



Symposium 2011

**September 24th and 25th
Vancouver Island University Campus
Nanaimo, BC**

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES from Five Break-out Groups

**as presented to the final Plenary Session
September 25th**

a partnership between



and



Fisheries

Over-arching Goal – *Work to return fish populations to historic levels – plentiful fish stocks*

Goals & Actions:

Gather Data – Gap analysis

- Blackman Report 1981
- Baseline Report - includes data from NRH – mostly below highway bridge
- Water quality data
- Biological and habitat assessment
- Escapement and fry/smelt counts – expand fisheries section of baseline report
- Support habitat enhancement, nutrient enrichment activities, riparian setbacks
- Thatcher Report, Haslam Report as models
- Investigate relationship with VIU Fish/Aqua

Funding for Hatchery

- Nanaimo River Stewardship Society (NRSS)
 - Potential acquisitions and covenants – working level agreements, investigate water licensing (side channel habitat, water storage), riparian areas
 - Build relationships with timber companies
 - Investigate Provincial Policies regarding Steelhead enhancement or alternatives
- Education and Awareness
 - Hatchery programs – expand?
- Invasive species awareness
- Species at Risk protection

Build and Sustain Relationships

- Gather Stakeholders and User Groups
- November Working Group Session
- Investigate cold water releases from Fourth Lake

Formation of Volunteer Stewardship group

- Contacting local homeowners and community members
- *Streamkeepers* courses, other opportunities

Synthesis:

Plan, Partnership, Fundraising

Identify and Prioritize Achievable Goals

Who should be involved: Stakeholder list: Nanaimo River Fish Hatchery, NRSS (Ted, Wayne, Bernie, Wayne), DFO (community advisor: Barrie Cordocedo; stock assessment: Steve Ballie; fisheries management: Margret Wright), MOE (?), Forestry Companies (TimberWest: Dave Lindsay; Island Timberlands) NFP, Nanaimo Airport Authority (Mike Hooper), Island Timberlands (Ken Epps), DFO – Fisheries Management – Gerry Kelly

Recreation

Nanaimo River Mission Statement:

Promote and protect the cultural and natural values of the Nanaimo River.

Draft Vision:

A place for diverse, responsible recreational pursuits in balance with the river's health—while ensuring involvement of stakeholders.

Guiding Principles and Basic Assumptions:

- Recreation values do not trump other river values
- Open and active involvement with First Nations about rights, culture and heritage at the River
- Sustainability of overall River health (water quality, flow, fisheries, sensitive ecosystems)
- Partnership approach and collaboration based on respectful dialogue among stakeholders is paramount
- Recreation is not suitable to all areas of the River (South Fork/Jump Creek, first nations cultural heritage sites, sensitive wildlife areas)
- Respect for Private Property (residential ownerships and resource industries)
- Utilize a science based approach to establish the baseline information for goal implementation

Goals:

- Identify key/priority recreation resources and accesses through expansion of the baseline inventory and research on recreation uses
- Explore options for site specific recreational development that maintains the natural characteristic of the river as best as possible
- Recreation uses to be flexible within other seasonal and cultural values (spawning runs, overwintering, migration corridors, marmot habitat)
- Influencing the RDN recreation plans for the river corridor (Area A OCP outlining Blueway plan for the Nanaimo River, Active Transportation Plan)
- Balanced representation of diverse recreational user groups to promote responsible use
- Develop key partnerships for collaborative educational programs from children to adults through in field experience in the watershed
- Exploring opportunities for new partnerships that lead to mutual benefits (e.g., Private/Municipal/hunting access to watershed)
- Flexibility to adapt to unique opportunities and challenges as they arise

Water

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO ACCHIEVE THE 2030 VISION:

- Submit to the province changes to the Water Act to protect ground water
- Submit this symposium's conclusions to RDN hearings in October on regional growth strategy with copies to other elected local authorities and First Nations
- Increase use of rainwater catchment, so less draws on the Nanaimo river
- Establish relationships among all involved authorities, citizens groups, first nations
- Map quantity of water sources in Nanaimo river watershed, including Cassidy and its relationship to the Nanaimo river as a priority
- Assess effects of development on ecosystem, including quality and quantity of water before development allowed, based on entire watershed despite geopolitical divisions
- Determine **Douglas Treaty** and other treaty implications for the Nanaimo river watershed
- Submit to federal government request to change northern border of national marine conservation area to extend to Nanaimo river estuary
- Require new developments to connect to community water supply and waste treatment systems
- Educate the public about the quality and quantity of water in the Nanaimo river watershed and related ecological, social and economic issues
- Consider seismic upgrading of existing water related infrastructure

2030 VISION:

Mid-island UNESCO model of biosphere

- Nanaimo river watershed is in mid-island UNESCO - model biosphere reserve and Community owns the watershed
- An educated public is involved and fully engaged in watershed management
- Development is governed by sustainability of entire ecosystem with protection of nature, wildlife species like salmon get top priority for water
- Obligations under the **Douglas Treaty** and other treaty processes are met

