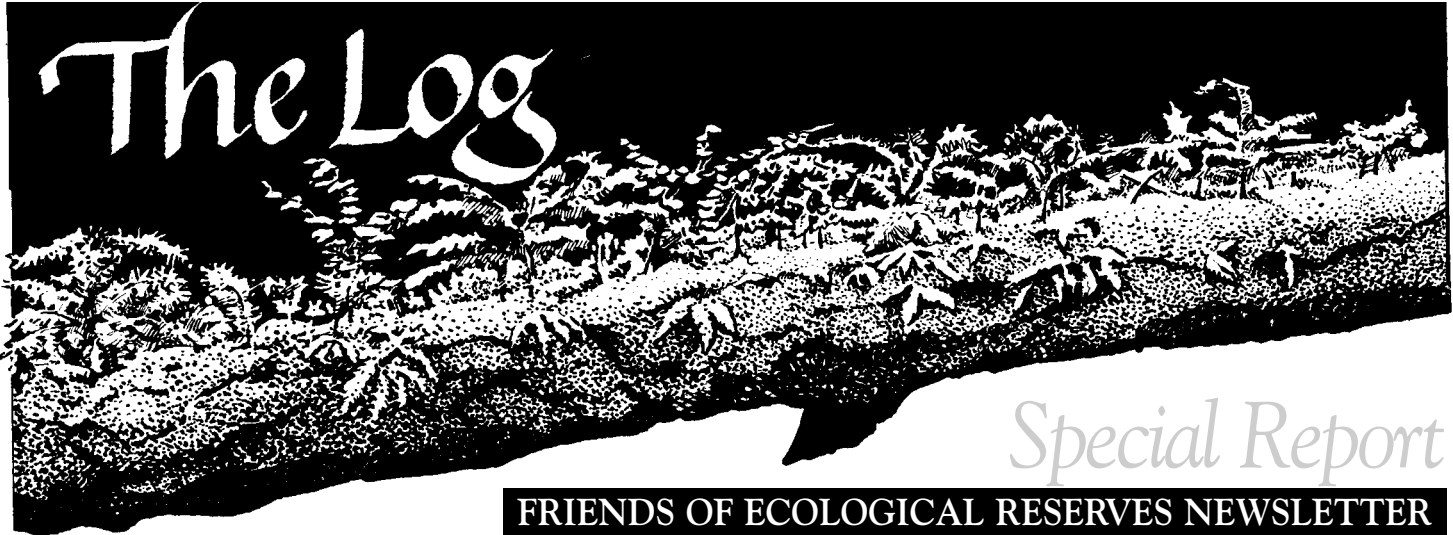


The Log



Special Report

FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES NEWSLETTER

Thinking beyond the bottom line... there are no easy answers

Recently I opened my mail to receive a theatre subscription renewal notice for next year. The first line of the renewal form indicated the cost of the season package. On the second line there was an additional sum, labelled, “the amount of your ticket that is subsidized by government grants”. A person in a hurry might total the two numbers and send in a cheque for the full amount, not realizing that the second number was optional.

At the time, I thought it was a clever, albeit somewhat cheeky, way of drawing attention to the true costs of putting on a theatre production as most subscribers are not aware that the cost of the seat they sit in is subsidized. The truth is, if theatre companies did not receive subsidies from governments and corporations they would probably cease to exist. And if that happened, how many jobs would be lost—not just actors, but playwrights, technicians, ushers—and how less rich would be the lives of audiences lost?

The truth is, theatre companies (and symphony orchestras and other

cultural institutions) lead a precarious existence—dependant upon a corporate and government philosophy that recognizes the importance of nurturing and supporting cultural experience. How benevolent corporations and governments actually are in supporting that philosophy depends, in large part, upon the economy. And, a theatre company’s audience is also dependent upon the economy. We buy theatre tickets when we have discretionary income. If our jobs are endangered, we think twice about buying theatre tickets, even though we know that buying tickets helps to keep that theatre company a viable, important contributor to the cultural life of our community, and of the province.

I began to think about this in terms of what is happening in British Columbia today, in terms of the economy and the environment. Sometimes we can know that [fill-in-the-blank: marmots, phantom orchids, salmon populations, orcas, parks] are in danger and nevertheless feel unable to respond because we feel trapped by

something that is more immediate.

It is a simple thing to ask, to demand, that people act for the good of the future. However, it really isn’t possible to suggest that environmental and social problems can be solved simply by calling on people to be more responsible to future generations. Nevertheless, if we don’t expand the boundaries of what we feel responsible for we don’t get very far. And, sadly, this logic neglects the likelihood that short-term goals, dictated by the balance sheet, can (and often do) conflict with long-term responsibilities.

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MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Service Plan 2002/03–2004/05

Mission:

To provide provincial leadership for sustainable economic development of BC's land, water and resources.

