



Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum | Spring 2021 Summary Report

Prepared by VMS

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Executive Summary

The Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum (hereafter referred to as the “EcoForum”) took place on June 11, 2021 via Zoom online conferencing. In attendance were over thirty participants from First Nations, federal, provincial, and local governments, as well as members of industry, higher education, and environmental conservation organizations. A list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

The EcoForum has been meeting since 2018 on a bi-yearly basis with three key goals:

- To create opportunities for information sharing and collaborative dialogue among diverse stakeholders of the Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel ecosystem
- To identify ongoing processes and collaborative actions with potential to support the health and recovery of this ecosystem
- To share knowledge, experience, and ideas that can inform research and problem-solving

The 2021 year began with a ratified Vision Statement and Terms of Reference, a newly elected Steering Committee and a plan underway to develop communications products and investigate potential funding models. The Spring 2021 EcoForum provided an opportunity for the Steering Committee to report back to EcoForum members on progress made since Fall 2020. It also gave the Alternative Practices Committee to share some of their work with the broader EcoForum membership.

Tim Ennis and David Stapley of the Comox Valley Land Trust were invited to give a presentation to the EcoForum on the Comox Valley Conservation Partnership. In particular, the EcoForum was interested in hearing how Conservation Partnerships are organized, how decisions are made across diverse interests, its ability to effectively catalyze change, potential models for growth, stabilization of funding and administrative and staffing structures. This presentation was followed by a group discussion on the merits of the Conservation Partnership model and whether aspects of that model could be relevant to the EcoForum. There were some helpful takeaways from the presentation and discussion that will inform the Steering Committee and the EcoForum at large as it continues to search for the appropriate model for collaborative partnership that can help us move beyond discussion and into action.

The Steering Committee agreed to continue researching potential institutional models that the EcoForum could learn from and will bring more ideas to future EcoForums for information and discussion. They will also seek out additional funding options that will help stabilize the forum and allow us to seek more stable administrative support.

Please contact info@bayneslambertecoforum.ca if you have questions or comments about this report.

Introduction

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that participants of the Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum live and work in Indigenous, Métis, and/or Inuit communities across BC.

EcoForum participants gathered digitally from the treaty and traditional territories of BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin), Cowichan, Halalt, Homalco, Kómoks, Klahoose, Ts'uubaa-asatx (Lake Cowichan), Lək'wəḡən (SXIMEŁŁ (Esquimalt), Songhees, TSou-ke, Lyackson, MÁLEXŁ (Malahat), Penelakut, Qualicum, Scianew (Beecher Bay), səilwətaʔt/seiʔ ílwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), Shíshálh (Sechelt), Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose), Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo), Skw̓wú7mesh (Squamish), SÁÚTW (Tsawout), Stzuminus (Chemainus), Tla'amin, Tsawwassen, We Wai Kai (Cape Mudge), Wei Wai Kum (Campbell River), WJOLŁP (Tsartlip), WSIKEM (Tseycum), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam).

We want to especially thank the host communities of Kómoks, Qualicum, Snaw-naw-as and Tla'amin First Nations.

Grant & Funding Acknowledgement

Financial support has been graciously provided by the Islands Trust Programs Committee, the Lush Cosmetics Charity Pot, and by the Comox Valley Regional District's Rural Community Grant which was applied for by the BC Shellfish Growers Association on behalf of the Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum.

EcoForum Purpose & Goals

The overarching objectives of the EcoForum are:

- To create opportunities for information sharing and collaborative dialogue among diverse stakeholders of the Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel ecosystem
- To identify ongoing processes and collaborative actions with potential to support the health and recovery of this ecosystem
- To share knowledge, experience, and ideas that can inform research and problem-solving

This EcoForum report is intended to provide a summarized overview of discussions, decisions, and actions undertaken at the EcoForum held on June 11th, 2021. Please note that formal consensus was not necessarily achieved on each and every point of discussion, though there has usually been agreement on steps for moving forward.

The Baynes Sound & Lambert Channel Ecosystem

Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel lands and waters have been the homeland of Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. Their cultural heritage, knowledge, and stewardship of this area for thousands of years highlights the importance of this place as a unique coastal homeland.

Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel, a thermally stratified inland sea, is a highly productive ecosystem, home to a regionally unique combination of diverse marine and coastal habitats. As such, it has been internationally recognized as an *Important Bird Area (IBA)*, and nationally designated an *Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA)*.

Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel is the highest ranked cumulative spawning and rearing area for herring in the Strait of Georgia: Thirty-eight percent (38%) of all herring spawning that has ever occurred in BC (based on >30,000 records) has occurred in this area,¹ positioning this area as a critical linchpin for the ecosystem health of the Coast. Seabirds, juvenile salmon, mollusks and other forage fish find shelter in the ecologically-distinct elements of Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel. The Sound and Channel are summer molting areas for sea ducks, with significant aggregations of waterfowl, shorebird and gull species during herring spawn. Several at-risk bird species use Baynes Sound for feeding or stop-overs.

Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel contains important foraging and haul out sites for Pacific harbour seals as well as Steller and California sea lions. Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel have been consistently used as spawning and rearing grounds for the last commercially harvested stock of Pacific herring. The estuaries and riparian areas of the Sound provide spawning and rearing habitat for coho, chum, coastal cutthroat trout and likely steelhead as well. More than fifteen salmon bearing streams drain into Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel. Intertidal eelgrass beds act as nurseries and provide protection and valuable food sources for these salmon. Significant quantities of both wild and cultured shellfish are produced within these waters.²

¹ Dr Doug Hay, retired. herring scientist, DFO in his Nov.2013 letter to FLNRO Deputy Minister Tim Sheldon

² Subsections titled "EcoForum Purpose & Goals" and "Baynes Sound & Lambert Channel Ecosystem" are based on the 2018 Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum Summary Report by Dr. Karen Hurley and Kim Dunn.

Spring 2021 EcoForum Overview

The Spring 2021 Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum took place via Zoom videoconferencing on June 11th from 9:30am-12:00pm. The event began with an introduction and land acknowledgement by Facilitator Jessie Hemphill of Alderhill Planning, followed by a lightning round of participant introductions answering the questions: Who are you? Where are you? And how are you doing today? Participants were then asked to look at a map of Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel and to place a digital stamp on the area they felt most connected to.

Presentations

Comox Valley Conservation Partnership – David Stapley & Tim Innes

The Steering Committee sees the EcoForum as having the potential to be a well-informed catalyst for influencing planners and decision-makers regarding ecosystem management of Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel. To do this effectively, the EcoForum needs a coherent overall assessment of the area's needs, threats and opportunities for recovery. The Committee has been searching for like-minded groups that have developed models for successful advocacy and impact, and this is why we invited David Stapley and Tim Ennis of the Comox Valley Land Trust to present to the EcoForum so that we may learn from their experience.

David Stapley: I started working with the Land Trust as a contractor in 2009. At that time the Land Trust had completed a report for *Nature without Borders*. The results showed there was a lot of work that needed to be done. The Land Trust initiated an invite to ENGOs to come together and work towards a strategy based on the recommendations in the Nature without Borders report. As a result, the Board agreed to make the Conservation Partnership a program of the Land Trust so that the Conservation Partnership could apply for funding and hire staff to help support their volunteers and take on bigger projects. We received grant funding and hired someone to do this work. Another important aspect was the structure we had to create in order to apply for funding, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes. We had a Steering Committee that accomplished two things: a) it gave members a say in what programs and initiatives we would take on, and b) it allowed the Land Trust to maintain their fiduciary responsibility and control, thus ensuring accountability. It's a structure that is democratic for all members, while also keeping to the requirements of the Land Trust. Strategic planning has been key, so we do a strategic plan every three years. This has helped us align our projects with our visions and our goals, and it allows members to actively participate in helping us set priorities.

Tim Ennis: I came into the Conservation Partnership relatively recently in comparison to David. To reiterate, it was very important to have that galvanizing plan. There was no plan before Nature without Borders. In terms of our plan, once our Conservation Partnership and Steering Committee were formed, we were able to leverage that plan in successful ways. Our partnership is alive, working well, and growing. Twenty-six ENGOs in the Comox Valley are members of the Partnership, this means practically all ENGOs in the Comox Valley, except maybe one or two, are now members. This represents thousands of people who are involved in this project in some capacity or another. We meet on a monthly basis to discuss what we are up to and current challenges we are facing. We work proactively with local governments because they have the most influence on land-use decision making. Therefore, they are the target group for our advocacy efforts, and *Nature without Borders* is our flying banner.

