

TAHSISH RIVER ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

March 2003

Approved by:



Dick Heath
Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: March 25/03



Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Mar. 31/03

TAHSISH RIVER ECOLOGICAL RESERVE Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. Research and educational activities may be carried out but only under permit.

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Tahsish River Ecological Reserve is to preserve a nationally and provincially significant unaltered west coast estuary. Most estuaries on Vancouver Island have been severely disturbed by human activities, and this estuary is exceptional in that it is in a pristine state and it is encompassed in a sizeable wilderness park (Tahsish Kwois Park) that provides it complete protection.

This 70-hectare ecological reserve comprises the delta and estuary of the Tahsish River, including a 12-hectare island in the middle of the river's mouth, and all intertidal and subtidal lands from mean high tide line to 10 fathoms. The estuary and associated island has a wide variety of plant communities and productivity is high, and as a result has a diverse wildlife population, some of which are of conservation concern. Plant communities vary from forest cover dominated by Sitka spruce, to tidal meadows, to surf grass and algal communities. Wildlife that utilize the ecological reserve include, but are not limited to, Roosevelt elk, deer, black bears, bald eagles, harbour seals, river otters, shorebirds, Canada geese, trumpeter swans and various duck species. The network of channels with various depths, flow characteristics and substrates that occur in the estuary provides migrating, spawning and particularly rearing habitat for fish such as chinook, chum, pink, sockeye, coho, cutthroat, steelhead, and sculpins.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Proximity of Ecological Reserve to park, results in trespass and access issues as well as recreation impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase public awareness -- need boundary identification and interpretation information about the sensitivity of the areas and restrictions on access and use. ➤ Develop a small primitive campsite close to the lowest reaches of the Tahsish River to focus recreation use away from the estuary. ➤ Clean up and restore user created campsites.
Impacts from poaching and nearby log salvaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recruit an Volunteer Warden and develop a formal monitoring system. ➤ Work with Conservation Officers to monitor harvesting and deter poaching. ➤ Ensure log salvaging does not occur in the ecological reserve.
First Nation relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to develop a working relationship with First Nations to reach a mutual understanding of ecological reserve management interests.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tahsish River Ecological Reserve itself is too small to be representative; however, when considered as part of Tahsish Kwois Park, it is part of a larger protected area that contributes to ecosystem representation. Tahsish Kwois Park is the 4 th largest contributor (with 5.4 %) to the representation of the Windward Island Mountains Ecosection (WIM), which is well represented in the protected areas system at 17.4%.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Likewise, the ecological reserve itself is too small to be representative, but when taken as part of Tahsish Kwois Park, it makes a small contribution of around 1% to the representation of CWHvh1, which is a well-represented variant with 19.3% of its area being protected.
Special Features	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Estuary, bear habitat, critical Roosevelt elk winter range, fisheries values, rare species
Rare/Endangered Values	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Blue-listed</i> cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, Roosevelt elk, trumpeter swan, Canada goose (subspecies <i>occidentalis</i>). <i>Yellow-listed species of conservation concern (S3-S4)</i> : bald eagle, river otter. Potential habitat for Olympia oyster (<i>Ostrea conchaphila</i>) (listed as Special Concern by COSEWIC) and <i>red-listed</i> sea otter.
Scientific/Research Opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Estuarine and wildlife research

Recreation

Representation backcountry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable
destination	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable
travel corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable
local recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable
Special Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wildlife viewing and cultural values; off and onsite interpretation (park use permit holder provides onsite interpretation)

Cultural Heritage

Representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Part of First Nation trade route. Traditional uses such as subsistence hunting, fishing, food
----------------	-------------------------------------	---

gathering, botanical harvesting. Post-contact exploration history.

Special Feature



Archaeological sites: fish weir posts, village site used during the salmon season in nearby IR 11

Other Management Considerations

Other Designations



Not Applicable

Relationship to other PAs



Part of a system of ecological reserves on Vancouver Island. Encompassed in Tahsish Kwois Park.

Co-operative Management Arrangements



Commercial fishery closure specific to the ecological reserve: intertidal clams – harvesting prohibited, First Nations and recreational access.

Partnerships



Vulnerability



Ecological reserve values are vulnerable to recreation use, poaching, and adjacent log salvaging

Relationship to other Strategies



Marine Protected Areas Strategy

Area: 70 hectares (20 ha upland; 50 ha foreshore)

Date of establishment: May 12, 1988