

**SPECIES AND ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK
LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP
SYMPOSIUM 2017
Highlights Report**

January 31 - February 1, 2017
Victoria, BC



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Species and Ecosystems at Risk Symposium 2017

Highlights Report

The 2017 Species and Ecosystems at Risk Symposium took place on January 31 – February 1, 2017 in Victoria, following the theme of “*Conservation without Borders: Working together on species and ecosystems at risk initiatives*”. The event was attended by about 70 people, including representatives from local governments throughout British Columbia, in addition to some representatives from the provincial and federal senior governments and conservation organizations.

The purpose of the symposium was:

- ♦ To share ideas on ways to work across geographic and organisational boundaries;
- ♦ To discuss the development of a potential Species and Ecosystems at Risk (SEAR) Charter;
- ♦ To discuss existing examples of incentives and how they could work for us;
- ♦ To provide information and updates from the federal and provincial governments on species and ecosystems at risk; and
- ♦ To learn about what other local governments are doing to protect species and ecosystems at risk.

This was the fourth and largest symposium of the SEAR Local Government Working Group (LGWG) since its formation in 2009. In the Symposium Evaluation Form (see Appendix 8), delegates showed a very positive response to the symposium in general and commented on the value of being able to network face-to-face. The symposium included both presentations and break-out discussions, focusing on working across geographical and organizational boundaries. Significant outcomes from the symposium included a confirmation of support for a potential SEAR Charter with 34/35 delegates supporting the idea and 1/35 partly supporting it, and similar but slightly less enthusiastic support for a potential Conservation Tax Incentive Program with 28/39 supporting the idea, 9/30 partly supporting it and 2/39 not supporting.

The detailed Symposium Report can be downloaded at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/species-ecosystems-at-risk/local-government-working-group>.

Presentations Summary

Copies of the PowerPoint presentations are included in the detailed Symposium Report.

- ♦ **Butch Dick**, a Songhees Nation elder, welcomed the group to his traditional territory.
- ♦ **Alec Dale**, Executive Director, Ecosystems Branch, Ministry of Environment, welcomed the group and noted that Province remains committed to working with local governments. It is important to work collaboratively in order to meet challenges for SEAR.

Federal Panel

- ♦ **Ken Brock** and **Brad Langham** (Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada) gave an overview of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) and recent activities.

Provincial Panel

- ♦ **Lynn Campbell** (Ministry of Environment) provided a provincial update, including progress on the SEAR Discussion Paper recommendations and potential new programs (SEAR Charter and conservation tax incentives).
- ♦ **Leah Westereng** (Ministry of Environment) spoke of the Five-year Plan for Species at Risk and early results from the online Species at Risk Public Engagement.
- ♦ **Anne Hetherington** (FLNRO, Smithers) described an innovative approach to subdivision design and a community-based problem solving approach.
- ♦ **Lindsay Anderson** (FLNRO, Kootenays) described partnership approaches in the Kootenay Boundary Region.
- ♦ **David Trotter** (Ministry of Agriculture) talked about the Environment Farm Plan assessment to identify environmental risk on farm land and ways to reduce these risks.

PechaKucha Presentations

There were seven brief presentations demonstrating how local governments across the province are working across geographical and organisational boundaries to protect species and ecosystems at risk:

- ♦ City of Victoria (**Thomas Munson**)
- ♦ Capital Regional District (**Todd Golumbia**)
- ♦ Coastal Douglas-fir and Associate Ecosystems Conservation Partnership (**Katie Bell**)
- ♦ Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (**Scott Boswell** and **Tanis Gieselman**)
- ♦ South Okanagan-Similkameen Shared Environmental Planner Project (**Alison Peatt**)
- ♦ International Connectivity (**Tory Stevens**)
- ♦ South Coast Conservation Program (**Pamela Zevit**)

Panel: Working together: How to (better) use planning tools / bylaws and work with our councils and boards

- ♦ **Deborah Curran** (UVic Environmental Law) noted that local governments have the tools they need to protect species at risk on private land. She urged local governments to use more education as part of bylaw development, and the need for focus on the bigger regional conservation approach (edges, corridors) in addition to site focus. She highlighted some of the challenges that the Saanich Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA) has experienced.
- ♦ **Stephen Godwin** (City of Surrey) explained Surrey's "successive policies" that build on each other and how they have used development permits to protect riparian areas.

- ♦ **Todd Cashin** (City of Kelowna) talked about their wetland protection strategy and different protection approaches. He noted that images are a more effective communication tool than data.
- ♦ **Adriane Pollard** (District of Saanich) spoke about the results of the consultant's report on the economic impact of the EDPA.
- ♦ **Andy MacKinnon** (Councillor, District of Metchosin) talked about the proposed land swap between Metchosin, Langford and Scia'new First Nation. He noted the importance of having councillors who have a biology background, and encouraged participants to run for council.



Incentives

- ♦ **Alf Birch** (volunteer with Land Trust Alliance of BC) explained the conservation tax incentive program (CTIP) concept and his presentations to various local governments. Supportive letters from local governments would be welcomed.
- ♦ **Jennifer Eliason** (Islands Trust Fund) reminded participants of the Islands Trust Natural Areas Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP), a potentially similar model to the proposed CTIP.
- ♦ **Dave Zehnder** (Farmland Advantage) explained the Farmland Advantage Program and the need for cheap, fast, effective and powerful solutions for species at risk.
- ♦ **Lynn Wilson** (CRD Parks) described the Capital Regional District's Land Acquisition Fund.
- ♦ **Alison Peatt** (South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program) outlined the process to set up regional conservation funds.