Strategic Shifts:

The ministry was established in June 2001 to provide a single access point to planning, data and information about Crown land and resources by integrating and streamlining functions previously performed by numerous ministries and agencies. Over the next three years, significant functions will be delivered through partnerships with industry, academia and societies to ensure efficient delivery and enable increased revenues. Strategic shifts include:

FROM	TO
■ Slow, rigid and costly land-use planning processes	■ Firm timelines for balanced land use plans
■ Expensive, inefficient land and resource information databases and registries	■ Streamlined access to integrated databases, and electronic filing (e-filing) of land titles and surveys
■ Slow decisions and a large backlog of land and water applications	■ Timely, balanced decisions and backlogs eliminated
■ Prescriptive regulations	■ Performance-based regulations
■ Unbalanced resource decisions	■ Sustainable and balanced resource management based on sound science-based allocation principles
CORE BUSINESS AREAS:	
1. Strategic Land-use Planning	■ Land-use planning, monitoring of plans, resource sector strategies and identifying regional development opportunities
2. Integrated Land and Resource Information	■ Improved quality of, and access to, integrated registries and resource information
3. Land and Water Management	■ Strategic policy direction to the BC Assets and Land Corporation (BCAL) and the Land Reserve Commission (LRC)
4. Sound Governance and Organizational Excellence	■ Principles, policies and legislation to guide sustainable resource management

Major Initiatives

1. Strategic Land-Use Planning

Continuing: Complete land-use planning for priority areas, and monitor implementation of completed plans. The ministry will also assist in the development of resource sector strategies to facilitate sustainable economic development.

Delivering differently:

- Complete priority land and resource management plans (LRMPs): Central Coast and Sea-to-Sky (March 2003); Morice, North Coast and Queen Charlotte Islands (March 2004). Landscape plans will be prepared for priority areas in Atlin-Taku, Chilliwack, Dease-Liard, Merritt and Nass.
- Complete landscape plans with a focus on sustainable economic development by March 2005 for about 90 of the 120-150 planning units that will be amalgamated from the previous 1250 landscape units province-wide.
- Complete coastal plans that will identify shellfish and finfish aquaculture sites for Vancouver Island, the North Coast, Sunshine Coast and the Queen Charlotte Islands by March 2004.
- Develop a working forest land base; implement the Living Rivers Strategy with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection; and, determine the feasibility of establishing a 20-year plan for infrastructure rights of way.

Will no longer deliver:

- Four community resource boards will no longer receive provincial government funding after March 2002. Alternative funding sources to support the Muskwa-Kechika and the Central Region (Clayoquot) boards will be investigated during 2002/03.

Budget impacts: The budget will be reduced in this area by 43% over the next three years, due to completion of major planning tasks.

2. Integrated Land and Resource Information

Continuing: Provide information to public and private clients from the ministry's resource information databases, land titles and registries.

Delivering differently:

- Integrate databases to improve access efficiency and utility of information.
- Use web-based systems to improve access to land and resource information, and enable clients to submit land titles, land surveys, requests, applications for licences, and fee payments.
- Place greater reliance on partnerships to provide standardized data to public and private sector clients.
- Register archaeological sites with the Land Titles Office.

Will no longer deliver:

- Transfer responsibility for ensuring the quality of land surveys to the land surveying profession.

- Reduce the number of regional land title offices.

Budget impacts: The budget in this area will be reduced by 39% over the next three years, due to increased efficiencies and developing public/private partnerships.

3. Sustainable Land and Water Management

Continuing: Provide strategic policy direction for land and water management.

Delivering differently:

- Integrate the water and Crown land allocation functions to achieve efficiencies.
- Reduce the backlog of water licence applications that are more than a year old by 90% before March 2003.
- Eliminate backlogs and delays in Crown land applications by March 31, 2002.

Will no longer deliver: Minimize provincial role in water utility regulation by transferring appropriate regulatory authority to regional or local government.

Budget impacts: The budget in this area will be reduced mainly through efficiencies created by the integration of land and water management functions.

4. Sound Governance and Organizational Excellence

The functions amalgamated under the new ministry will be delivered in a more streamlined, integrated and transparent manner.

- Develop sustainability principles as part of a sustainable resource management strategy to ensure clear interpretation of the government's policy on the appropriate balance between economic, environmental and social objectives.
- Review the pricing policy for land and water resource uses.
- Move to an improved regulatory framework that uses performance-based standards.
- Reduce the number of regulatory requirements to streamline decision-making and increase opportunities for economic development.
- Revise provincial consultation framework to ensure that provincial obligations regarding aboriginal rights are considered during development of new regulatory framework.

Budget impacts: The budget in this area will be reduced by 31%.

Government Priorities relating to Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

New Era Commitments Included in Service Plan 2002/03-2004/05

- Eliminate backlog and delays in Crown land applications.
- Provide faster approvals and greater access to Crown land and resources to protect and create jobs in tourism, mining, forestry, farming, ranching, oil and gas production.

