

Background

The Sunshine Coast is the second fastest growing region in British Columbia. Between 2001 and 2006 our population rose 8.4%. The traditional logging and fishing sectors, which were economic drivers in the past, have been in steady decline. Tourism, real estate development, service industries, the arts, and a large array of small (often home-based) business are creating a new dynamic economy. Our region is becoming a retirement destination and businesses increasingly rely on scenic values, fish and wildlife resources and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Timber has been extracted from the [Sunshine Coast forest district](#) for 150 years. This is longer than most, if not all other areas of BC, due to our proximity to the province's first sawmills. The result is that our forest base is highly fragmented, there are few remaining stands of old growth and the habitat for threatened species has been dangerously reduced.



The current rate of timber harvesting is unsustainable. This was acknowledged in the [forest district's Timber Supply Analysis of 2001](#), which shows steep reductions in the cut within the next few decades. See [the SCCA's analysis of this review](#). Another analysis, which was supposed to have been done five years later, has been postponed indefinitely.

Strategic Planning Stalls

Unfortunately, the Sunshine Coast is one of the few remaining regions in British Columbia that does not yet have a strategic land use plan or a regional growth management strategy. Our proximity to Vancouver has brought the region under huge development pressure, while sharp land use conflicts between economic sectors are escalating.

The SCCA has been very active in pushing for strategic land use planning since the 1990's, as have a number of other organizations and local governments. Over the years, government's commitment to a full LRMP process (Land and Resource Management Plan) has weakened. The current vision for land use planning is for a Strategic Land and Resource Plan (SLRP).

Some elements of higher level planning are in place; about half of the landscapes of the forest district have completed or draft Landscape Unit Plan for old growth retention (see [Ongoing Issues / Managing Our Forests / Landscape Unit Plans](#)), a draft Mountain Goat Winter Range plan is available and about 50 Wildlife Habitat Areas have been established for Marbled Murrelets and Grizzly Bears. All logging companies have Forest Stewardship Plans. Taken together, measures to protect biodiversity in this region to date are entirely inadequate. Progress toward completion of these lower levels of resource planning has entirely stalled.

Mapping Key Areas for Biodiversity



In 2004, the SCCA produced a map of ecologically significant private land in the Sunshine Coast Regional District. In 2005 we launched Project Conservation Representation to prepare the public and conservation sectors to participate in higher level planning and to identify the environmental and conservation issues that need to be addressed. We have met many times with local governments, provincial government, the Sechelt Indian Government, community groups and other stakeholders to try and move the process forward.

We are currently working to identify lands that, in their natural condition, are supporting local sustainable businesses. And we plan next to identify the critical biodiversity values of the entire planning area and the most appropriate opportunities to protect these values. The maps and other material we produce will be freely available to all parties in the planning process.

In 2007, the Provincial government committed to creating a Strategic Land and Resource Plan (SLRP) for the Sunshine Coast Forest District. Government is now consulting with First Nations on the protocols of the planning process and the status of their land use plans. The Minister of Agriculture and Lands, in a meeting with our Executive Director in early March, told us that government-to-government negotiations related to the SLRP will be completed by the end of 2008, at which time public and private stakeholders will be engaged in the process.

[Documents and Links](#)