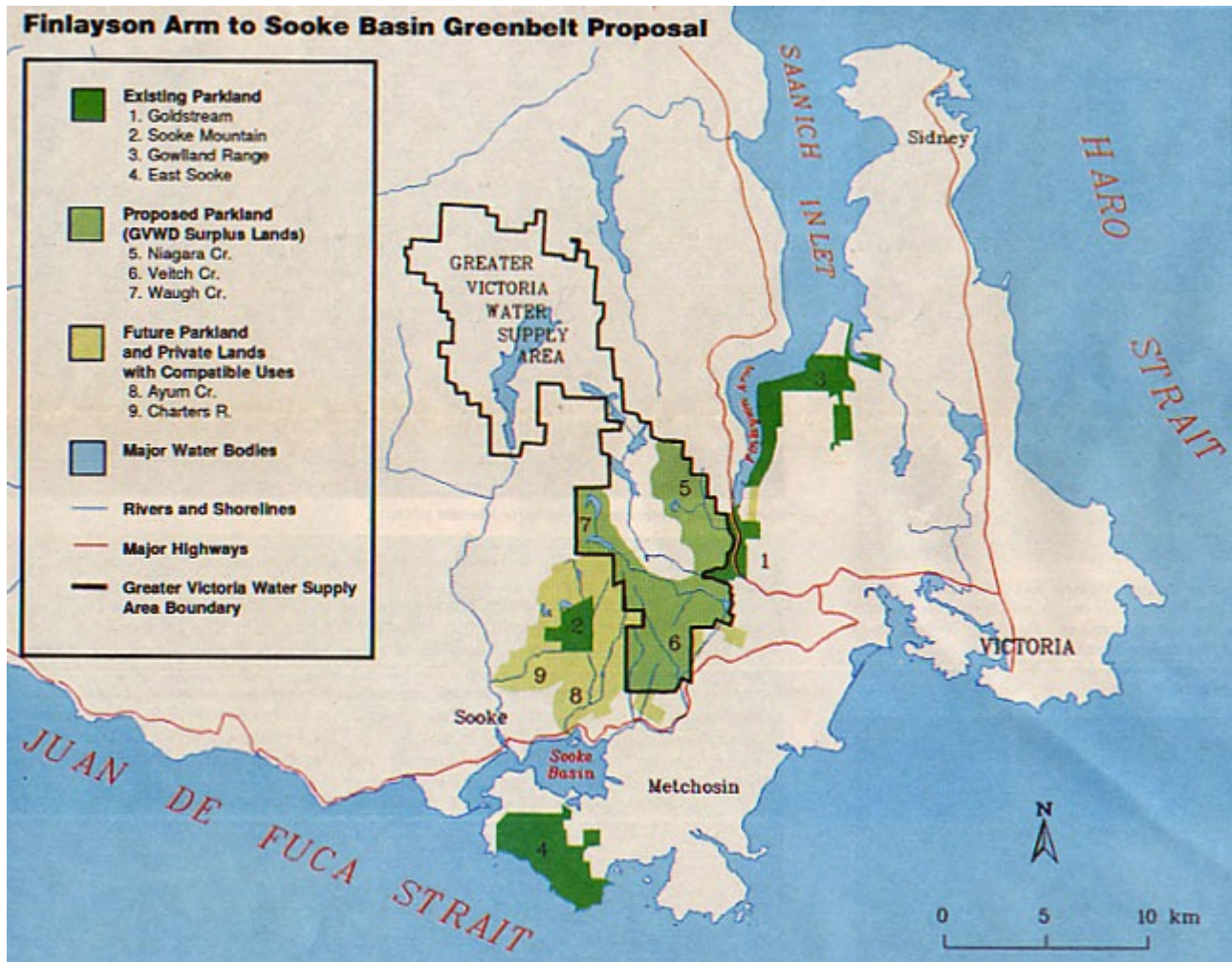


The following account, *The Victoria Connection*, has been borrowed, verbatim, from Appendix D in Will Koop's December 1997 *Seymourgate* report. It is a summary of events from late 1994 to 1997 over the conflict of interests on the future of the former Greater Victoria Water District's off-catchment lands, between the Association of B.C. Professional Forester's South Vancouver Island Chapter, its proposal to render these lands as a Demonstration Forest, and the numerous public organizations and societies who rallied together to effectively create a public Regional Park, created on November 19, 1997, lands collectively called the Sooke Hills.



