

**PITT POLDER
ECOLOGICAL RESERVE #99 MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

(This statement is intended for use in conjunction with the descriptive text and map pages supplied in the "Guide to Ecological Reserves in British Columbia").

Features Requiring Special Management Consideration:

Bog vegetation, nesting sandhill cranes, forest succession and educational use of the reserve.

Management Issues:

1. The wetlands in the reserve are only a small part of a much larger wetlands area that has undergone artificial drainage through ditching. In order to rehabilitate the wetlands for waterfowl production, the Wildlife Branch has installed dykes and weirs for the control of water levels. (There have been disagreements between conservation groups and the Wildlife Branch on just what the appropriate water level is, particularly in connection with sandhill crane nesting). Ecological Reserve representatives have not been involved in decisions on water level management in recent years, even though water levels are crucial factors for vegetation changes in this reserve. The surrounding Pitt-Addington Marsh became a Wildlife Management Area in 1987.
2. A vegetation monitoring program was initiated in 1983, to be carried out by volunteers for the purpose of observing long-term changes due to the modification of water levels. This program had to be discontinued after one year when the most active volunteer member moved away. Several permanent vegetation plots along planned transect lines were measured in and marked. There is good evidence that vegetation changes occurred, especially in the peat bog portions where shore pines have invaded in large numbers. In addition to those changes that occur as a result of modified water levels, vegetation changes also occur as a result of forest succession after logging, particularly on higher ground.
3. There is no written evidence that sandhill crane nesting was ever confirmed to be inside the reserve boundaries, but this may be due to concerns about divulging this sensitive information (egg collectors, photographers!). Sandhill cranes have very exacting demands for their nesting habitat and the latter in turn is bound to increase or decrease with water-table changes favourable or unfavourable for the development of the particular vegetation type.
4. The top of the southeastern of the two hills is accessible by trail and used to provide panoramic views of the surrounding wetlands (mostly outside the reserve). Young Douglas-firs that have grown up after logging are now increasingly obstructing the view for birders from this vantage point. An inquiry from the Wildlife Branch was discussed in the mid-80s, whether or not trees could be removed and an observation blind could be built on the hilltop. It was pointed out to the Wildlife Branch at the time that the reserve boundary runs across the peak and that tree cutting and

construction could not be done inside the boundary, but would not be prevented outside of it. As the tree crowns close in further, this may become an issue again. However, it must be determined if birders desire a view from the hill.

5. Naturalist visitors have pointed out that the trail traversing the reserve becomes narrow and tunnel-like with the growth of trees and shrubs. Black bears are feeding along the trail and pull berry bushes down even further. Bear/human encounters have occurred due to this and create a safety concern. The Alouette Field Naturalists planned trail maintenance work in late spring 1990.
6. A new dyke has been built to the south of the reserve, running south and north, then turning east to join another dyke. It touches the reserve boundary at its right-angle turn and may give new access to the public as it has no ditch on the side nearest the reserve.

Management Actions Required and their Priority:

1. Re-establish local liaison with the BC Wildlife Branch to get information on the proposed management of the surrounding Wildlife Management Area, in particular with regards to water level control on water levels to maintain a near-natural regimen that will allow maintaining peat bog vegetation.
2. Examine conditions of trail and trail-side vegetation; closely supervise removal of overhanging brush if appropriate, and install bear warning signs.
3. Communicate with main user groups (e.g., Alouette Field Naturalists) regarding viewpoint management on Burnt Hill.
4. Re-establish vegetation monitoring program only if expertise and continuity of interest is available. (Completing establishment of permanent plot transects would be highest priority).
5. Ensure placement of an ecological reserve sign at the access point from the new dyke.

Fire, Insect and Disease Contingency:

1. Avoid fires; if firefighting becomes necessary, avoid using chemicals and bulldozers in the reserve.
2. No insect and disease control desired.