

Howe Sound Community Forum

Co-hosted by the Village of Lions Bay and Metro Vancouver Electoral Area A at Broughton Hall, Lions Bay
Friday, May 5, 2017

Notes from Roundtable on Ecosystem Inventory

Participants:

Eoin Finn, Founder, My Sea to Sky
 Stephen Foster, Howe Sound Lead, David Suzuki Foundation
 Julie Gardner, Dovetail Consulting (for part of the time)
 Maria Harris, Director, Metro Vancouver, Electoral Area A
 Jeff Juthans, Land & Resource Specialist, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
 Randall Lewis, Environmental Coordinator, Squamish First Nation (for part of the time)
 Marcin Pachcinski, Division Manager, Electoral Area and Environment, Metro Vancouver
 Birgitta von Krosigk, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative (Facilitator)
 Greg Weary, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative

Background:

This roundtable was formed as a follow up to Maria Harris’ presentation on Metro Vancouver’s Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) study. There were separate roundtables on the Ocean Watch Report (Howe Sound edition), renewed HSCF Principles of Co-operation, and Education initiatives.

A number of ecosystem-related studies have been done that cover the Howe Sound area in whole or in part, including:

Study	Focus/Background	Area
Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory Mapping App Metro Vancouver Sensitive Ecosystem definitions Technical Report , January 2014 D. Meidinger (Meidinger Ecological Consultants Ltd), J. Clark (Metro Vancouver), D. Adamoski (Metro Vancouver)	“...ecologically significant and relatively unmodified <i>Sensitive Ecosystems</i> including wetlands, older forests and woodlands. It also includes human <i>Modified Ecosystems</i> that retain ecological value such as seasonally flooded agriculture fields or young forests. The SEI was conducted from January 2010 to May 2012.”	Metro Vancouver and Abbotsford, including a portion of Howe Sound: Howe Sound SEI map (SE side of Howe Sound, approx. from M (Yahoo) Creek, north of Lions Bay, to Montizambert Creek [excluding Lions Bay]).
Sound Investment – Measuring the Return of Howe Sound’s Ecosystem Assets , February 2015 David Suzuki Foundation by M. Molnar, with the support of the Sitka Foundation	“The purpose of this study is to estimate the economic value of the ecosystem services provided by the land and marine ecosystems and their uses within the region.”	Howe Sound / Txwnuwuts The area runs from Lighthouse Park, up the eastern coastline of the fjord, past the northern border of Squamish and Paradise Valley, and back down the western coastline to Gibsons. The study area also includes the marine area and islands within.”

Themes emerging from the roundtable dialogue:

Work on ecosystems is currently fragmented and “siloed”

Many ecosystems studies have been done or are being done by different entities, including non-profit organizations and government bodies, but there was a sense that these studies are fragmented rather than co-ordinated. There are differences in geographical areas covered, relative emphasis on marine versus land values, methodologies used, and recommended action steps. There may also be overlaps, with different bodies collecting the same or similar information, leading to a potential waste of resources. This can lead to frustration among funders, and may make it more difficult for planners and decision-makers to act on the studies’ findings.

Information sharing, hosted events, and planning is happening but gaps still exist

Examples of information sharing, hosted events, and co-ordinated planning efforts do exist, for example:

The David Suzuki Foundation has hosted and co-hosted a number of events, including the [Howe Sound Aquatic Forum](#) (April 2014) and the [Howe Sound Science and Knowledge Workshop](#) (March, 2015). The Foundation also does a lot of research and education in and around Howe Sound.

The Howe Sound Community Forum meets twice annually and brings together elected officials from various levels of government, including the Squamish Nation, non-profit organizations, and members of the public.

The HSCF is a convening body focused on communication and information sharing, and is not a decision-making body or a planning entity.

Metro Vancouver co-ordinates a number of task forces and working committees for member municipalities, each with associated terms of reference, meeting space, minutes and other documents. For example, the [Climate Action Committee](#) is the standing committee that provides advice and recommendations on policies, bylaws, plans, programs, budgets and issues related to air quality, climate change, and environmental planning. There is also the Regional Invasive Species Task Force, which has a relatively formal structure and aims to be a platform for sharing information. Members include municipal and Metro staff, representatives of non-profit organizations, and other researchers and consultants.