- Make the Land Reserve Commission more regionally responsive to community needs.
- Establish a working forest land base to provide greater stability for working families and to enhance long-term forestry management and planning.
- Adopt a scientifically based, principled approach to environmental management that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility.
- Give property buyers more information about prospective properties by ensuring that notices of known archaeological sites must be registered with the Land Title Office.
- Deregulation—immediately identify opportunities to eliminate unnecessary and costly regulations.

Key Projects Included in Service Plan 2002/03-2004/05

- Build a structure for the ministry and prepare a business plan to implement the objectives of the government in this area.
- Review the status of existing land-use plans and current land-use planning process and develop a strategy to conclude province-wide land-use plans in a manner which is expeditious and balanced and results in plans which can be implemented on the ground without significant delays.
- Develop a plan to resolve land and water use conflicts between ministries and external interests.
- Reduce the backlog in applications (land and water licence applications).
- With Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, develop a program to implement the
- Living Rivers Strategy.
- Rationalize the numerous land and resource inventory information systems to create a central source of integrated information that can be accessed by users both within and outside government.
- Create a central registry for all tenures and other legal encumbrances on Crown land and resources.
- Optimize the financial return from the use of Crown land and water resources consistent with province's land-use and water policy objectives.
- Determine the feasibility of establishing a 20-year plan for infrastructure rights of way.
- Within 18 months, develop a working forest land base on Crown land for enhanced forestry operations, accompanied by effective and streamlined approval processes for forest operations in those zones. ■

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND & AIR PROTECTION

Service Plan 2002/03–2004/05

Mission:

The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection helps British Columbians limit the adverse effects of their individual and collective activities on the environment. The mandate of the ministry is to:

- protect human health and safety by ensuring clean and safe water, land and air,
- maintain and restore the natural diversity of ecosystems, fish and wildlife and their habitat, and
- provide park and wildlife recreation services and opportunities to British Columbians and visitors.

Strategic Shifts:

The ministry plays an essential role in maintaining a healthy environment—which in turn enhances human health, supports economic development and provides a high quality of life. The ministry is changing its business methods to better focus resources where there is the greatest risk to the environment, and to reduce its costs as well as reduce the costs to others of meeting environmental standards.

The ministry will put more emphasis on:

- developing clear environmental standards and performance expectations;
 - monitoring and public reporting;
 - ensuring positive compliance with expectations; and
- providing a professional corporate enforcement service where required.

Less emphasis will be placed on direct delivery of services and advice.

FROM	TO
■ Ministry as sole protector of the environment.	■ Shared stewardship—sharing responsibility for the environment with others as appropriate and emphasizing a ministry staff culture of client service.
■ Prescriptive approaches using prohibitions and controls.	■ Setting appropriate environmental standards, and ensuring standards are met.
■ Unclear accountability for environmental results.	■ Clear roles for ministry, industry and other stakeholders in the gathering and reporting of environmental information.
■ Well-developed but single focus ministry initiatives.	■ Integrated ministry program delivery based on best available science and an ecosystem-based approach.
■ Constraints on economic development.	■ Economic development based on clear, reasonable outcomes, with discretion as to how to achieve these outcomes.
■ Proprietary information belonging to government.	■ Public information made available in a transparent, timely and accessible manner.

CORE BUSINESS AREAS

1. Environmental Protection of air, water and land quality (delivered by Environmental Protection Division).
2. Environmental Stewardship of biodiversity, wildlife, fish and protected areas (delivered by Environmental Stewardship Division).
3. Park and Wildlife Recreation management of hunting, angling, park recreation and wildlife viewing (delivered by Environmental Stewardship Division).

Major Initiatives

Environmental Protection:

Outdated, prohibitive environmental regulatory processes increase costs for government and private businesses. Inflexible statutory decision-processes result in conflict and litigation (e.g., contaminated sites).

Previous priorities for ministry resources, along with increased regulation, have resulted in service backlogs, poor environmental monitoring and reporting systems, and inadequate science and information. The public is increasingly aware of the links between health outcomes and the quality of air and water.

The ministry will provide leadership by setting and enforcing high environmental standards, developing incentives for improved environmental performance, monitoring and reporting on environmental conditions, and encouraging others to accept a greater role in environmental protection. The ministry will put relatively greater emphasis than in the past on mitigating poor environmental quality that directly affects human health.

Fewer staff and resources will be directed to low- and medium- risk pollution sources, which will be addressed through guidelines and regulations.

Continue to deliver:

- Airshed planning framework, policy and advocacy (continued opposition to Sumas II power project).
- Climate change strategy.
- Industry-led pollution prevention planning at large industrial sites.
- High-priority monitoring and reporting on air, surface water and groundwater quality (and continued opposition to bulk water exports).
- Permitting and inspections of high-risk industrial and municipal discharges and high risk contaminated sites.
- Response to high-risk toxic spill emergencies.
- Compliance and enforcement services.
- Support other ministries in standard setting for waste management (e.g., agriculture, aquaculture).

