



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

NEWSLETTER

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VISION

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"We, the Musqueam, will work together to take care of our territory so the following generations will know how to be self-reliant. We will remember our own history and as well, use our traditional teachings to take care of everyone and everything on this earth".

IN THIS ISSUE...

From the Editor

Page 2

Conservation - Endangered Caribou Habitat

Pages 2 - 3

BC to Adapt Sustainable Fish Farming Technology

Pages 3 - 4

Educational Opportunities: Online Learning Platforms

Pages 5 - 6

Spring Events Around Vancouver

Pages 6 - 7

Contact Us

Pages 7 - 8

FROM THE EDITOR

Happy belated New Year everyone!

We are approaching the Spring of 2021, and almost one year of learning to live through the global pandemic that is COVID-19. As we continue to find new and inventive ways to live and work under the new conditions, we are keeping our focus of environmental and community health a top priority. The Environmental Stewardship Department is working hard to continue being a representative voice for Musqueam and their lands, water and territory. We are looking forward to seeing the community in person soon and wish everyone health and safety during these times.

Take care,

Yeganeh Asadian, M.Sc., P.Ag., Environmental Stewardship Department Manager

CONSERVATION - ENDANGERED CARIBOU HABITAT



Thanks to conservation groups, the science community and public support, the BC government has withdrawn from plans to log critical habitat for the endangered caribou – specifically a Columbia North caribou herd located in an old-growth valley just north of Revelstoke.

Anthropogenic disturbances such as road building, logging and oil & gas development have destroyed and fragmented caribou habitat, while giving natural predators such as wolves easy access to caribou herds, resulting in a tremendous decline in populations in B.C. and other parts of Canada. Like many other mountain caribou, the Columbia North herd depends on nutritious lichen found on old-growth trees, which make up a major portion of the proposed logging area. This food source is particularly significant as it is the primary form of sustenance for the herds during winter – and due to the lichen being limited to old growth environments, there is little to no option for herd relocation. If the harvesting operations had proceeded as planned, it would have resulted in the destruction of approximately 300

hectares of high-quality summer and early-winter habitat for the endangered caribou herd. Due to public pushback, the government has agreed to halt proposed logging activity in the Argonaut Valley region until a thorough planning process is established to manage the Columbia North caribou herd and critical habitat is protected. 14 cutblocks surrounding Argonaut Creek were planned by BC Timber Sales, a government agency that manages the auctioning of logging permits. Out of these cutblocks, 12 overlap with federally designated core critical habitat for the southern mountain caribou. The herd, which consists of 147 individuals, makes up a majority of the Kootenay population and has the highest chance of continuing in the long term. Argonaut Creek is part of the inland temperate rainforest, which is considered one of the province's most at-risk ecosystems.

After conservation groups drew attention to and made light of the logging plans in September 2020, over 3,000 letters were sent in to elected officials demanding that the area be exempt from logging and road building due to the sensitive ecological characteristics that the area encompasses. The government's response was to suspend 11 of the 14 cutblocks, leaving 3 left that can still be auctioned off for logging. While the area is not completely protected from logging and other industrial activity, this is a major victory for wildlife protection and ecological conservation.

BC TO ADAPT SUSTAINABLE FISH FARMING TECHNOLOGY



The federal government is planning to phase out open-net farming in British Columbia in an effort to move towards more sustainable fish farming practices. As part of a Liberal campaign in the federal election, moving away from open-net fish farming in BC waters was proposed by the year 2025, and partially formed a part of the mandate letter for the Fisheries Minister.

Open-net fishing is a controversial method in the fish farming industry as studies have suggested that the open-net designs spread parasites, viruses and disease to wild salmon and other aquatic organisms. This has led scientists to theorize that it is a contributing factor to the rapid decline of BC salmon stocks, particularly in the Fraser River which is seeing salmon return in lower numbers each year. Although there is an approximate timeline for the removal of open-net farms, there is no confirmed date for

deactivation. The government will be working with First Nations to adapt traditional fishing knowledge and practices that can be designed to create more sustainable fish farming technologies. The report will also incorporate scientific data and research from the aquaculture industry and environmental agencies.

Although the open-net fish farms will be replaced with a more environmentally responsible design, these farming systems may differ depending on the region. Fisheries and Oceans Canada has stated that they are exploring the use of an area-based management approach that would consider the amount of cumulative impacts that fish farms may be receiving in certain areas. Other factors such as timing windows and licenses for sea lice management will be applied to the management approach to focus on specific timing for sensitive wild salmon habitat areas.



Figure 1 – Example of open-net fish farms in British Columbia.

Given the relatively tight timeframe for open-net fish farm operations to be phased out by 2025, there is still much to be examined in terms of the sustainable technology that is to replace the open-net design. There are current land-based and closed-containment systems that have potential to be included in the new approach, but new models of fish farming are constantly evolving – including ocean-based and hybrid systems.