This map of the proposed Sooke Hills Park area is borrowed from the Western Canada Wilderness Committee Victoria Branch's Winter 1994, Vol.13, No.8 publication.

THE VICTORIA CONNECTION

There is an intriguing linkage between the efforts and operations by professional foresters to establish a "demonstration forest" within the off-catchment lands of the Greater Victoria watersheds and with those established in the Greater Vancouver watersheds' Lower Seymour off-catchment lands. The potential to radiate forestry educational programming to a large concentrated urban population, and a logging program next door to a forested municipal water supply watershed, are

features common to both. Though recent efforts to incorporate this agenda for the off-catchment lands of Greater Victoria were unsuccessful, the parallels are nevertheless important enough to be included as a semi-detailed appendix in this report.

Just after the B.C. Supreme Court decision in the Spring of 1994, which brought a halt to the logging program in Greater Victoria's drinking supply watershed, the Greater Victoria Water District announced that the forested off-catchment lands were to become surplus lands, and therefore a source of available revenue. As this was both a public and ecological issue, a coalition of environmental and affiliated organizations in the Greater Victoria area, led by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and the Sea to Sea Greenbelt Society, then proposed that the off-catchment lands should be dedicated as a protected park.¹ That's when the South Vancouver Island Chapter of the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters (ABCPF)² began a counter campaign to propose a demonstration forest, or what they carefully coined a "community forest". The process by professional foresters attempted to subvert that public park process is almost identical to the process with the Lower Seymour off-catchment lands in the mid-1980's, when three North Shore municipalities proposed a regional park for the area.

The ABCPF's Southern Vancouver Island Chapter sent the following correspondence to the Greater Victoria Water District Board members on October 11, 1994:

I am writing on behalf of the 300 concerned members Our fact sheet (attached) states that ... Much of this area, within easy driving distance, already has been reserved for the enjoyment of future generations in the form of national, provincial and municipal parks and government reserves We suggest, therefore, that the Board give serious consideration to the creation of a Community Demonstration Forest, a unique setting where the citizens in this area, particularly the school children, can see and experience first-hand a variety of forest values, integrated resource management and the ecosystem approach to forestry; truly an outdoor classroom for all.... The lands, managed as a Community Demonstration Forest would provide the District and community with opportunities to: ... permit careful selective harvesting to mitigate the escalating operational costs of the GVWD and to demonstrate modern techniques.... A Community Demonstration Forest could be planned and directed by a community based Advisory Committee made up of District, community and special interest group representatives. The SVI Chapter of the ABCPF would be a willing participant.

On November 27, 1994, John Harris, a professional forester, sent a memo to his fellow members of the ABCPF RPAC Goldstream Community Demonstration Forest sub-committee. Harris, who was also the ABCPF's liaison officer for the Victoria/South Vancouver Island Regional Public Affairs Committee, wrote:

¹ Victoria and Saanich Municipal Councils, Tourism Victoria, Fairfield Community Association, Fernwood Community Association, James Bay Neighbourhood Environmental Association, Cordova Bay Rate Payers Association, Association for the Protection of Rural Saanich, Greater Victoria Fish and Game Association, Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition, Greater Victoria Ecological Network, Garry Oak Meadows Preservation Society, Friends of Ecological Reserves, Victoria Natural History Society, Citizens Association to Save the Environment, Sea to Sea Greenbelt Society, Sierra Club of British Columbia, Sierra Club of Victoria, University of Victoria Students Society, Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group, Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

² The ABCPF is now the ABCFP, the Association of B.C. Forest Professionals.

It was decided at our last regular RPAC meeting on Thursday, Nov. 24, that this committee would concentrate on the community demonstration forest project. Closely related, however, is our forest classroom project, which could wait until we hear in February about our funding proposal, or we can raise other funds and get started now.... I am including in this fax: 1. Excerpts from a hot-of-the-press full color, illustrated 4-page flyer, 60,000 copies of which were just published by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee to combat our proposal. 2. Notes from the last board meeting of the Greater Victoria Water District. These include minutes of the October meeting and the "package" (agenda, public presentations etc.) from the November meeting. These may give you some inkling of where the Board is thinking now and the opposition that is developing. 3. Comments by Water District Forester, Gordon Joyce. He will be at the Thursday meeting to answer your questions.