Deliver Differently:

- Simplify environmental regulations and standards, especially for low and medium-priority operations.
- Improve drinking water protection, through amended *Drinking Water Protection Act* and groundwater legislation.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of contaminated sites administration.
- Improve and expand product reuse and recycling (e.g. tires, batteries).
- Increase local government control over low-risk floodplain and dyke management.
- Increase web-based public information.

Discontinue:

- Permitting for low/medium-risk waste management sites which will be subject to guidelines and regulations.
- Response to low risk environmental spills.

Environmental Stewardship

British Columbia's economy is based in part on use of natural resources (e.g., forestry) and in part on protection of its diverse and unique ecosystems (e.g., tourism). Roles and responsibilities of various levels of government regarding environmental management are not clear.

Ministry programs for species management and habitat restoration are not delivering desired outcomes and lack adequate priority setting.

The ministry will work to reduce jurisdictional overlap, integrate and focus programs based on priorities, and develop performance standards and measurements for management of resources. The ministry will facilitate community initiatives to protect and restore their local environment. Fewer staff and resources will be directed to providing advice to industry and local government on habitat and ecosystem protection, and to directly protecting habitat and species where risks are relatively low.

Continue to deliver:

- Development of Provincial Biodiversity Strategy.
- Park Management planning.
- Industry-led identification of potential Wildlife Habitat Areas (under Forest Practices Code).
- Industry-led recovery strategies for species at risk.
- Protection for priority fish and wildlife habitat.
- Response to known significant threats in protected areas (e.g. pine bark beetle).
- Compliance and enforcement services.

Deliver Differently:

- Harmonize with federal government on protection of species at risk and stream protection measures.
- Implement integrated Living Rivers Strategy for protection and restoration of watersheds.
- Implement area-based planning for protection of species and habitats.
- Involve local communities in protection and restoration of local ecosystems.
- Integrate environment stewardship activities and conservation functions inside and outside protected areas.
- Set environmental standards in a revised Forest Practices Code focusing on results.

Discontinue:

- Operational planning and referrals regarding wildlife, fish and habitat.
- Freshwater fishing industry development grants, partnerships and advice.
- Response to low-risk human-wildlife conflicts.
- Environmental Youth Team.

Park and Wildlife Recreation

There is strong public support for the province's world-class park system. Park and wildlife recreation serve to stimulate tourism and support the provincial economy, and also are a unique part of cultural life in British Columbia, especially in rural communities. Opportunities exist for increasing wildlife- and park-related opportunities for small business, especially in rural communities.

The ministry will increase opportunities for public involvement in park management, diversify sources of funding for parks and ensure greater connection between fees and services and benefits. Fewer staff and resources will be directed to providing services where recreational use is low or where costs cannot be recovered (cost recovery will be largely dependent on the management/resourcing model adopted for parks, and hunting and fishing).

Continue to deliver:

- Hunting and angling authorizations, based on known population data.
- Facilities for camping and recreation in designated parks.
- Wilderness recreation management.

Deliver Differently:

- Develop new management model for park and wildlife recreation that connects fees with services and opportunities, and allows greater public involvement in decision-making.
- Develop new funding and management approach for fish hatchery operations.
- Increase opportunities for commercial recreation service delivery in appropriate parts of the park system.
- Increase local community and First Nations involvement in park management through a different management structure, such as an Authority.
- Increase web-based hunting and angling licence services.

Discontinue:

- Camping and recreational facilities in lower use parks (number depends on the new management model).
- Charging less than market rates for park services.
- Many inquiries will be directed to web-based information.

Government Priorities relating to Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

The first priority of the provincial government is to encourage a strong, private-sector economy that maintains high environmental standards and assures exemplary environmental stewardship. This responsibility for environmental stewardship is shared across all government ministries.

The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection directly supports this government priority by providing leadership in adopting and advocating a science-based, principled approach to environment management that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility.

New Era Commitments Achieved and Included in Service Plan 2002/03-2004/05

- **No logging or mining in Parks:** The government has publicly re-confirmed this legislation and policy.
- **Lifting grizzly bear moratorium:** Limited hunt in September 2001 and Spring 2002. Report of scientific panel in December 2002.

Continued on page 16

"MWLAP Service Plan..." continued from page 15

- **Ensure decisions on new parks are made in public:** Open Cabinet approval for proceeding on a federal-provincial agreement and funding a new Gulf Islands national park.

