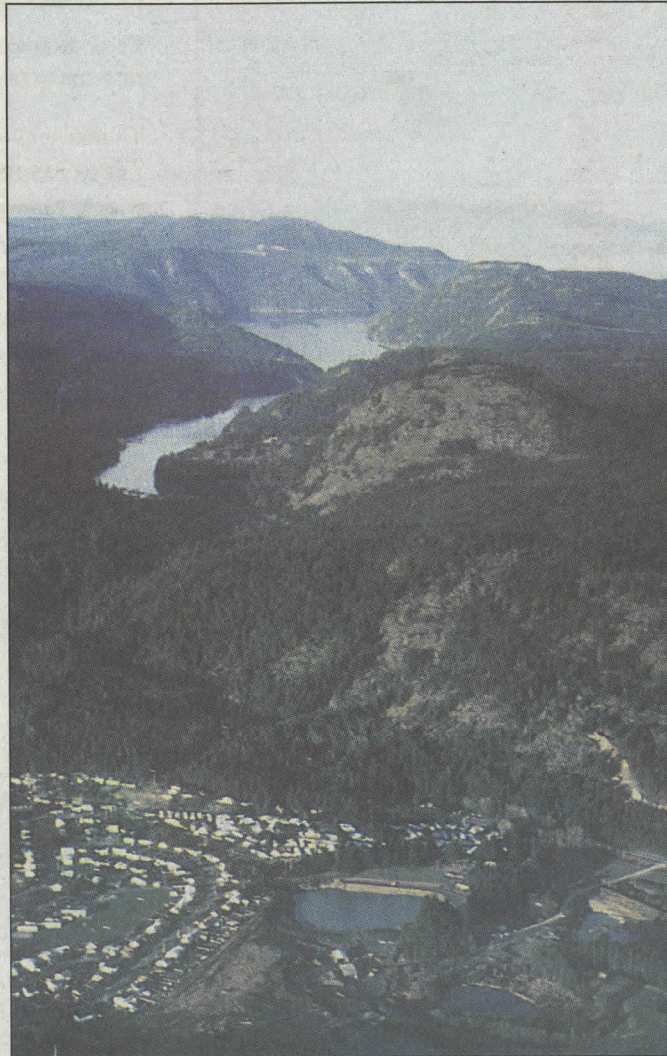
But the Capital Region's natural areas are seriously threatened by population growth and corresponding development. Amongst the current threats are proposed urban development projects on lands adjacent to East Sooke Park and numerous rock quarry proposals on lands adjacent to the new Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Many of the green space areas that Capital Region residents now take for granted are not yet protected as parks. In fact, most of these green spaces are private lands that could be developed and lost as green space in the very near future.

If certain large tracts of private land currently on the market are not purchased and conserved soon to complete the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, then they will be sold to developers and the "belt" will be broken by inappropriate residential urban sprawl.

"If we want to live in the Emerald Kingdom, we're going to have to buy the jewels."

(Our View, Times Colonist, April 25, 1999)



Housing developments encroaching on Goldstream Provincial Park and Sooke Hills Regional Park at the head of Saanich Inlet threaten the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt. Photo by Alison Spriggs.

Are you willing to pay \$6 to \$10 a year for more parks?

On Election Day, November 20, 1999 many municipalities in the CRD will include an "opinion poll" question on their ballot. Voters will be asked whether or not they support the establishment of a regional parkland acquisition fund. It is not a referendum. The results will not be binding.

A parkland acquisition fund will allow CRD Parks to purchase significant natural areas identified by the public and documented in the draft CRD Parks Master Plan in 1998. This fund is needed because there are no "uncommitted" public funds to acquire additional parkland.

To date, 3.6 percent of Greater Victoria has been protected as regional parkland. Much of the area's remaining unprotected green space is at risk because of the region's rapid population growth.

Purchasing lands for parks today, to secure the health of our region for the future, makes sense. The land is affordable now, but it may not be for long.

