

TRIAL ISLANDS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

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Approved by:



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Date: Jan. 15/04

TRIAL ISLANDS 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. **Landing on Trial Islands Ecological Reserve is restricted by permit to protect sensitive plants and ecosystems.** Research and educational activities may be carried out but only under permit.

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Trial Islands Ecological Reserve is to protect the most outstanding known assemblage of rare and endangered plant species in British Columbia. Located just off the southern tip of Victoria in a turbulent part of Juan de Fuca Strait, this twenty-three-hectare ecological reserve protects two elongated rocky islands and associated islets. It protects the greatest number of endangered and vulnerable species in a single ecological reserve in British Columbia. Nationally significant wildflower habitat, carpets of great and common camas and other showy stands of spring wildflowers, and unique stands of wind-adapted Garry oaks cover the island. Endangered or threatened plants that occur on Trial Islands Ecological Reserve include but are not limited to the white-top aster, paintbrush owl-clover, golden paintbrush, creeping wild rye, rosy owl-clover, California buttercup, snake-root sanicle, purple sanicle, and Scouler's campion. This is the most northern limit of their range for many of these species. Nine plant communities have been described, including the red-listed Garry oak-California brome association. A living museum of what the Victoria area must once have been like before colonization, this outstanding assemblage of rare species highlights the importance of maintaining protected areas. The ecological reserve has potential to serve as a seed bank for species re-introduction.

Trial Islands also serve as important roosting sites for cormorants, black oystercatchers, diving ducks, gulls, eagles, raptors, and shorebirds, as well as haul-out sites for sea lions and seals.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Impact from high visitor use (trampling etc.) due to the proximity to Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to limit access by park use permit only and limit the number of permits to avoid impacts. ➤ Develop a public information strategy to make potential visitors aware of the sensitivity of the site and the need to seek permission. ➤ Work with the ecological reserve warden, lighthouse keeper, and interest groups to monitor level of use and impacts.
First Nations interest in the ecological reserve and the lack of knowledge of cultural values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to consult with First Nations to acquire knowledge on traditional use and cultural values associated with the ecological reserve.

Non conforming uses on the island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Liaise with CFX radio station to clean-up near the radio towers and to address fuel storage issues. ➤ Acquire the radio tower site from Land and Water British Columbia when it has been decommissioned.
Impacts on wildlife from marine wildlife viewing operators (marine contamination, vessel wash, animal disturbance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Liaise with commercial operators and Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensure regulatory compliance and protection of marine values.
Invasive species encroaching on the native plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Work with ecological reserve warden and other volunteers to remove invasive species. ➤ Develop a vegetation management strategy.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒ Trial Islands Ecological Reserve contributes minimally (0.28%) to the representation of the Southern Gulf Islands Ecosection which has only 5.62% protected provincially.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒ It contributes minimally (0.12%) to the representation of the Coastal Douglas-fir (CDF) mm variant which has only 2.43% protected provincially. However, any protected area that contributes to the protection of this ecosystem may be considered important given the fragmented nature of this ecosystem and the limited opportunities available for its protection.
Special Features	☒ Trail Islands Ecological Reserve supports more species of rare vascular plants than any known area of comparable size in the province. Many stands of showy spring wildflowers are present.
Rare/Endangered Values	☒ <i>Red-listed species:</i> seaside bird's foot trefoil (Endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as it is one of two populations), golden indian paintbrush (Endangered by COSEWIC with few populations, Trial Island Ecological Reserve has the biggest one with 2,560 plants), snake-root sanicle (<i>Sanicula arctopoides</i> listed as Endangered by COSEWIC), white top aster (Threatened by COSEWIC), purple sanicle (Threatened by COSEWIC), creeping wild rye, dense-flowered lupine, paintbrush owl-clover, hairy owl-clover, rosy owl-clover, California buttercup, Carolina meadow foxtail, Scouler's catchfly (COSEWIC Endangered), Garry oak / California brome plant association. <i>Blue-listed species:</i> Spanish clover, beach sand spurry, chaffweed, Nuttall's quillwort, Macoun's meadow-foam, sand-dune sedge, western pearlwort, and Henderson's checker-mallow. There are several more vascular plants that are yellow -listed and in the conservation concern category (S3-S4).
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒ Potential research/use of the ecological reserve as a seed bank for species reintroductions

Recreation

- Representation
- backcountry Not Applicable
 - destination Not Applicable
 - travel corridor Not Applicable
 - local recreation Ecological reserves are not meant for outdoor recreation, however the ecological reserve is a popular area for marine wildlife viewing and boating/kayaking activities. The landing is restricted by permit and management will work with groups to address potential impacts.
- Special Opportunities None known at this time
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities Adjacent wildlife viewing, offsite interpretation

Cultural Heritage

- Representation Values unknown
- Special Feature Traditional First Nations and Songhees bulb harvesting site. There are no known archaeological sites in this reserve. The island has been the site of a lighthouse for over a century.

Other Management Considerations

- Other Designations Part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS). MBS Regulations prohibit all disturbance, hunting, and collection of migratory birds and their eggs within a MBS.
- Relationship to other PAs Part of a system of protected areas on southern Vancouver Island
- Co-operative Management Arrangements Not Applicable
- Partnerships Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), naturalists groups and tour operators
- Vulnerability Terrestrial plant communities are sensitive to trampling and have a low carrying capacity for recreational use, vessel wash, invasive species, and marine contamination
- Relationship to other Strategies Not Applicable

Area: 23 hectares

Date of establishment: July 05, 1990