New Era Commitments included in 2002/03 – 2004/05 Service Plan

- **Acquire and protect Burns Bog:** The ministry is working, through the *Ministry of Finance*, with landowners on purchase negotiations.
- **Living Rivers Strategy:** The ministry is working with the *Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management* on practical programs to improve British Columbia's river systems with scientifically-based standards for watershed management, and on developing effective partnerships for management, enhancement and restoration of fish habitat.
- **Comprehensive groundwater legislation:** The ministry is working with the *Ministry of Health Planning* on an action plan to improve the protection of drinking water from the source to the tap.
- **Oppose Sumas II power project:** The ministry is continuing work with legal counsel in presenting BC's case to Washington State.
- **Maintain ban on bulk water exports:** The government has publicly committed to maintain the legislation establishing the ban.
- **Streamline Forest Practices Code:** The ministry is working closely with the *Ministries of Forests and Sustainable Resource Management* on Forest Practices Code revisions.

Key Projects included in 2002/03 – 2004/05 Service Plan

- **New/revised legislation to deliver on New Era directions:** The ministry will present amendments or develop new legislation as appropriate.
- **Improvement plan for threatened airsheds:** The ministry is identifying critical airsheds and actions required for ensuring their protection.
- **Pollution Prevention Planning Initiative:** The ministry will facilitate the development of pollution prevention plans at large industrial sites.
- **Extending Product Stewardship:** The ministry will foster improvements to, and expansion of, product reuse and recycling programs.
- **Biodiversity Strategy:** The ministry will develop a Biodiversity Strategy to guide conservation of natural ecosystems.
- **Strategic use of information technology for client service:** The ministry will enhance web-based services to provide public information and service client needs. ■

"...beyond the bottom line..." continued from page 1

Can businesses (or governments) struggling to survive in an age of consolidation really factor in long-term environmental and social concerns while focusing on short-term profit? It appears that the current BC government would say no. In the current economic system, reducing carbon emissions, restoring a wetland, or phasing out toxic chemicals will lead to higher costs and lower profits. Making choices that lead to lower profits means risking a business, a job, an economy.

Increasingly, consumers need to be aware of (and pay for) the relative social and environmental cost of goods and services. Ways need to be found to ease the conflict between the short-term goal of the bottom line and our long-term responsibility to the future. For example, if all of the costs to society—including the health-care expenses and environmental cleanup costs—were reflected in the price of the products we purchase, then reducing pollution would boost the bottom line.

If, through increased social and environmental tariffs on goods, businesses were encouraged to become stewards for shared natural resources then, for example, restoring a wetland could reap profits. In an economy that included all costs and values, we wouldn't have to struggle to resolve the conflict between short-term goals and long-term responsibilities.

Being competitive, innovative, providing the most value to shareholders—these are powerful motivators in our economic system. If the rules of doing business could be adjusted so that both working for nature and for people were required for economic success, the energy and creativity currently channelled into the bottom line would go toward the benefit of future generations.

In this report, we've brought to your attention the service plans of the two ministries that have both complementary and competing interests in the environment. And, we have provided Tom Burgess' insightful analysis, in full, of the impacts that these decisions will have. Inevitably, these decisions will result in widespread changes to the environment and park system in BC, as we know it. Will the results be a short-term gain, or will they provide the security for long-term future benefits? ■

Cheryl Borris, Editor

Environmental Cuts—What We're Losing

By Tom Burgess

INTRODUCTION:

On January 17th, the provincial government announced plans to downsize most of its Ministries, including Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP) and Sustainable Resource Management (SRM). These two Ministries contain all the elements of the Wildlife, Fisheries, Habitat Protection and Parks Programs (the Four Programs) which had been included in the former Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP). The Four Programs have been the focus of the Federation of BC Naturalists' **HELP MELP Campaign**.

We are aware, however, that there will be cuts to other elements of the former Ministry—specifically to Pollution Prevention and Water Management, a loss of at least 100 positions, and to the Conservation Officer Service, a loss of at least 25 positions. At January 17th, government figures were indicating a planned reduction from both SRM and WLAP of 983 positions, a 35% reduction.

Utilizing government information sources, it has been possible to determine the precise number and likely effect of the planned cuts in Victoria and in all nine Regional offices.

PREVIOUS CUTS:

Before considering this information, however, it must be understood that the announced cuts are not being taken from fully staffed Programs. Under the previous government administration, Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat Protection had ALREADY been reduced to only 50% of their former strength over a seven-year period. The Parks Program had been downsized earlier and had been spread progressively thinner as additional areas and Park numbers were

increased. By July 2001, Parks staff were responsible for over 800 Parks. The number of field staff then available provided a ratio of 5 Parks per field staff.

...we will lose support for Watershed Restoration; Wildlife Inventory; and Habitat Protection efforts in forest habitats...

MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (SRM):

A further compounding factor was the formation of the new SRM Ministry. At least 52 staff were taken from Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat Protection and placed into SRM. Some continued their former duties (the 11 member Habitat Inventory Group; the 15 member Conservation Data Center) but others found themselves with new duties. Where their duties changed, the efforts of the Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat Protection Programs were diminished. This was particularly true for Area Management, Hunting Regulations, Wildlife Inventory and Habitat Protection efforts dealing with fish/wildlife/forestry issues.