A recent event that took place in September 2020 saw 101 BC First Nations, commercial/recreational fishing groups and eco-tourism affiliates demand for the removal of 18 fish farms in the Discovery Islands located near Campbell River. This opposition highlighted the significance of the impacts open-net fish farming is having on the marine ecosystem, especially juvenile salmon that use these areas as a migratory path towards the ocean.

The interim report being prepared by First Nations, the aquaculture industry and environment stakeholders is scheduled to be completed by spring of this year.

A green plant sprout with five leaves is growing out of the center of an open book. The book is open to two pages of text, and the plant's stem is positioned between the pages. The entire scene is set against a plain white background.



The following institutions are a few examples of where one can access useful and informative information regarding environmental education:

The Raincoast Conservation Foundation has established an online education series called Coastal Insights – a webinar based program that consists of weekly or bi-weekly lessons that focus on the lands, waters and wildlife of coastal British Columbia, while providing and informing Indigenous perspectives of many traditional territories. Coastal Insights is currently on *Season 2: Eyes on the Coast*.

The Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) is a non-profit organization that has been established for over 30 years. Each year, SPES connects with thousands of people through school and public programs, while the conservation team engages community members to volunteer in habitat restoration and wildlife monitoring. Normally, SPES will hold annual events such as nature tours and workshops, however during COVID-19 they have adapted online learning as an alternative resource to keep the community safe. Currently, SPES is offering various online workshops that cover wildlife, conservation and Indigenous perspectives.

To register, visit:

<http://stanleyparkecology.ca/events/>

BURNS BOG CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The Burns Bog Conservation Society (BBCS) was formed in 1988 due to growing concerns on the ecological condition of the sensitive and unique bog area. Since then, the BBCS has helped to protect Burns Bog from various development proposals. Over the years, the BBCS has implemented several programs that focus on community outreach and education. The BBCS currently offers field trips, in-class workshops, day camps, an outdoor nature festival and other seasonal events.

For more information, visit <https://burnsbog.org/>



WINTER EVENTS AROUND VANCOUVER

* Please note that all events are in accordance with BC Health & Safety Guidelines regarding COVID-19*

❖ Coastal First Nations Dance Festival, March 12th – 18th

2021 marks the 14th season of the Dancers of Damelahamid First Nations Dance Festival, which occurs in the early spring of each year. The festival consists of a series of cultural performances and is a highly recommended experience. Normally the festival would take place at the Anvil Centre, however this year due to COVID-19 the festival is happening in a virtual format. Most years, with the live events, some performances are ticketed and others are free (or at least included with regular admission to the Museum of Anthropology). This year though, because it is all online, admission is free.

❖ Persian New Year Fire Festival, March 17th

Taking place at Ambleside Park in West Vancouver, The Persian New Year (also known as Norooz or Nowruz) is celebrated with a concert, fires and festivities annually in mid-March. The Persian New Year event offers the Lower Mainland's best opportunity to experience Persian culture, New Year's

celebrations and musical performance. Nowruz festivities at Ambleside include Persian music, food, dancing and fire jumping. The event typically runs from 5:00 until 10:30 pm, with fire jumping usually starting around 6:00 pm.

❖ **Vancouver Sun Run (Virtual), April 18th – 30th**

Taking place each year in April, the Vancouver Sun Run is an annual 10 km race that starts downtown and finishing at BC Place Stadium. This year, the race is set to take place between April 18th and April 30th and will be a virtual event instead of the usual live run, due to COVID-19. There will be 4 types of runs available: individual, 8-person teams, the Youth Team Challenge and the Shaw Team Division. There is also a shorter 2.5 km run option for all ages. Due to the virtual aspect, runners can run anywhere they choose as opposed to the downtown circuit normally used. To register for the upcoming virtual Sun Run, click [Vancouver Sun Run 2021 Registration](#) or visit vancouversunrun.com

❖ **Earth Day, April 22nd**

Earth Day is on April 22nd with celebrations of the environment happening across the city, including the Party for the Planet in Surrey and a parade in Vancouver. The Party for the Planet event takes place from 10 am to 6 pm at the City Hall Plaza in Surrey. The event consists of concerts and performances on various stages throughout the day. The Vancouver Earth Day Parade & Festival is a small student-organized event that usually takes place along Commercial Drive on the Saturday just before April 22nd starting at 1 pm. The Stanley Park Ecology Society also holds an Earth Day event which includes weaving crafts using invasive species of plants, planting native plants in the park and helping dig out invasive blackberry bushes.

❖ **Bike to Work Week, May 25th – 31st**

Bike to Work Week is a green initiative that encourages commuter cycling. The event has been going since 1995 and promotes sustainable transportation by cutting down on carbon emissions caused by automobile commuting. The event is hosted by HUB Cycling. Participants can register as individuals or as a team (past registrants are not required to re-register). Prizes and daily giveaways are included as incentives for participation. There are also “celebration stations” set up throughout the city where cyclists can stop at for maintenance. To register, visit [Bike to Work Week Vancouver](#).

CONTACT US

For further inquiries regarding the newsletter and our green initiatives, please contact:

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