Gordon Joyce, mentioned above, is a professional forester and is still currently employed with the Greater Victoria Water District as their forest manager to supervise forest management of their water supply forests. In 1989 he left the Greater Vancouver Water District's Watershed Management Division, where he had been employed for some ten years. During his years as a forestry student at the University of British Columbia, he wrote a bachelor's thesis in 1976 on the landforms and forests in the Greater Vancouver Regional District's Seymour watershed. From 1986, until the time of his departure, Joyce became the first of four Project Managers of the Seymour Demonstration Forest. Joyce had co-authored the September 1986 "Lower Seymour Demonstration Forest Integrated Plan", regularly attended Seymour Advisory Committee meetings and some sub-committee meetings (such as the Planning-Development Group), and was thoroughly entrenched in the philosophy and operating activities of the demonstration forest.

On November 23, 1994, before the RPAC meeting mentioned above, Gordon Joyce sent the following memo (which he denies writing) to John Harris "Re: RPAC Activities":

- 1) I've attached a draft of a "Community Forest description". This is from a Water District position. Please review and make recommendations on "purpose", "objectives" (far too many listed) and what else to add/leave out.
- (2) I still recommend that this group be given a formal name: "Goldstream Community Forest Committee" ???
- (3) We need to continue to get support from School Districts (have some from Sooke District) and not only one from each, but from committees, associations etc. How about the BCTF [BC Teachers Federation]?
- (4) Need to continue to respond to media articles and letters by writing directly to the Board and through letters to the editor (T.C.[Times Colonist], Goldstream newspaper etc.) Should get different names on letters.
- (5) Need to develop a slide show/presentation package ... would people be willing to make presentations to Park Committees, municipal councils etc.?
- (6) Can we get some \$\$ to develop a "newsletter" or some other handout for general public use?
- (7) Need to get formal support from BCFA [BC Forestry Association], Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C., B.C. Naturalist Society ... need as many groups/agencies as we can get.
- (8) I've attached a few pages from the "Green Guide", gives you an idea of what WCWC/S.C. [Sierra Club] are focusing on. Matters relating to the Management Plan, yields etc. are a long ways off. Besides, consultants will address yields in both the Land/Timber study and the Recreation/Community Forest study. If the Community Forest concept is approved then we can work on a management plan.

In preparation of Gordon Joyce's presentation, John Harris wrote back to Joyce suggesting that the ABCPF create a brochure, contact the respective provincial legislative politicians, and have tours to the Seymour Demonstration Forest and to Victoria's off-catchment lands:

- (1) Preparation of a brochure explaining our concept of a community demonstration forest.... It might outline the pros of a CDF ... and the cons of a park (cost, inability to demonstrate harvesting techniques)....
- (2) Meetings with Moe Sihota and Rick Kasper, Capital Regional District, Outdoor Club of Victoria etc. I can set these up. Any other groups we can approach? Make a list for Thursday of organizations that you have had experience with....
- (3) A visit to the Seymour Demonstration Forest and any others which member's experience suggest would be useful to visit. Make a list of those you are familiar with in order of priority. Perhaps there is a set of slides or over-heads describing the SDF (Gordon?).
- (4) Arrange public tours of the non-catchment lands (Gordon, can this be arranged; could you supply bus and driver if we supply guides?) We need to develop a "two hour tour". So we can offer tours to any groups we contact. I think this is the best way to allay the fears of logging and show off the other educational possibilities. A tour of the heavily forested watershed lands (most of it having been clear-cut logged at one time or other) demonstrates to most people in the most effective way that logging does not result in hopeless devastation of the forest and the turning of the water....

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee Victoria chapter, and The Sea-to-Sea Greenbelt Society, obtained copies of the correspondence between John Harris and Gordon Joyce. On January 25, 1995, they broadcast a joint media release calling for the resignation of the Greater Victoria Water District's Watershed Manager Gordon Joyce:

Joyce is in a clear conflict of interest - - supporting a demonstration forest in the GVWD's off-catchment lands while the future use of these lands is still being considered.... The memo clearly states that Joyce has a bias. He should now step down if the Greater Victoria Water District is to retain any credibility with the public. Joyce is supposed to be working in the public interest, managing the watershed for high quality water - - not promoting the interests of his professional associates. This memo will make people very cynical about the Water District's commitment to good faith land use planning. It highlights the need for a fair and open process of public input on the future use of the off-catchment lands.... the public interest is being betrayed if the Water District or its staff have already made up their minds to promote a demonstration forest, which is logging by a different name.