Following January 17th, figures were provided showing that SRM was to cut 37, 135, 175 and 238 positions, respectively, over four fiscal years—a total of 585 positions and representing a 38% cut. We know that 12 of the 52 SRM transferees from Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat Protection are to be cut this year. We do not yet have information on the remainder of the 52, nor on any other possible transferees. From the 12 known cuts from this

year, we will lose support for Watershed Restoration; Wildlife Inventory; and Habitat Protection efforts in forest habitats. Thus, what might have originally appeared as a simple transfer to new duties is now revealed as a permanent loss to the Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat Protection Programs.

THE MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND AIR PROTECTION'S FOUR PROGRAMS:

Cuts to the Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat Protection Programs under the previous government removed 300 dedicated environmental workers. The cuts recently announced by our current government will take yet another 74 workers—38 now, 36 later—reducing Program strength to only 32% of the mid '90s levels. There will be only 225 staff left for the entire province, charged with the responsibility of maintaining fish and wildlife populations and their habitats and providing us with various opportunities to enjoy them.

Our Parks Program fares even worse. Earlier downsizing had not been as severe, but the Parks system has doubled in recent years. By July 2001, the ratio of staff to Parks was one field worker for every 5 Parks. Current government plans will cut staff by 63—33 now and an additional 30 later. This is a 34% cut that will bring field strength to only 120. This will have the effect of increasing the ratio to one field worker for every 7 Parks.

The above losses of dedicated and knowledgeable staff are a disaster, plain and simple. But, to make matters worse, in numerous Regions, some of the Four Programs suffer disproportional losses, in the range of 40%–50%.

Continued on page 8

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM CUTS AND IMPLICATIONS:

Wildlife Program

The over-all cut to Wildlife is 23%—20 workers (11 now, 9 later), leaving only 66 to care for Wildlife throughout the Province. Four Regions are more heavily impacted, losing the following: Vancouver Island—50%; Lower Mainland—43%; Cariboo—40%; and Skeena—33%.

Losses to this extent simply devastate Regional Programs. Knowledge, experience and manpower are taken away. The remaining workers are proportionately more heavily burdened with administrative and regulatory tasks. There is less time to conduct field activities and to liaise with public groups and other agencies. Partnerships suffer. Staff increasingly loses contact with the resources they are trying to manage.

These ill effects affect all four Programs.

While there are many losses to the Wildlife Program, two, in particular, stand out in. The first is Area Management, a function consisting of various activities conducted to legally designate, manage and monitor especially valuable habitats, along with highly valued or threatened populations. These include our Wildlife Management Areas (22 of them) and a list of more than 300 other reserves. At least 5 staff directly responsible for these functions are being cut. Others less directly involved will not be able to spend sufficient time on this function to do it justice. The Area Management function is now being placed under the Parks Program, in spite of it being already understaffed and due to suffer a 34% staff cut.

The second heavy loss to Wildlife is in the area of population and habitat inventory. There will be 10 staff cut from this function. These include long-service Wildlife Technicians with extensive experience and several

Biologists, recent graduates of university, with the latest knowledge of survey techniques. The Program will be seriously damaged by these cuts, with losses to the inventory functions for big game, large carnivores, raptorial birds, non-game birds, and species at risk. The latter three categories are of primary concern in both the Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland Regions, which are being most heavily cut.

Fisheries Program

Cuts to the Fisheries Program are nearly 30% overall, with the loss of 26 positions (17 now, 9 later), leaving only 64 Fisheries staff to do the job. Two Regions are particularly heavily impacted, Vancouver Island losing 60%, and the Lower Mainland losing 50%.

Within the Program are several areas of interest that have been particularly heavily impacted. The first of these is the Urban Salmonid Habitat Program (USHP). Begun with MELP funding in 1995-96, it was focused on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland with the primary goal of ensuring sustainable wild salmon and other salmonid stocks and habitat in populated areas of the Georgia basin. It was hoped that the Program would build partnerships with other levels of government, initiate community involvement and increase public awareness.

Judged to be a tremendous success, plans were being made to expand the Program to the Thompson and Okanagan Regions. Funded first by MELP, then Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and latterly by the now defunct Fisheries Renewal BC, it provided almost \$6.4 Million of project funding over seven years. Ten staff were hired, three each in Victoria and the Lower Mainland, and four on Vancouver Island.

Working with 32 different local governments on 129 projects, the Program provided \$3 Million, initially paying salaries for more than 20 local government Environmental

Coordinators. For the Community Stewardship efforts, run entirely by volunteers, the Program paid over \$3.3 Million to fund 252 projects with 89 local Stewardship groups formed specifically to pursue the goals of the Program. These local groups undertook Watershed Assessments (over 100 are ready to go with restoration work on Vancouver Island alone), and protection, enhancement and restoration efforts. Many are now focused on Watershed Planning and Public Education efforts—just what was desired.

