

SUTTON PASS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

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Approved by:



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Date: Mar. 31/03

SUTTON PASS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. Research and educational activities may be carried out but only under permit.

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Sutton Pass Ecological Reserve is to protect one of the few known occurrences of adder's tongue fern (*Ophioglossum pusillum*) in British Columbia. This is one of only four or five known localities of the strange unfern-like blue-listed plant in British Columbia. The reserve is located beside Highway 4 about 25 kilometres west of Port Alberni and it lies in a narrow valley bottom in a pass between the Taylor and Kennedy river drainages. The fern is found mainly on moist sites along with other herbaceous communities at the margin of the shrub zone along the edge of a pond that was dammed by an ancient rockslide. This pond is subject to pronounced seasonal variations in water level and aerial extent, which is important for maintaining the herbaceous zone and preventing shrubs from advancing. This action allows small herbs adapted to seasonal flooding, like the adder's tongue fern, to thrive in minimal competition for light with the shrubs.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Impact of road maintenance activities and logging upslope on the water quality and water level regime, which could affect the existence of the adder's tongue fern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage the Ministry of Transportation to limit the use of chemicals with respect to the management of the highway pass. ➤ Develop, in conjunction with the Ministry of Transportation, a spill response to address potential spills on highway. ➤ Continue the review of forest development plans (Weyerhaeuser) to ensure that forest harvesting activity does not impact water quality and water levels. ➤ Encourage a formal monitoring program by recruiting a Volunteer Warden.
Limited ability of the ecological reserve to protect adder's tongue fern given its small size, location, and adjacent uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Investigate other sites where this fern may occur to ensure that other options for protection are available.

Conservation

- Representation
 - ecosection Too small to be representative
 - biogeoclimatic subzone/variant Too small to be representative
- Special Features Pond and herb/shrub types
- Rare/Endangered Values Blue-listed (G5, S2) adder's tongue fern
- Scientific/Research Opportunities Research on fern

Recreation

- Representation
 - backcountry Not Applicable
 - destination Not Applicable
 - travel corridor Not Applicable
 - local recreation Not Applicable
- Special Opportunities Not Applicable
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities Offsite interpretation

Cultural Heritage

- Representation Not Applicable
- Special Feature Not Applicable

Other Management Considerations

- Other Designations Not Applicable
- Relationship to other PAs Part of a system of ecological reserves on Vancouver Island
- Co-operative Management Arrangements Not Applicable
- Partnerships Not Applicable
- Vulnerability Impacts on water quality by road maintenance or logging may affect the fern. This site provides poor protection to the plant.
- Relationship to other Strategies Not Applicable

Area: 3.4 hectares

Date of establishment: May 4, 1978