A discussion on the proposed CTIP followed (see summary below).

Working together: Communicating with our partners and the public

- ♦ **Rick Kool** (Royal Roads University, Environmental Education and Communication) spoke of the ethos (who are you?); pathos (who are you communicating to); logos (subject, how are you communicating?) Our task is to find bridges so that people want to hear us.
- ♦ **Chris O'Connor** and **Gavin Hanke** (Royal BC Museum) reminded us to be engaging for a variety of audiences. Avoid preaching and make the experience memorable.

Interactive Sessions

Discussions on Potential SEAR Charter

Detailed comments were captured in worksheets (see Appendix 4 of the Symposium Report). In addition to comments on specific wording, themes included:

Pros:

- ♦ Important to start somewhere
- ♦ It helps to raise awareness
- ♦ Easier if many local governments are adopting this
- ♦ Demonstrates support from elected officials
- ♦ Provides good basis for working with the Province
- ♦ Clarifies roles and responsibilities for SEAR
- ♦ Provides clear intent
- ♦ Low level of commitment, so an easy first step

Cons:

- ♦ Too vague, lacks clarity
- ♦ Not legally binding, no measurable outcomes
- ♦ Needs to be tied to incentives
- ♦ Perceived as downloading
- ♦ May lack resources and political support for implementation

Support

- ♦ Some participants felt their local government would be likely to support a charter; others felt it would not be supported
- ♦ Concerns included: the length/wordiness of the document; the need to be very clear about the commitment a local government is signing on to; and resources required for implantation, including monitoring
- ♦ Suggestions included finding staff champions, having a few tools that work for everyone (e.g., tax incentives), and explaining how this could reduce red tape
- ♦ Some felt there would be public support, others identified challenges such as people who could be concerned about loss of development or property rights, and the cost of implementation

- ♦ Suggestions included a strong education component; finding community champions to promote; and seeking UBCM and UDI support

Guidance

- ♦ Need easy access to tools and examples
- ♦ Need supporting data and mapping
- ♦ Need resources – such as shared environmental planners
- ♦ Need incentives for land conservation
- ♦ Need support from senior governments

Discussions on Potential Conservation Tax Incentive Program

Detailed comments were captured in worksheets (see Appendix 5 of Symposium Report). Themes included:

Pros:

- ♦ It is another tool to support land protection
- ♦ It provides an optional incentive for landowners
- ♦ It can be created as a revenue neutral tool for local governments
- ♦ Provides a template for implementation, consistency across the province
- ♦ It is an educational tool

Cons

- ♦ Complexity
- ♦ Tax implications (tax shift)
- ♦ Cost to set up, monitor and enforce

Support

- ♦ Some felt their local government would support a CTIP; others had reservations
- ♦ NGO support was seen as essential both for education and implementation
- ♦ Public support will depend on good communication
- ♦ Some participants welcomed ‘another tool in the toolbox’, others suggested using these resources for other tools such as land purchase, carbon credits (for carbon sinks) and the existing EcoGifting program

Taking These Lessons Home

Participants were asked to write down one thing that they would do differently as a result of having attended the symposium. Detailed answers are provided in Appendix 6 of the Symposium Report, and included:

- ♦ More collaboration with colleagues, including sharing of information

- ♦ Improving communications skills, using more story-telling, being mindful of the audience, and putting more effort into communications
- ♦ Improve use of existing tools, for example by not overly fine-tuning mapping and using more communications
- ♦ Look at new strategies to use, such as a dedicated conservation fund and investing in the conservation community

Awards

The SEAR Local Government Working Group presented its first ever peer-nominated awards for local governments who have demonstrated exemplary work on a species and ecosystems at risk (SEAR)-related initiative, based on the symposium theme “Conservation without Borders”.



Nominees are below, with winners in **bold**.

Kootenay Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional District of East Kootenay for the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund
Okanagan Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City of Kelowna's Mission Creek Restoration Initiative ▪ RDOS for leading the establishment of the South Okanagan Regional Conservation Fund
Thompson/Cariboo Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TNRD for the Cherry Creek Savona Official Community Plan
South Coast Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Metro Vancouver Regional Parks' Aldergrove Regional Park Wetland Restoration ▪ City of Richmond's Alexandra District Energy Barn Owl Box Initiative ▪ Metro Vancouver Regional Parks' Coastal Sand Ecosystem Restoration at Iona Beach Regional Park ▪ The Corporation of Delta's Streambank lupine (<i>Lupinus rivularis</i>) set aside and management plan ▪ Township of Langley's Langley Ecological Services Initiative ▪ City of Surrey's <i>Biodiversity Strategy and associated Sensitive Ecosystems Development Permit Area Guidelines (SEDPA)</i>, Zoning By-law, 1993, and Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2013 amendments for Streamside Protection Setbacks.
Vancouver Island Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comox Valley Regional District's Partnership Project to update Comox Valley SEI Assessment and Map in the OCP ▪ City of Nanaimo's Restoration of Jinglepot Marsh and Harewood Plains Park Initiative

Projects Posted by Delegates

Participants brought one-page posters with information on projects they are working on, offers of sharing information, and questions for others. The poster summary is included in the Symposium Report (Appendix 7).

Symposium Evaluation

Overall the Symposium was rated very highly, and all participants agreed or strongly agreed that their attendance was a good use of their time. Detailed comments are provided in Appendix 8 of the Symposium Report.