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BC Parks

Victoria

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RE: Public input
Salt Spring Island Parks and Ecological Reserves
Management Planning

Colleagues,

I promised Karen Ferguson, one of the community representatives in the management planning process for Salt Spring, and your consultant, Harry Parsons of Bufo Inc., that I would make a formal submission as part of the current phase of public input for Mount Maxwell and Mount Tuam. I was at the Open House near Ganges weeks back.

Below is some background information and a list of concerns and issues that I suggest be addressed more fully for both Mount Maxwell Ecological Reserve and Mount Tuam Ecological Reserve (and adjacent areas).

background

Thirty years back, I started field work in both those ecological reserves for the BC Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing. This work led to a report that was also my M.Sc. thesis:

Fragments: Management, protection and restoration proposals for thirteen ecological reserves in British Columbia, Canada. A report to the Ecological Reserves Committee and Advisory Board of the Ministry of Landscape, Parks and Housing of the Government of BC, June 1981.

A few copies were filed around and for a time were in provincial government libraries and at the UBC Forestry library.

The section on Mount Tuam comprised pages 39 to 48 and that for Mount Maxwell included pages 49 to 55. Three decades later, these little management concepts were simplistic and a bit naive – but remain curiously relevant to today's discussions.

As part of the early field work for my doctoral studies, I conducted field work in the 1980s in both ecological reserves. But more than 20 years back became more interested in Mount Maxwell. Over the years, I have conducted research and taken small groups of

university students on day field trips in Mount Maxwell – and when the ecological reserve was just the original parcel only took small groups onto the edge of the area. In recent years, I have taken these small groups into the expanded ecological reserve after extensive instruction and discussion around minimizing impacts (not just from recreation but from research).

While I have not actually published that much specifically on Salt Spring Island, Mount Maxwell has been the area that I have assessed and monitored most extensively in my career as a landscape ecologist and environmental planning. And over the years I have produced a modest body of work (and data). Some of the publications that centred on field work from Mount Maxwell are listed below.

Ingram & Lindsay Upshaw. on-line. Gap analysis in conservation planning for cultural & less culturally modified landscapes: Prospects for northern Garry oak ecosystems in British Columbia, Monitoring the Effectiveness of Biological Conservation, Vancouver. Forrex Journal, British Columbia.

Ingram, G. B. in press. Fields or forest? Aboriginal food production landscapes, unresolved legacies and contemporary ecosystem management of Garry oak woodlands in southwestern British Columbia. in *Forest and Environmental History of the British Empire and Commonwealth*. London: Oxford University Press.

Ingram, G. B. 2002. Thinking like a dynamic mosaic: The relevance of landscape ecology to setting goals for biodiversity conservation & restoration for northern Garry oak ecosystems. *Conference Proceedings: Restoring Garry Oak Ecosystems – Progress and Prognosis*, University of Victoria April 2002, 96 – 108.

Ingram, G. B. 2007. Unresolved legacies & contested futures: Aboriginal food production landscapes, ecosystem recovery strategies and land use planning for conservation of the Garry oak ecosystems in south-western British Columbia. *Undercurrents* (issue on Planning, Culture and Space) 16: 15 - 19.

Ingram, G. B. 2002. Thinking like a dynamic mosaic: Towards a strategy for conserving northern Garry oak ecosystems * part 1. *Menziesia* (Journal of the British Columbia Native Plant Society). 7 (1): 8 – 11.

Ingram, G. B. 2002. Thinking like a dynamic mosaic: Conservation planning for the plant species at risk in northern Garry oak landscapes in BC, * part 2. *Menziesia* 7 (2): 8 - 12.

Ingram, G. B. 2000. Conservation of biological diversity as landscape architecture. in *Workingpaper Landskabsøkologiske Skrifter. The Management of Biodiversity from a Landscape Ecological Perspective*. Roskilde, Denmark: Roskilde University. 119 - 134.

Ingram, G. B. 2000. The implications of landscape ecology for conserving the biological diversity of northern Garry oak, *Quercus garryana*, ecosystems. in *Workingpaper Landskabsøkologiske Skrifter. The Management of Biodiversity from a Landscape Ecological Perspective*. Roskilde, Denmark: Roskilde University. 135 - 176.