Some of the region's ecosystems are extremely threatened. For example 95 percent of the original Garry Oak Woodlands in the Capital Region have already been lost to development.

The population of the Capital Region has already grown by 25 percent over the last 10 years and this extremely fast growth rate is expected to continue. New parks and additions to old parks are needed to keep our Capital Region one of the finest small cities in all of North America.

Get your aspiring political leaders to take a stand. Do they advocate setting up a Parks Acquisition Fund? Do they support the completion of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt?

The CRD needs to quickly establish a park acquisition fund that is sufficient to purchase the crucial properties needed to complete Greater Victoria's Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt. Such a fund makes good financial sense. We won't have to borrow money to purchase parklands, as has been done in the past. Instead, public money raised to buy parks will be spent that way, not on interest payments.

In 1998, before any educational campaign was launched about the need for such a levy, 61 percent of people responding to a random survey in the CRD said that they would support a property tax increase to buy more lands for parks. Most people were willing to accept an increase in tax of \$5.00 per \$100,000 of assessed value (or about \$11.33 per average household value). The concept of supporting a tax levy for our park system received stronger support than raising taxes for other popular services like swimming pools, ice rinks, sports fields and libraries.

It is estimated that a tax levy of at least \$10 per year per average household is needed to do the job of regional park

purchases over the next decade. This amounts to \$4.40 per \$100,000 in assessed value. This would raise about \$17 million over ten years. Local groups and other levels of government working as partners could then help raise the additional several million dollars needed to top up this Park Acquisition Fund.

Municipal elections are held every third year on November 20th. This year, 1999, is an election year.

Attend public all-candidates meetings and ask those seeking your vote if they support the annual levy of \$10 per household to be used for park acquisition including buying up the private properties needed to complete the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt!

Get and fill out WCWC "opinion poll" mailing cards regarding the Parks Acquisition Fund and send them to your local governments as soon as possible!

**If you are eligible, be sure to vote November 20.
The future of our CRD Park system is at stake!**



CREDITS

Published by Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC), 227 Abbott Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 2K7. Phone 604-683-8220. WCWC's Victoria Chapter, 507-620 View St., Victoria, BC V8W 1J6 Tel 250-388-9292 Fax 250-250-9223 E-Mail: wc2vic@island.net Main Office E-Mail: info@wildernesscommittee.org Web Page www.wildernesscommittee.org WCWC is a membership-based citizen-funded non-profit charitable society dedicated to promoting, through research and education, sustainable resource use and wild ecosystem preservation.

Research and Writing: Alison Spriggs and Kristin Lindell. Editing: Adriane Carr. Design/Layout: Sue Fox. Map: Chris Player. Photos: Cover - Garth Lenz, printed here with permission of *Beautiful B.C. Magazine*. (Look for a story on the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Sea-to-Sea Campaign in the Spring, 2000 edition of *Beautiful B.C.*) All other photos: Jeff Barber and Alison Spriggs.

Western Canada Wilderness Committee Educational Report Vol. 18 - No. 8 Fall-Winter 1999. Posted in Vancouver. Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 0900567. Press run--50,000 copies. Printed in Canada. Copyrighted WCWC 1999. Material may be freely used provided credit is given.

Yes! I will help create the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt! Yes! I support a CRD Parks Acquisition Fund!

- ☐ I will contribute to your campaign to complete the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt and the rest of the Capital Regional Park and Trail System.
Here is my tax-deductible gift of ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$500 ___other to help you win these campaigns. WCWC's Fed. Charitable Tax No. 11929 3009 RR0001
- I want to ☐ renew my membership ☐ become a Wilderness Committee member.
Enclosed is my ☐ \$30 Individual ☐ \$52 Sustaining-Family annual membership fee.
- ☐ I want to purchase your 18" X 24" *Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt* beautiful full-colour poster.
Enclosed is \$15 to cover full cost--mailing tube, postage and all appropriate taxes.

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Please clip and return to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee - Victoria Chapter,
507-620 View Street, Victoria, BC V8W 1J6. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**