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee also wrote a letter that same day to Jack Hull, the Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Water District, asking for Gordon Joyce's resignation:

It is not appropriate for staff of the GVWD to be advising a subcommittee of the ABCPF on means to further the promotion of a demonstration forest in the off-catchment lands. This action specifically contravenes the Water District's own standard of conduct policy which clearly states that, "the conduct of employees should also instill confidence and trust in the general public that the Greater Victoria Water District is at all times fulfilling its obligations to all the people it serves in a fair and impartial manner.... In lending advice and support to the members of his professional association, Mr. Joyce has violated the public trust, and should step down from his position with the Water District.

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee was raising a very important point on ethical principals and standards as they relate to the public's trust.

Through 1995 to mid 1996 the lobbying efforts by the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters continued to escalate. Members from their continental umbrella organization, the Canadian Institute of Forestry, for instance, also partook in the efforts to lobby provincial government representatives, such as the Minister of Forests. There were dozens of newspaper articles and letters to the editor about the issue. One of the articles featured some rather archaic remarks from Jack de Lestard, the professional forester chair of the Greater Victoria Community Forest Society:

“We're not talking clearcuts, we're not even talking patch cuts. What we're talking here is to teach a little bit about forestry,” de Lestard said. “We're trying to protect it, basically. That's not a park-type protection where you preserve. We're talking conservation more than preservation where you actually do what you have to do to keep the forest healthy, as opposed to just going in and letting it all fall down around your ears.” (Times Colonist, October 28, 1995.)

The Minister of the Environment, Moe Sihota, was asked to step in during the Spring of 1996 to not only resolve the issue of the future of the off-catchment lands, but to also tackle the larger issue regarding the role of the Greater Victoria Water District and the management of the Sooke and Deception watersheds. To do this, David Perry was appointed as the Special Commissioner for the Conservation and Protection of the Greater Victoria Water Supply:

The Commission ... was established to make recommendations on the long term provision of sustainable water supply for the Greater Victoria Region. The scope of the Commission's mandate includes: 1. conservation and protection measures for ensuring the quality and quantity of the source of Greater Victoria's water supply; 2. boundary redefinition, land management, land activities and capital works to address provincial and regional interests and public concerns, both within and adjacent to the watershed; and 3. the structure of governance of the Greater Victoria water supply, in relation to the issues outlined above. (Report of the Special Commission, Volume 2, page 1.)

The Commission held a series of six public meetings between July and August 1996, which allowed for many members of the public and organizations to present their information and views on the complex issues of the Greater Victoria Water District, including the on and off-drainage lands. In Volume Two of the Commission's final Reports, called “Background Reports”, and under a section entitled “Land Use Management and Ownership”, the Commission had proposed six options for the future use of the off-catchment lands. Option 2, prompted by the proposals from Gordon Joyce and the ABCPF, was for a “Community Advisory/Management Board”, where the “non-catchment lands would be managed by a community advisory board”, much like the Seymour Advisory Committee. In fact, a footnote attached to the option discussed the Seymour Demonstration Forest as a primary model. The Greater Vancouver Water District's Demonstration Forest Supervisor Laurie Fretz was interviewed on September 27, 1996, who told the Commission that the Seymour Advisory Committee was comprised of “appointed” representatives from “government, industry, and the general public”. We know of course, that none of the Seymour Advisory Committee members were ever appointed by the GVRD's Water Committee, and that the “general public” are not represented.

The Perry Commission provided two important recommendations. First, that the Greater Victoria Water District should be disbanded because of its failure to represent and operate in the public's interest, and secondly, that the off-catchment lands not be subject to the interests of the Association of Professional Foresters:

Based on consideration of the submissions made to the Special Commission, I must conclude that any uses which involve logging or other harvesting activities for educational purposes within the non-catchment lands should be prohibited. Integrated land use which includes these activities would compromise protection of the water supply and environmental integrity. Given that approximately 88 per cent of Vancouver Island's land base is already dedicated to high-impact activities such as agriculture, urban settlement, mining and logging, there is no pressing need to introduce these activities into an extremely sensitive area. (Report of the Special Commission on the Greater Victoria Water Supply, Volume One: Main Report, David Perry, Special Commissioner, October 1996.)

In late August 1997, the Greater Victoria Water District, which was incorporated through a provincial Act in 1922, was disbanded. It is now regrouped under the direct control of the Capital Regional District, called the Regional Water Commission. On November 19, 1997, the Sooke Hills off-catchment lands were formally established as a public park.