Environmental Values: Wildlife, Habitat and Species-At-Risk

We Envision:

- *A healthy watershed, teeming with a diversity of endemic life*
- *That community health is understood to be directly linked to a healthy environment*
- *That as an informed and involved community we recognize that we all share responsibility for ensuring sustainable stewardship of a healthy watershed*
- *That an empowered, inclusive and funded Watershed Stewardship Board be given legislative authority for conservation planning in the watershed*

Goals:

- Obtain current field data about ecosystems
 - Actions
 - Produce a baseline report including, but not limited to, species and ecosystems at risk
 - Continuous monitoring
- Lobby for enabling legislation
 - Actions
 - Investigate models from other jurisdictions (e.g. Ontario, Cuba, Brazil, etc...)
- Build partnerships
 - Actions
 - Contact Snuneymuxw First Nations and other groups (e.g. VIHA, MISSI, etc...)
- Identify high priority ecological sites for acquisition
 - Actions
 - Investigate options for funding acquisitions
 - Habitat banks, mitigation, offsets, etc..
- Acquire sustainable funding
 - Actions
 - Source funding with community partners (e.g. residents, business, institutions, governments, etc...)
- Work with Snuneymuxw, local government, and resource users to gain understanding of their long term management plans
 - Actions
 - Management plans align with vision
- To increase community awareness to gain support for the vision
 - Actions
 - Community gatherings
 - Share information
 - Develop & provide content for school curricula
 - Regular reporting to gauge progress

Estuary

- The NRE is an extensive, unique and vital ecological area *in our city* that supports a wide diversity of life (*Not well recognized as such by the general community*)
- It is the economic and spiritual “heart” of the SFN
- It has historically been an important economic driver for the community

Overarching Goal: Balance and Restoration

Develop a land ethic, a land protocol, how to be on the land and in unique environments like the estuary,

LT Develop goals for 2030:

- To further development with SNF and other local community partners a representative body to provide effective leadership, oversight and management of the estuary in a long term, sustainable manner.
- To establish an on-going model educational program to ensure that the natural values of the estuary are widely recognized and respected in the wider community.
 - Every grade 6-7 get educated about the estuary
 - Artists Response Society. Eco Education through Music “Voices of Nature”
 - Publicity campaign for adults in newspapers, media, events, etc.
- Project Watershed for Estuary in Art Auction fundraiser
- 2030 we’ll have the first the annual Shellfish Extravaganza.
- What are the habitat enhancement opportunities? Low hanging fruit volunteer participation
- Celebration with our brothers and sisters in SFN (Aboriginal Day) as a way to bring together and educate around Estuary.
- Renaming the estuary?
- Cultural ecotourism around the estuary
- Viewing the estuary as you would view any other natural area
- A viewing platform as a project- add walkways (cause people to stick to the elevated walkway system) to ensure protection of the fragile environment
 - Educate people on tributaries that also empty into the estuary: the Wexford, Richardson, & Chase River creeks that run through urban areas as a way of outreach
- To establish best management policies and practices for: -recreational, fisheries, forestry, agricultural and other sustainable economic uses of the estuary, as well as for emergency-preparedness
- To have a close working relationship with VIU and “The Centre for Estuary Research” for on-going monitoring, research and education related to the estuary
 - Re-establish eel grass beds, shellfish, and other species
 - Engage wider community, volunteers, FN, etc.

Immediate To Do List:

- Identify and protect sacred places (work with SFN to protect these sites)
- Develop and implement an education program (over the next four months)
- Affirm an effective mechanism and partnership with SFN on working to protect and improve the estuary
- Foster better relationships with SFN for all the community
- Work closely with the *Centre for Estuary Research* and VIU to implement a comprehensive research program

Concerns-- What will 2030 look like for the estuary if:

- Sea level rise
- Climate change
- Earthquake
- Preparedness – have a plan in place to protect the estuary

What's Next?

- **Research / Project Partnerships currently being explored by Vancouver Island University and Prof^a. Maria Inês Paes Ferreira of IF Fluminense - Campus Macaé**
- **Application for a Partnership Grant with federal government**
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Over-arching Themes:

1. **Create a comprehensive database** (Baseline Report) that includes and deals with, but not limited to all species and ecosystems at risk.
2. **Public education** and involvement programs and workshops designed to heighten public awareness and education. Community gatherings, shared information, develop & provide content for school curricula, regular reporting to gauge progress.
3. **Building significant working relationships** with the Snuneymuxw First Nations and other groups such as RDN, VIHA, MISSI, and SWACA.
4. Identify high priority **ecological sites for acquisition**.
5. Investigate options for **sustainable funding**. Source funding with community partners. (i.e., residents, business, institutions, governments, etc...)
6. Determine **Douglas Treaty** and other treaty implications for the Nanaimo river watershed and commit to working within these guidelines.