



DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA

PROGRAM

Pacific Estuary Conservation Program

BC COAST

Overview

Many species of British Columbia's fish and wildlife rely on the diversity of habitats in estuaries that form where the river meets the sea. The characteristics of estuaries such as the proximity to diverse natural resources (forests, marine, grasslands), moderating climate and flat fertile land also make estuaries prime sites for human settlement. Today, as the human population continues to grow, BC estuaries are seriously threatened by urban, industrial, and recreational development as well as changing land practices.

The Pacific Estuary Conservation Program (PECP) is a partnership effort of government and non-government conservation organizations working together to find creative ways to provide long-term protection for British Columbia's estuaries. These organizations have successfully secured thousands of hectares of shoreline and intertidal habitats in many of British Columbia's major estuaries since the program began in 1987. Under the program, organizations pool funds, expertise, and staff resources to manage water and habitats across these coastal landscapes, and provide long-term land security for key sites critical to the millions of migratory birds, fish and other wildlife of the Pacific Flyway.

Under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, signed between Canada, the United States and Mexico, the Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV) coordinates conservation efforts across the borders of Alaska, BC, Washington, Oregon and California. Within BC, the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program delivers the land securement and enhancement program for the PCJV.



Harlequin

PECP MEMBERS:

- Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service)
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
- BC Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- The Land Conservancy of British Columbia
- The Nature Trust of British Columbia



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Ducks Unlimited Canada conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

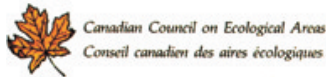


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In 1996, the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program was honoured with this Award, which recognizes the types of contributions that are necessary to achieve and guide the completion of a Canada-wide network of protected areas, which are representative of the country's ecosystem diversity.



The Pacific Estuary Conservation Program was a first recipient of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award in 1999. The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty which serves as an official vehicle for achieving wetland conservation and sustainable land use on a global scale.



The United States Fish & Wildlife Service administers the NAWCA program under the North American Waterfowl Management Agreement between Canada, United States of America and Mexico.



Background

British Columbia's coastline is 27,000 km long and for the most part consists of rocky steep-sided forested slopes. While estuaries comprise only about 2.3% of this coastline, they contain unique characteristics that provide critical feeding and resting areas for waterfowl and other wildlife. Coastal waterfowl species of international management concern include snow geese (60% of the Wrangel Island population), trumpeter swans (25% of the world's population), black brant (majority of the Pacific population) and Barrow's goldeneye (most of the world's population). Estuaries also provide habitat for many other species such as shorebirds, salmon, shellfish, eulachon, songbirds, birds of prey, and many marine, river and terrestrial mammals.

The Fraser River estuary is a high priority site for the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program. It is the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast, the most productive salmon river in North America, and the site of the largest wintering concentrations of waterbirds and birds of prey in Canada. It also supports over half of the world's population of western sandpipers during their migration. Other smaller but important areas along the coast include the East Coast of Vancouver Island, Queen Charlotte Islands and the North Coast of BC. Land acquisitions, conservation agreements and extension programs are all used to help provide long-term security for key habitats.

Some of the greatest habitat losses for waterfowl and other migratory birds are coastal farmlands adjacent to intertidal areas. Farmlands provide important food resources in the form of remnant vegetable crops, grass, seeds and invertebrates. The coastal habitat complex of farmlands and intertidal areas on both sides of the Canada-US border function as one biological unit within which migratory waterfowl and shorebirds move. Currently, over 7 million people live in this area along the Strait of Georgia (BC) and Puget Sound (Washington). This number is expected to triple in the next few decades that has the potential to reduce a significant amount of the already limited habitat. Therefore it is imperative to conserve the remaining farmland and intertidal habitats.

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