Comox Valley Conservation Partnership Successes:

- Regional Growth Strategy Document: The CVCP has become a common point of contact for the constellation of local ENGOs, which is convenient and time-efficient for local governments. Instead of speaking to each ENGO separately, they can approach the CVCP and get information to everyone at once.
- Conservation plans based on sound and up-to-date geographic data: One of our main interests is keeping a database that is relatively up to date on vulnerable ecosystems. This sensitive ecosystem inventory provides important data that helps to support policy change.
- OCP: Working with local governments is key. We helped develop information around DPA for the Village of Cumberland through our information and data collection. We are also working closely with the city of Courtenay to do the same thing.
- External Expertise: It's important to bring external experts to support and push the envelope on conservation and help us find common ground on where we should be going on environmental protection policies. Hosting events that members and stakeholders (like government and the public) can attend is useful.
- Natural area Management: Assigning dollar figures to the "free" environmental services that nature provides to cities has been helpful in showing the "value" of conservation efforts.
- Public Engagement and Outreach: Land-use decision making can be influenced by public engagement events and outreach. At least three CVCP projects were funded through this tactic.
- Government referral agency: If a developer is proposing to do a development they have to approach the CVCP and then this is passed along to ENGO's in that area. If the ENGO doesn't have the capacity to respond, then our core team will support in getting the required information together.
- Dedicated email referrals: What we were noticing in this process was that there was not a lot of consultation prior to the development process. But now the CVCP is included at the beginning of the development process. Developers now reach out on day one.

- Strategic priorities are best set through a consensus-based model
- Dedicated Coordinator: Having a paid staff person is key.
- Funding: It's hard to get core support/funding. One of the great funders has been the provincial government through the BC community gaming grants. They will fund administrative costs. Other options may be LG Grant-in-Aid funding, and the Real Estate Foundation of BC.
- Importance of non-profit status: Charitable Organization status opens up potential funding opportunities with the government.

EcoForum participants discussed some of the pros and cons of the Conservation Partnership model as it relates to the needs of the Baynes Sound / Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum.

There are some key insights from this discussion that the Steering Committee will need to keep in mind as it further researches potential models for EcoForum structure, funding, staffing, and advocacy:

- There is some funding available for administrative/staffing costs, but staffing for a full-time position would likely require a patchwork of grants and fundraising activities.
- The CVCP does not include government officials among its membership; however, other Conservation Partnerships do. Those Conservation Partnerships may have models that are more relevant to what we are looking to do.
- The CVCP uses *Nature without Borders* as a comprehensive framework that unites their membership and provides focus for their advocacy work and strategic planning.
- The organization has two tiers, a Steering Committee of 8-10 people that have the aptitude and capacity for the leadership work, and a secondary tier of members/supporters that want to stay informed through their newsletter and want to participate in other ways
- The goals of the EcoForum may not be as focused as those of the CVCP, given that we also need to look at industry and recreational needs.
- Activities on land have an effect on the marine environment, so our focus can't be too rigidly limited to oceans or else we may become unable to make the connections between land-based activities and marine ecosystem health and recovery. To that end, it may be useful to extend our network to groups like the CVCP that can help us bridge the gap between land and water.

Committee & Working Group Reports

Steering Committee Update – Daniel Arbour & Dorrie Woodward

In Spring 2020 EcoForum members were tasked with the creation of a Steering Committee. Daniel Arbour, Dorrance Woodward, Jim Russell, Carl Butterworth, Chris Pearce, David Critchley, and Randy Frank joined the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has been meeting every month or two and has worked arduously to create the Draft Terms of Reference that were ratified at the Fall 2020 EcoForum. The Terms of Reference are now available to members upon request, please email us at: info@bayneslambertecoforum.ca

Until now the EcoForum has been generously supported by Islands Trust and World Wildlife Fund. Unfortunately, World Wildlife Fund is unable to provide continued financial and administrative support, but they kindly left us with a comprehensive report on the overlapping interests and jurisdictions related to Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel. We also used up the in-kind and financial support provided by Islands Trust, so the Steering Committee has had to take on a lot of the administrative work involved in preparing for this EcoForum.

The Steering Committee recently applied for additional sources of financial support and secured two grants for a total of \$7500 that will allow the EcoForum a modest budget for the continuation of its work during the coming year.

The EcoForum has the potential to be a significant catalyst for change in Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel. As a network working together for the long-term ecological health of this marine ecosystem. We have the people, the expertise, and the organizational tools to have a real impact. The Steering Committee is keen to host keynote presentations from groups that have been able to move from discussion to action, and could provide potential models for the EcoForum to learn from.

