

SPECIES AND ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION

The Comox Valley Regional District board, on occasion, elects to support province-wide concerns and issues in the form of a board resolution. These resolutions are normally forwarded first to the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities (AVICC) for consideration but may also be forwarded directly to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Based on the nature of the concern, UBCM will either endorse or not endorse the recommendation and if endorsed, will present the concern to the provincial or federal government on behalf of all BC municipalities and regional district.

Date of Board meeting: June 24, 2009

Board Resolution: WHEREAS the province of British Columbia has the richest biodiversity of all Canadian provinces, with 76 per cent of Canada's bird species, 70 per cent of its freshwater fish species, 66 per cent of its butterfly species and 60 per cent of its conifer species;
WHEREAS B.C. is one of only two provinces in Canada that lacks stand-alone endangered species legislation, the province choosing instead to rely on a fragmented legislative and policy framework that provides insufficient protection for biodiversity, proven by the fact that 87 per cent of known threatened and endangered species in B.C. are unprotected and more than 1,300 species are currently at risk in B.C.;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government be requested to enact a strong Species and Ecosystem Protection Act to safeguard British Columbia's exceptional biological richness - in particular, against the threats posed by habitat loss and climate change - recognizing the critical importance of conserving biodiversity to maintaining ecosystem integrity and human well-being;

AND FINALLY THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Union of BC Municipalities 2008 convention.

This resolution was referred to UBCM on, June 27, 2008

A response was received on May 6, 2009

Response from UBCM: On motion, was ENDORSED at the annual convention: The Resolutions Committee notes that a similar resolution, which dealt solely with Endangered Species and not with Ecosystem Protection, was put forward in 1999, calling for the creation of a "stand alone" Endangered Species Act in BC to address uncertainty and conflict in the industry (1999-B57). At the time, membership referred this resolution to the UBCM Executive. To date, the provincial government has no stand-alone Endangered Species Act. Legislation governing this area includes the BC Wildlife Act, the Forest and Range Practices Act, and the Species at Risk Act. The BC provincial government operates in this area through the Ministry of Environment's "Endangered Species and Ecosystem" branch.

Additionally this resolution was referred to the Ministry of Environment

In addition to current legislation and policies that address the conservation of species and ecosystems in the province, the B.C. government recently unveiled a new Conservation Framework - a science-based, province wide approach that prioritizes and selects conservation actions for species and ecosystems of concern, shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach. Designed, tested and reviewed by scientists and wildlife experts from universities, conservation organizations, industry and government, the Framework promotes the efficient and strategic use of resources among all partners. It has been developed collaboratively with the support of Biodiversity BC and its member organizations and major scientists including Fred Bunnell of UBC, who co-authored the scientific methods underpinning the Conservation Framework.

The Framework aims to contribute to global efforts for species and ecosystems conservation, prevent species and ecosystems from becoming at risk, and maintain the full diversity of native species and ecosystems. The B.C. government is also examining options for a Species at Risk Regulation under the Wildlife Amendment Act, 2004, which would provide additional protection for species at risk in B.C. The Conservation Framework and the Wildlife Amendment Act, 2004 augment existing provincial and federal legislation and policies that protect species at risk (e.g. Forest and Range Practices Act, Parks Act, Wildlife Act, Fish Protection Act, Environmental Management Act, Water Act, federal Fisheries Act, and Species At Risk Act).

These measures complement the more than 14 per cent of British Columbia's land base in parks and protected areas, and help to ensure British Columbia continues to meet its biodiversity conservation obligations internationally, nationally, and provincially.