And I have given the following public presentations that centred on field work from Mount Maxwell including the following.

Ingram & Lindsay Upshaw. 2004. Gap analysis in conservation planning for cultural & less culturally modified landscapes: Prospects for northern Garry oak ecosystems in British Columbia, Monitoring the Effectiveness of Biological Conservation, Vancouver.

Ingram & Lindsay Upshaw. 2004. Setting goals and priorities for restoration strategies in the context of disparate historical interpretations: An example from the Garry oak and Douglas fir mosaic of Mount Maxwell, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, 16th International Conference, Society for Ecological Restoration, Victoria, Canada.

2003. Fields or forest? Aboriginal food production landscapes, unresolved legacies and contemporary ecosystem management of Garry oak woodlands in southwestern British Columbia. International Conference on the Forest and Environmental History of the British Empire and Commonwealth. University of Sussex, Brighton UK, presented by Richard Grove.

2004. Historical assessment protocols in setting ecosystem restoration priorities for cultural landscapes: Prospects for the oak woodland and conifer forest mosaics modified by the Salish of Pacific Canada, Faculté des géosciences et de l'environnement, Université de Lausanne, Switzerland.

2002. The ecology of Mt. Maxwell & other northern Garry oak landscapes, Salt Spring Island Conservancy, Ganges, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia followed by a field trip on management and restoration.

2002. Thinking like a dynamic mosaic: The relevance of landscape ecology to setting goals for biodiversity conservation & restoration for northern Garry oak ecosystems. Conference: Restoring Garry Oak Ecosystems – Progress and Prognosis, University of Victoria.

2000. (Ingram, G. B. and W. Erickson). Revisiting aboriginal burning: Fire to counter encroachment of Garry oak, *Quercus garryana*, ecosystems in Pacific Canada. A Native Solution to Fire Management Symposium in Hobart, Tasmania. Session theme: Re-establishing local processes.

1990. The Landscape Ecology of Mt. Maxwell, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. Presented as a field trip at the May 1990 symposium, Landscape Approaches to Wildlife and Ecosystem Management. UBC.

I was also one of the co-founders, in 1999, and contributed scientific and administrative support until 2003, to the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT). Within that group, the roles of larger, though somewhat degraded landscapes dominated by Garry oak ecosystems (with the two largest in BC being Maxwell and Tuam), were hotly contested.

There are five to ten other researchers who have conducted field work on Mount Maxwell (and another group for Mount Tuam, with whom I am less familiar) and whose research is readily available (with a bit of searching). ***So my general, and most important, recommendation to the management planning process is to be much more thorough and comprehensive in reviewing the data, scientific conclusions, cultural research and debates that already exist around both ecological reserves and adjacent areas.***

management issues for the next ten years

While most of the issues below are relevant to the futures of both Mount Maxwell and Mount Tuam, most of the examples that I will provide below are from Mount Maxwell. At the Open House, I listed some of these issues on the butcher paper next to the posters for Mount Maxwell and will expand a bit below.

The south-western slopes of Mount Maxwell, and to a lesser extent Mount Tuam, support some of the most globally significant habitat on the Gulf Islands – in some cases more so than the important areas to the south-east that were captured in the National Park. Within this context, these two ecological reserves will be increasingly important for monitoring including related to climate change.

The south-western slopes of Mount Maxwell, and to a lesser extent Mount Tuam, support some of the most globally significant examples of northern Garry oak ecosystems – particularly in terms of have the extensive areas to support a diversity of landscape, successional and cultural processes. Within this context, these two ecological reserves will be increasingly important for monitoring including related to climate change.

The south-western slopes of Mount Maxwell, and to a lesser extent Mount Tuam, support a growing number of rare organism and those that are or that will be listed as ‘at risk’ under the federal Species At Risk Act (SARA). And with growing concerns about ‘critical habitat’ under the terms (and funding requirements of SARA which extend to the Province of BC), Mount Maxwell, and to a lesser extent Mount Tuam, are bound to be increasingly identified as holding critical habitat for legally protected species.

The south-western slopes of Mount Maxwell, and to a lesser extent Mount Tuam, support some of the most extensive and significant cultural landscapes for the Cowichan (and to a lesser extent Tsawout) peoples and First Nations and are of increasing interest for cultural research, landscape conservation and ecosystem restoration.