This work is focused on the Metro Vancouver area, and only covers a small part of Howe Sound. In addition, the Howe Sound portion of Electoral Area A is small both geographically and in terms of number of residents, relative to the rest of the Electoral Area. New initiatives led by Metro Vancouver would typically need to be applicable to the whole Metro Vancouver region.

There is a need for better information sharing and for a co-ordinated and comprehensive marine/land use planning framework for Howe Sound

Despite the above examples (not an exhaustive list), there is widespread agreement that co-ordinated and comprehensive marine and land use planning is needed for Howe Sound. This call has been around for some time, yet it has proven difficult to move beyond the verbal commitments.

Specifically, there is a need for shared methodologies, databases, and decision-making tools, in order to facilitate action and implementation as well as planning.

Pilot projects as a possible starting point

In the short term, it may be possible to do one or more pilot projects. Looking specifically to ecosystem services, there may be potential for collaboration in this area. A possible first step would be to find out who the other players are. One goal would be to go beyond the inventories and tackle the actual planning aspects. Metro Vancouver could potentially take the lead and involve the other regional districts.

There may be advantages of taking baby steps at first and starting around a specific subject matters/topic areas (such as ecosystem services) as this could provide an easy link for moving forward with hosting meetings, developing agendas etc. This would still require commitment of staff time and some terms of reference. Who would host the list of what is out there already? Maybe Metro (already doing this). It would need to go beyond an information sharing function, otherwise would be duplicating the Howe Sound Community Forum. Sharing is not the same as co-ordinating. Also, if it stops at information sharing, it can be easy to pop back into the silos after the meetings.

Possible functions: information sharing platform, clearinghouse, inventory of what is available, creating opportunities for co-ordinating efforts, raising the identity of Howe Sound, emphasizing the common interest in ecosystem services, sharing inventories to assist in decision making.

There is also a need to look at longer term governance models

A **Howe Sound Biosphere Region** designated under UNESCO is one possible, longer term model, as it may take a long time to be designated. However, there is nothing to *stop* an area from working as a biosphere region before official designation, so it could be possible to explore this model in the near term as well.

On the one hand, the international aspect of a designation by a UN body could be seen as bringing in bureaucracy and priorities from outside the region. On the other hand, this international framework has been shown to open up new funding opportunities for all organizations working in the area. Also, the framework itself is deliberately vague in order that local and regional stakeholders can develop place-based solutions to protect ecosystem and cultural diversity and to promote sustainable development. Some biosphere regions have used the framework as part of their branding for the region.

Any longer term governance model needs to be durable so that it can maintain momentum and properly support planning and action as well as information sharing. It could also be more efficient to have one point of contact with the Squamish First Nation, rather than have a number of people asking the same questions over and over again.

Squamish Nation is the only entity with jurisdiction over the whole area. However, their resources are limited, and they are being called on by lots of organizations to provide input, putting additional strain on resources. Squamish Nation is working on a number of initiatives, including attending May 6/17 meeting in Nanaimo on the UN Convention of Biodiversity, Agenda 21 and ICAs (Indigenous Conserved Areas).

There may be an opportunity right now given the opening up of the Principles of Co-operation for the **Howe Sound Community Forum**. Any changes would of course need to go back to the respective boards and councils for approval. At the same time, there is a need to go beyond the Forum model in order to enable comprehensive planning and decision making.

The **Ocean Watch Report, Howe Sound edition** has a detailed action plan, including looking at governance.

There are many examples of interregional governance models, including the Fraser Basin board.

Should there be a Working Group or Task Force to look at different governance models? Who should be part of it? Representatives from the Howe Sound region, including the Squamish First Nations. Should work more cohesively together, through elected officials.

Who would offer planning time, resources? Who would co-ordinate it? Maybe Metro Vancouver? This may require raising the profile of Howe Sound in Metro. Also, Metro has not had a big focus on the marine environment to date.

How do we take the energy that exists for an integrated land and marine planning structure and grow the excitement and start to develop concrete proposals? Regional buy-in is required.

ACTIONS:

- Birgitta will circulate the notes from the roundtable, and participants are encouraged to provide comments, clarifications, and corrections.
- Add Governance Models to the agenda for the next Howe Sound Community Forum in 6 months.