

## Excellent Turnout for Pender Harbour's Stewardship Fair

About 75 people came to the Stewardship Fair held February 26 at Pender Harbour Community Centre in Madeira Park. Attendees were greeted with coffee, homemade muffins and displays by stewardship groups and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC). Participating organizations included the Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society (MVIHES), Nature Trust of BC, Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF), Pacific Streamkeepers Federation, Pender Harbour & District Wildlife Society, Ruby Lake Lagoon Nature Reserve Society, Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) and The Land Conservancy.

Presentations began with Sid Quinn, resource manager for the Sechelt First Nation, who welcomed everyone to Sechelt territory and gave some historical perspective to his people's presence in the Sakinaw Lake area. The Sechelt occupied and made extensive use of the mouth of Sakinaw Lake, which they knew as *stsexwma*. Shell middens are located there, and an extensive fish trap, since demolished, was described by an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century writer as one of the world's great wonders. The Sakinaw sockeye run helped the Sechelt sustain a sizeable population at Pender Harbour. "It used to feed a lot of our people," Quinn said. He described the important role that Sechelt experts have played in efforts to preserve the run and ended his talk with an elder's definition of stewardship: "When we inherit a resource, we have to pass it on to our children in better shape than when we received it."

Sunshine Coast Regional District director John Rees spoke about the complex water-use issues associated with the 10-lake Sakinaw system. He pointed to pressures of growth and development on the water supply, and estimated that 5 million gallons of water will have to be found from new sources each year to sustain the 50-55 new houses being built annually in the Pender Harbour area. "The community will certainly need to use water from Sakinaw Lake sooner or later," Rees said, and



*The quiet beauty of the Sakinaw Lake outlet stream, looking east from the path that leads from lake to dam.*  
Daniel Bouman photo

proposed that a 12-year supply could be obtained by taking 25 mm (one inch) of water from both Sakinaw and Ruby lakes.

Grant McBain, FOC community advisor for the Sunshine Coast, showed slides and gave a history of Sakinaw Lake from the salmon's point of view. He described improvements made to the outlet channel and spawning beaches, and provided an overview of habitat conditions. Alan Kenney talked about the vital role that PSF plays in support of salmon restoration and stewardship projects. One such project is on Vancouver Island's Englishman River, and Faye Smith of MVIHES gave an inspirational account of her society's initiatives in preserving the river's important salmon runs.

After lunch (provided by the SCCA) about 20 individuals, including members of the Sakinaw Lake Homeowners' Association, participated in a round-table discussion, facilitated by Lee Turnbull, on forming a stewardship group for the Sakinaw watershed. As Sakinaw Lake is downstream from nine other lakes and countless streams, it was felt that representatives from the rest of the watershed needed

to be part of any group formed. Water- and land-use planning, pollution and ecosystem integrity were identified as core issues. There was general agreement that a stewardship and watershed planning group could do much to raise public appreciation of the area's lakes and streams—their interconnectedness and interdependency—and that wise land- and water-use practices are necessary to help preserve these waters for wild and human populations alike.



*A kayaker's perspective on Sakinaw Lake, facing north-east from the outlet.*  
Andrew Scott photo

## Great Ideas for Lakeside Living

Our everyday habits can either help or harm the lakeshores and other riparian zones in the Sakinaw watershed. By making smart personal choices, we can save money and time, and preserve the environment, as well:

- site your septic system far from the shoreline, keep it in good repair and pump it out regularly; compost house and yard waste.
- build gravelled paths and driveways, not paved lanes that produce pollution-laden runoff.
- prune rather than remove trees; plant low-maintenance native trees and shrubs; eradicate invasive non-native plants.
- use environmentally friendly garden and workshop products, household cleaners, paints, etc; avoid pesticides and herbicides, and don't use fertilizers near water.
- mow lawns high using a mulching mower, limit watering, leave grass clippings, aerate and overseed, remove weeds by hand.
- a modern electric or 4-stroke outboard motor will improve fuel consumption and reduce leakage of oil and other pollutants into lakes (a conventional 2-stroke outboard discharges up to 25% of its fuel/oil mixture straight into the water).
- don't use anti-fouling paints for boat bottoms, as these are a serious source of aquatic and marine pollution.
- be careful to avoid oil, fuel, antifreeze and other chemical spills.
- enjoy naturescaping (or creating useful wildlife habitat on your property). See resource section below.
- share shoreline access with neighbours in sensitive areas in order to reduce the need for construction.
- clean up after pets and don't let them chase or harass wildlife.
- check with your FOC community advisor for inexpensive ways to naturalize your shoreline and improve wildlife habitat.
- use a small, low-impact floating dock rather than a fixed structure.

## About Preserving Private Land

Private land only makes up about five percent of BC's land base, but it can be a precious conservation resource, especially when the land is adjacent or close to a stream or other body of water—and thus potentially valuable wildlife habitat. Private landowners

may wish to protect properties with high ecological values for future generations.

There are many ways of doing this. Private land can be given or donated, either to government or to a non-profit group. Or it can be left in private ownership but with restrictions placed on future use. A common way of protecting private land is with a covenant: a voluntary written agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization or government in which the landowner promises to preserve the land in specified ways. A covenant can apply to all or part of a property and be tailored to address particular ecological features and the owner's objectives.



*The dam on Sakinaw Creek controls the lake level and enables Fisheries employees to count salmon. Daniel Bouman photo*

Private land donated to a conservation organization, with or without a covenant in place, may have tax benefits. The donor can still arrange to retain the right to use the land for a period of years. If the land is deemed to have ecological value (as certified by Environment Canada), an additional tax advantage accrues to the donor.

The SCCA is authorized to hold conservation covenants and receive ecological gifts. The association can help landowners evaluate their properties and develop conservation plans that suit their precise needs. The SCCA can be contacted through its website (see below, under Sources & Contacts).

## Sources & Contacts

### Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The draft recovery strategy for the Sakinaw Lake sockeye salmon is available at: [http://www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/consultation2004/main\\_e.htm](http://www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/consultation2004/main_e.htm). This website also has other important background documents. Phone: Grant McBain, FOC Community Advisor, 604-883-2613.

### Pacific Salmon Foundation

The website, [www.psf.ca](http://www.psf.ca), describes the valuable programs that PSF operates or manages, including the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund, the Community Salmon Program and recovery plans for several critical BC salmon and steelhead areas.

### Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Check out the many local initiatives that this active non-profit group is sponsoring in the local region at [www.thescca.ca](http://www.thescca.ca). The SCCA is involved with private land conservation, drinking water protection, the preservation of wildlife habitat and more.

### Living by Water Project

There's a wealth of advice about working toward healthier human and wildlife habitats along fresh and saltwater shorelines at [www.livingbywater.ca](http://www.livingbywater.ca), including comprehensive information about septic systems, docks, boating, co-existing with wildlife, preventing erosion, gardening with native plants, maintaining water quality, home purchasing and construction.

### Land Trust Alliance of BC

You'll find descriptions of voluntary conservation options for private landowners at [www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca](http://www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca), with detailed downloadable files about covenants, preserving natural and cultural features, ecogifts, and tax implications and benefits.

### Guide to Less Toxic Products

This Canadian website is comprehensive, with extensive consumer advice about household products. Recommendations, alternatives, home recipes and links are also provided ([www.lesstoxicguide.ca](http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca)).

### Naturescape British Columbia

Loads of ideas for creating useful wildlife habitat on your own property can be found at this website: [www.hctf.ca/nature.htm](http://www.hctf.ca/nature.htm).