The volunteer Stewardship efforts over the seven-year period are estimated at over 400,000 hours, valued at \$4 Million. Local Stewardship groups have advised Fisheries staff that they want to see more of them in the field, to provide technical advice. Also considered desirable is much greater public involvement in Watershed Planning, considerably more development of Official Community Plans and Bylaws to protect small streams, and increased volunteer involvement in long-term protection and restoration of watersheds.

Regrettably, all this good work is now in limbo. Eight of the 10 USHP staff have been cut and the remaining two transferred. There are no project applications being taken, no funding has been identified, and the future of the Program is in question. Although the Living Rivers Strategy and the Forest Investment Account might provide some limited assistance, it seems apparent that the USHP Program as originally envisaged and practiced, is a thing of the past.

The second Fisheries area of interest heavily impacted is the Watershed Restoration Program. Funded entirely by Forest Renewal BC, it was only one of several investment initiatives. Its goal was to identify, assess and subsequently restore watersheds that had been negatively impacted by past logging practices. In the process, it would

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“Environmental Cuts...” continued from page 8
provide jobs and education for local citizens and First Nations and opportunities for public information.

Over the first five years (1994 to 1999), this Program provided just over \$302 Million to the effort. An estimated 2,800 watersheds in need of restoration (725 high priority, 425 medium priority) were the original focus. Of these, 860 watersheds received detailed assessment and 150 had restoration efforts completed. Another 320 watersheds were only partially restored. Restoration efforts included road deactivation or rehabilitation, slope stabilization and fish and aquatic habitat restoration (riparian plantings, fertilization and spawning/rearing channel replacement).

This Program was substantially reduced over the past two years, then cut, along with the FRBC Program. As successful as it was—and it was very successful—it leaves a great deal undone. Only 150 high priority or 20% of all watersheds were considered to be restored. There are another 575 high priorities to complete plus 425 medium priorities and 1,650 other watersheds. There is still a great deal to do. The Fisheries Program provided 10 positions to this effort. Seven of these are now cut, 2 others will go during the next 24 months. One has been transferred.

Other areas of interest where Fisheries is suffering staff losses include Steelhead Management. This program will lose four staff (one now, three later), including Biologists and Technicians with decades of experience, from Victoria, Nanaimo and Surrey. Also included in the cutbacks are 5 Technicians with many years experience in fish and fish habitat inventory and 2 Biologists (from Vancouver Island and the Kootenays). These personnel were specifically trained to deal with recommending BC Hydro dam flows to ensure adequate water for fish, and with independent Hydro operations (there are 600 of these proposed for BC, 50 on Vancouver Island alone).

Habitat Protection Program

Cuts to the Habitat Protection Program overall are 23%, a loss of 28 positions (10 now, 18 later), leaving 95 positions to carry the provincial load. Three Regions are disproportionately impacted, Vancouver Island at 35%, Lower Mainland at 42% and the Kootenays at 33%. Habitat Protection (HP) staff typically deal with either urban/rural or fish/wildlife/forestry issues.

...there were never enough staff nor adequate policies and procedures to do an effective job of protecting critical habitats...

The urban/rural areas of the Province—southern and southeastern Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and the Okanagan—have moderate climates and inviting landforms which attract human development. They also support a high proportion of special habitats and an increasing number of wildlife and fish populations considered “at risk”. Habitat protection efforts in the past have focused on identifying these special habitats and on working with local governments via a “referral” system to avoid or mitigate developments impacting them.

With rapidly increasing human populations, the referral system became unwieldy. In recent years, HP staff had begun to develop “Best Practices” documents which provided local governments, developers and consultants with the means of identifying special habitats and of avoiding impacts upon them. This new approach depends on successful partnerships, constant education and updating for approval authorities and ongoing monitoring efforts to correct deficiencies.

Sadly, 11 urban/rural HP staff have

been, or soon will be, cut. These are the people who dealt with municipal “Best Practices” partnerships, Streamside Protection guidelines, urban planning, local government liaison, community watersheds and referrals on the Fraser Estuary and in Burrard Inlet. The efforts of their remaining colleagues are now made much more difficult.

Elsewhere in the Province, HP efforts focus more on issues of wildlife and fisheries habitat in forested areas. With the imposition of parts of the Forest Practices Code (FPC) and the announced intention to re-write the FPC to simplify regulations that would free up more timber for harvesting, the new duties of HP staff remain yet unclear. What is not unclear, however, is that there were never enough staff nor adequate policies and procedures to do an effective job of protecting critical habitats in our forests. Now, government intends to take away 8 more staff from this function. It remains to be seen whether the staff left behind will be sufficient to do an effective job or if the new procedures being developed will be any improvement on past efforts.

