



All Hands on Deck: Taking a Joint Venture Approach to Species at Risk Conservation and Management

WHILE SPECIES AT RISK PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT IN BC REMAINS somewhat cloudy from a regulatory standpoint, resource professionals need to seek new ways to address their legal, professional and ethical responsibilities for protecting species and habitat. Collaborative partnerships help to achieve these responsibilities. They represent the new and perhaps needed shift in moving across discipline, land use and landscape boundaries for affecting long-term species and ecosystem at risk conservation.

Two established models are the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program and the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team Society. Both have evolved to conserve species and ecosystems at risk in biodiversity hot spot regions in BC. A third, perhaps the newest player on the block and the one I work with, is the South Coast Conservation Program (SCCP). The SCCP covers three forest districts (Sunshine Coast, Squamish-Lillooet and Chilliwack) all with their own unique species, land-use and resource management issues.

The objective of these organizations is the coordination and facilitation of activities and tools to maintain and recover species and ecosystems at risk. The guiding mandate is to use an eco-regional or bio-regional approach in concert with recovery teams, recovery plans and strategies for specific species. While these are buzzwords, they are nonetheless important descriptors that recognize the variables of trying to affect conservation-based change for such a biodiverse area with so many competing and often conflicting jurisdictions and interests.

While the SCCP is still a relatively new organization, it has facilitated and developed a wide range of research, tools and activities for species at risk conservation and awareness. This includes:

- Mentoring and training workshops on species at risk identification, best practices and conflict resolution.
- Extensive stewardship and outreach with private land interests.
- Securing funds to develop tools and applied science resources to assist professionals and decision makers in the private and public sector. These tools include habitat suitability mapping, occurrence inventory data, learning outcomes for population and critical habitat restoration and recovery.
- Developing networking and capacity building for varying interests to develop their own mechanisms to carry on species and ecosystems at risk conservation.

There are two projects underway which are particularly relevant to forestry and biology professionals:

- *A Guide to Species of Conservation Concern for the South Coast of British Columbia*
- *A Recovery Implementation Plan For Species at Risk in the South Coast Region of British Columbia.*

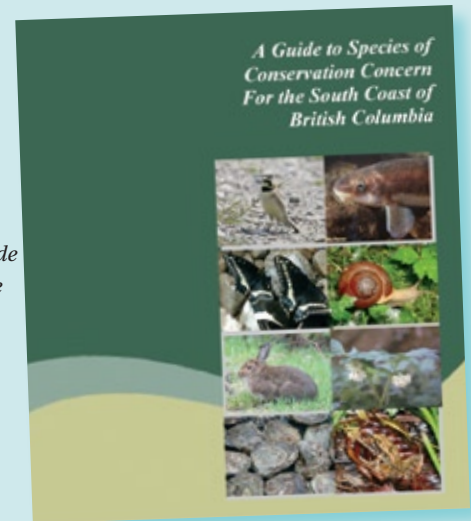
The guide will provide information on the identification, biology and ecological associations of a representative selection of regionally, provincially and federally significant species for the South Coast. It is

based on a previous publication, *Field Guide to Species at Risk in the Coast Region of British Columbia* developed by the BC Ministry of Environment and Interfor in 2003. The recovery implementation plan involves consideration of species

at risk populations that are naturally rare or impacted by anthropogenic activities. It also includes the measures needed to maintain and recover those populations and the provision of a scientific framework for species at risk management. Both documents take a multi-species, multi-landscape approach to species and ecosystem at risk conservation issues.

A plethora of federal, provincial and local legislation and regulations exist in BC governing species and habitat protection. While the jury is out on how effective this buffet of regulatory mechanisms is, resource managers, professionals and the public are moving ahead with a multi-disciplinary/multi-jurisdictional partnership or 'joint venture' approach to address regulatory responsibilities and societal demands for species at risk conservation. These joint ventures often integrate a range of landscapes and land use interests and generate collaborative solutions. They bring senior agency interests, academia, land use and environmental professionals to the table with non-government interests and smooth the progress of effective management and knowledge sharing while also addressing conservation needs and legislative requirements. 🐦

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South Coast Conservation Program Structure

The SCCP own governance structure uses an eco-regional or bio-regional approach. The present steering committee has the following representatives:

- University of British Columbia faculty from forestry, planning and geography
- Three land trusts: The Land Conservancy, The Fraser Valley Conservancy and The Nature Trust
- Several advisors from the biology, forestry, agrology and planning professions representing private sector and government interests.
- First Nations representation which is an evolving but critical component.

The whole process has been co-led by and evolved from an original committee convened by regional BC Ministry of Environment staff in the Lower Mainland.