Website Update – Carl Butterworth

The EcoForum now has a URL (www.bayneslambertecoforum.ca) which is being hosted by the same company that hosts the Islands Trust websites. This will allow the EcoForum to have some continuity as Coordinators and Steering Committee members change over time. We also have a professional Zoom account, a Gmail account, and Google Drive for the Steering Committee to have all information and contacts centralized in one place. The website is not ready yet, but members will be notified when it is made public.

Alternative Aquaculture Practices Committee Update – Barb Mills

The goal of this committee was to see if there are viable alternatives for shellfish aquaculture that are more environmentally friendly. The committee has a diversity of talent and knowledge with representatives from DFO, Industry, ENGOs, Government, and Higher Education meeting a few times per year over the last 3 years.

The Committee focused on practices that are good for the ecosystem, while also viable for aquaculture growers. Our greatest success has been the development of a better understanding of where each stakeholder is coming from. This has allowed us to create an environment of openness for sharing information, designing joint research projects, and researching options for carrying out that research. The difficulty will be finding the funding, students, and growers to come together to make these research projects happen.

We looked into more sustainable aquaculture practices and conditions of license around the world. This research resulted in specific recommendations to the DFO regarding aquaculture conditions of license and prevention of marine debris. The DFO is implementing many of these recommendations and will also be looking at monitoring habitats. As part of these new rules, growers will be spending three months looking at the impacts of practices that could be destructive to marine ecosystems.

The years 2021-2030 have been designated by the United Nations as the *Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development*. As part of the UN's efforts, they published recommendations for a *Blue Economy* which stresses the importance of understanding and better managing the many aspects of ocean sustainability. This EcoForum is a good example of what needs to be done to implement a Blue Economy that can truly pull together local knowledge and science, diverse stakeholder interests, and ecosystem health and recovery.

Resources & Action Steps

Next Steps

- Steering Committee will investigate options for EcoForum structure (Status Quo, Conservation Partnership, or others) and will bring that info to the Fall forum
- Steering Committee will continue to seek funding options and will learn more about practices and models that can support us to move forward
- Steering Committee will make Terms of Reference available to members
- Steering Committee will prepare a Forum Report for distribution to members
- Alternative Aquaculture Practices Committee will report back on possibility of adding more members to the Committee
- Fall 2021 Forum will be more of a decision-making forum based on recommendations the Steering Committee will bring forward

Resources Shared During the EcoForum

- <https://www.cvlandtrust.ca/cvcp/>
- <https://conservationstandards.org/about/>
- <https://kootenayconservation.ca/>
- Marine Plan Partnership: <http://mappocean.org/#:~:text=The%20MaPP%20initiative%20is%20a%20partnership%20between%20the,North%20Coast%2C%20Central%20Coast%20and%20North%20Vancouver%20Island.>
- Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Partnership: <http://okcp.ca/>
- South Okanagan Similkameen CP: www.soscp.org
- Marine Plan in Haida Nation:
http://mappocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/hg_OverviewLayout-2015-10-06-300dpi-hiWEB.pdf

Appendix A: Participants List

ORGANIZATION	NAME & SURNAME
Alderhill Planning Inc. (Facilitator)	Jessie Hemphill, Kyla Alex
Notetaker	Alderhill Planning Inc.
Comox Mayor's Office	Russ Arnott
Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD)	Daniel Arbour, Alana Mullaly
Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN)	Stuart McLean
Islands Trust (IT)	David Critchley, Laura Busheikin, Marnie Eggen
K'omoks First Nation (KFN)	Randy Frank, Todd Boychuk
Vancouver Island University (VIU)	Carl Butterworth, Timothy Green
Simon Fraser University (SFU)	Leah Bendell
Fisheries & Oceans Canada	Jim Meldrum, Terri Sutherland, Chris Pearce, Chris Marrie, Shelley Jepps, Marisa Keefe
BC Shellfish Growers Assn (BCSGA)	Nico Prins, Malcolm Cowan
Taylor Shellfish	Alex Munro
Assn for Denman Island Marine Stewards (ADIMS)	Barb Mills, Dorrie Woodward
Conservancy Hornby Island (CHI)	Serena Laskin
Project Watershed	Bill Heath
Comox Valley Nature	David Innes
Alternative Practices Committee	Doug Wright