

Technical Background Part 2: Ecosystem Compensation – Protecting Red- and Blue-listed Plant Communities and Wetlands

Introduction

During the environmental review of the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project, the Ministry of Transportation pledged to compensate for losses of red- and blue-listed ecosystems throughout the corridor, and dry arbutus habitat in the Horseshoe Bay area, at a replacement ratio of 1:1. This commitment can be found in the Environmental section of the Project website www.seatoskyimprovements.ca, under “Table of Commitments”, Section 4.14.

Highway construction resulted in the loss of 0.96 ha of Douglas fir/arbutus woodland-rock outcrop ecosystem at the southern end of the corridor, 6.49 ha red-listed habitats, 3.08 ha blue-listed habitats, and 0.42 ha permanently wetted ponds at the northern end of the corridor near Pinecrest. The first technical backgrounder, issued in 2007, describes the Tunnel Point and Doodson Corner sites that have been protected in perpetuity to compensate for the dry arbutus habitat losses. This Part 2 technical backgrounder describes the red- and blue-listed ecosystem and wetland protection program.

Habitat Protection

In May 2007, the *Parks and Protected Areas Statutes Amendment Act* added 9.91 ha red-listed ecosystem to Brandywine Falls Provincial Park and 10.62 ha red- and blue-listed ecosystems and recruitment areas to Murrin Provincial Park to compensate for Sea-to-Sky Project-related impacts. An additional 2.35 ha of red-listed community at Doodson Corner, 6 kms north of Lions Bay, was protected by a Section 106 Land Act transfer to the Ministry of Environment in 2007. The Ministry of Environment will administer the Doodson Corner land for ecosystem conservation purposes.

To mitigate for direct impacts to wetlands and indirect impacts resulting from highway construction near Pinecrest, 14 km south of Whistler, BC MoT will protect 260 ha of a relatively undisturbed mosaic of forests and wetlands immediately north of Brandywine Falls Provincial Park. This area supports a breeding population of red-legged frogs, a SARA-listed species of special concern. Red-legged frogs need both aquatic and terrestrial habitats to complete the different phases of their life cycle, and the exchange of individuals among local populations is important for maintaining populations within the larger region. This red-legged frog habitat, which serves as habitat for other amphibians and wildlife as well, will be added to Brandywine Falls Provincial Park.

Photos:

1. Red-listed habitat added to Murrin Provincial Park
2. Wetland habitat added to Murrin Provincial Park
3. View from the red- and blue-listed polygon at Doodson Corner
4. Red-listed ecosystem and wetlands protected and added to Brandywine Falls Provincial Park