The south-western slopes of Mount Maxwell, and to a lesser extent Mount Tuam, are of increasing interest to researchers, scholars and graduate students with on-site data collection, discussion and debate about the ecosystems, history, management and restoration of these two areas subjects of increasing public scrutiny. Only part of this work will probably involve the permission or cooperation of BC Parks.

These five ‘facts’ or just ‘trends’ will shape the management of the two ecological reserves, and adjacent areas, for decades to come – whether or not this ‘new world’ is fully acknowledged in the current provincial management planning process.

Now in terms of specifics, the following are the ‘wicked problems’ (termed by the planning theoretician, Mel Webber) that must at least be acknowledged if this particular management planning cycle is to be taken seriously (and can be used to obtain more resources for protection, management, monitoring, and restoration).

1. It’s time for a humble strategy on the part of BC Parks to acknowledge that over the last 35 years, it hasn’t had the resources to do much for the two ecological reserves (as aspects of those ecosystems have deteriorated) and that the many

researchers up there haven't exactly taken BC Parks very seriously. So a way to build bridges with the past and current researchers, to 'grand-father' them into a tighter research permit and data exchange programme (that maintains their control over their data and material) is over-due.

2. The most pressing (and least discussed) management issue over the next two decades is **fire**. Re-introduction of some fire (perhaps one day soon even **aboriginal burning**) is inevitable and a few dry years will bring fire back anyway. But with high fuel levels from a century of suppression, any prospect of a large, hot fire is a major threat to all of the values for which those ecological reserves were established (and expanded). And both areas warrant fire control strategies for where to focus any firefighting in the event of a major fire, where to let burn, and for flagging sensitive sites.
3. There needs to be a renewed strategy for control of **invasive plants** most notably broom. My sense, based on my notes, is that earlier control efforts on Mount Maxwell have been a failure and there wasn't even much monitoring of what was achieved and the subsequent ecological responses. Both ecological reserves have sufficient global significance to warrant budgeting more than \$100,000. (of primarily federal money) a year for control of invasive plants but this money cannot be justified unless far more scientific, realistic, and site-specific strategies are developed (that require long-term monitoring).
4. I was the first individual to propose **fencing to exclude (over-populated) ungulates** and I then monitoring the initial fenced area in the 1980s and 1990s. The fences were never very effective (because of big tree limbs creating breaches) and while the forb diversity would go up, temporarily, I am not sure if any more exclosures can be justified unless the fencing is far more durable (and there is more systematic monitoring of both changes in the herb layer along with breaches and subsequent fence repair).
5. We may see re-establishment of some **aboriginal land use**, particularly plant gathering and cultural activities, in the coming decade. Based on what I know personally, I would anticipate this inevitability in his management planning cycle
6. As for **agricultural in Burgoyne**, there was settler agricultural for barely a century and a half and aboriginal plant gathering and forms of agriculture for perhaps five thousand years before that (or at least aboriginal burning that was part of plant management and digging). So I recommend that any further discussion of re-establishment of 'agriculture' in Burgoyne necessary include both settler and aboriginal – not just because of recent legal precedents but because it's right and we all have a lot to learn about aboriginal food production.
7. For this cycle of management planning to be taken seriously (and lead to higher levels of funding, inventorying, monitoring, protection, and restoration), BC Parks

needs to forge a **clearer relationship to SARA** and I appreciate that this involves inter-ministerial and inter-governmental policy that is outside of the mandate for this cycle. But for at least a few years, it will be SARA money that will be largely 'calling the shots' (for better or worse).

8. Finally, there have been discussions around having Mount Maxwell, Burgoyne, the area as far north as Mount Erskine, and perhaps the areas on the other side of Samsun Narrows on Vancouver Island considered as a core for an expansive **biosphere reserve** (with one of the closest Canadian biosphere reserve at Clayoquot Sound). Typically, biosphere reserves involve a core that is a national park but there are exceptions.

Good luck with developing your strategy, plan, sketch or whatever. I hope to meet some of you up on Mount Maxwell some time soon and hope that we work together to build a climate of more creative exchange and critical engagement for protection of these wonderful parts of our region that will only grow in relative importance and be the objects of increasing public scrutiny and concern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Brent Ingram', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gordon Brent Ingram