Parks Program:

At 34% overall, cuts to the Parks Program are the heaviest of the Four Programs. There will be a loss of 63 positions (33 now, 30 more later), leaving 120 people to carry on with, in many cases, half their former numbers, but with additional duties. The Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland Regions are very heavily impacted. Both are reduced from 2 Districts each, to one. Vancouver Island loses 51% of its staff, the Lower Mainland, 45%. The Victoria unit, which supports Districts with its Planning, Acquisition, Extension, and Statistical functions, is cut by 35%. Both the Thompson and Okanagan Districts are cut by 33%.

One of the most serious losses to the Parks Program is the loss of all 13 of

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“Environmental Cuts...” continued from page 9
the District Extension Officers. These are the people who provided the public outreach and who nurtured the community relationships so necessary to the Parks Program. They are the staff who provided the field efforts that lead to public understanding of Park values, to appreciation, and thence to public support for protection of those values.

All Parks field staff undertake a certain level of extension duties, but the Extension Officers are the ones with the primary responsibility and the special training and experience to do the job. They handled many of the thousands of public inquiries that come in weekly during the high-use seasons, many of which cannot be satisfactorily handled by a website. They put together the Communication Plans, deciding what messages to get out, what tools to use and with what design and cost. They were the staff who worked with contractors and volunteers to provide the very popular and informative Interpretive Programs—the campfire and daytime sessions which tell us of nature lore and present us with information on conservation issues and outdoors safety tips. They arranged for the various spring school programs dealing with nature appreciation, back country education and safety practices.

Extension staff had primary responsibility for delivering the volunteer programs. In 2001, they dealt with 2,070 volunteers, who provided, free to the government, 130,000 hours of effort valued at \$1.3 Million. This included the campground and back-country hosts, the Ecological Reserve Wardens, and a wide range of Special Projects—trail and cross country ski trail development and maintenance; tracking and surveying wildlife and habitat; mapping caves and other natural features; providing viewing facilities and signs, and planting trees.

In addition to all this, they raised funds from outside sources, local governments, companies and private donors. In 2001, this provided for 77 different projects, valued at over \$500,000, not

including the value of volunteer hours. The Extension group was bringing in more than twice the value of the wages and benefits paid to them. In addition to loss of the Extension efforts, the loss of so many front-line staff places immense burdens on those members remaining. These are the people who provide all the Parks management functions. Among a wide range of functions are the following: provide and monitor Park Use permits; identify and deal with developing conservation and maintenance issues; supervise back-country use; plan and maintain trails, cross-country ski networks; investigate and take action regarding illegal Park uses; provide for public safety; answer public inquiries; and work with contractors, E-Teams, volunteer groups and individual on a wide range of subjects.

...the loss of so many front-line staff places immense burdens on those remaining...

Front-line Parks workers are now being expected to take on some new duties. These are associated with management and maintenance of Wildlife Management Areas (22 in the Province) and a wide range of Fish and Wildlife reserves—over 300 in all—many (65) of which have licenses, leases and management agreements to administer. Formerly a daunting task for Fish and Wildlife staff, this new duty for Parks staff will be impossible for them to carry out without some kind of relief. When front-line worker numbers are reduced to the extent planned by government, the services they provide are diminished, former service levels are made impossible, and Program changes must be contemplated.

AFTER THE CUTS—WHAT THEN?

The above information indicates what functions and services will be lost as a result of the announced cuts. But it is beyond reason to assume that staff

remaining will be able to carry on as before. Clearly, government intends a wide range of changes. Staff and public will be learning of these changes over the next weeks and months.

For now, we know of some of the intended changes from government releases. Government “will focus on client service”, “will do away with constraints on economic development”, “will facilitate sustainable economic development”, “will eliminate regulations to facilitate industry competitiveness”, “will trim regulations to foster a more competitive investment climate” and will “approve projects in a more timely, cost-effective and certain fashion”.

Government intends to encourage industry, local government and private organizations to take on a much greater environmental management and protection role, leaving government staff the role of monitoring and enforcement. How this is to be delivered after all the staff cuts remains unclear. How staff—already handling scores of partnerships in every region of BC—are to take on even more partnerships with less staff, is inexplicable.

Our Parks system is due for some major changes: no more extension or interpretive efforts, unless someone else pays the bills; less field staff to watch over the public interests; less staff to develop partnerships and work with the volunteers; campsites closing (40 to 50 this year); Parks closing (100 or more possible); and Parks assigned to the Federal government, or to Regional and Municipal authorities or private interests. A new approach to Parks management which meets public expectations may yet be developed, but it looks years away at this point.

There are many environmental concerns raised by both the staff cuts and the newly announced government intentions for the environment. The above are only the most obvious. ■

Tom Burgess is a retired Provincial Wildlife Biologist who is now working with the HELP MELP Campaign. He can be reached at 250 642 0015 or by e-mail: tomburgess@telus.net

Who's Who, These Days...

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*Note: Both ministries are in a state of re-organization.
For more complete information, including general name searches
for titles, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses etc., bookmark
<http://www.dir.gov.bc.ca>*

Source material on Ministry initiatives
compiled from the BC Government website:
www.gov.bc.ca