

PROJECT

Somass River Estuary Complex



BC COASTAL City of Port Alberni boundaries, on the west coast of Vancouver Island.



Trumpeter Swan

COMMON WILDLIFE

- Trumpeter Swan
- Mallard
- Green-winged Teal
- American Wigeon
- Bald Eagle
- Great Blue Heron
- Gyrfalcon
- Pink Salmon
- Sandhill Crane
- Coho Salmon
- Chinook Salmon
- Wolf

Highlights

The Somass Estuary project complex to date includes nearly 150 hectares of a 225 hectare delta of intertidal marshes, mudflats, forested islands and lowland meadows. The remaining parts of the delta consist of poplar plantations, sewage lagoon and effluent settlement ponds.

The estuary lies at the head of the narrow 40 km long Alberni inlet that stretches inland from the more exposed marine waters of Barkley Sound. It is consequently one of the most protected winter feeding sites for waterfowl migrating and wintering along the west coast of Vancouver Island.

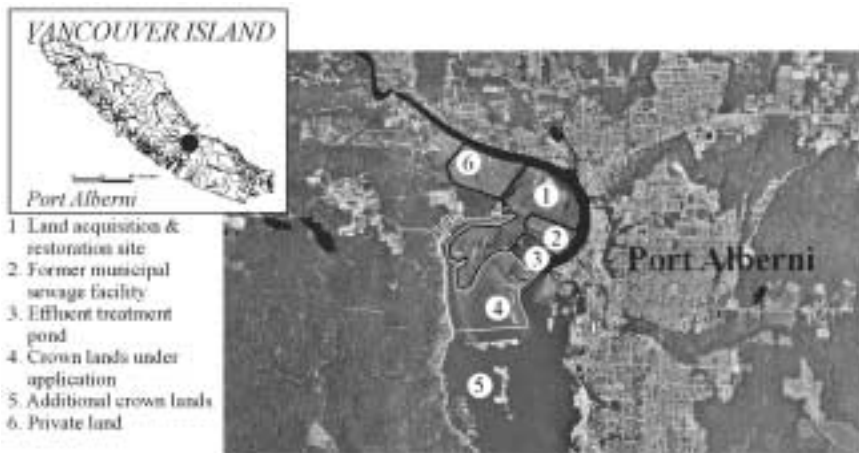
This Pacific Estuary Conservation Program (PECP) project area is an example of the strong working partnerships between government and non-government agencies, fisheries and waterfowl interests, and the forest industry in an industrialized estuary.



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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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THIS PROJECT IS THE RESULT OF COOPERATIVE EFFORTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

- Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service)
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- BC Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection
- BC Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- City of Port Alberni
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Port Alberni Port Authority
- Port Alberni Enhancement Association
- Weyerhaeuser Canada
- Norske Canada
- Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations

Background

The Somass River is the result of the combined flows of the Sproat River and Stamp River that converge to form one meandering river 4.8 kilometers from the estuary. Both rivers have hydroelectric dams, and parts of the estuary have been used in the past for livestock grazing, the treatment of sewage and pulp mill effluent, log booming and storage and shipping facilities. The Alberni inlet is world re-known for its recreational sport fishery, and local groups are actively involved in habitat restoration, streamflow improvement projects and fish hatcheries to mitigate past losses.

This estuary is a key feeding and resting area for thousands of Pacific Coast waterfowl, the most notable being Trumpeter Swans. Its significance was recognized as far back as the 1970's when the majority of the estuary was owned by MacMillan Bloedel Limited, and part of the intertidal flats was managed as the J.V. Clyne Bird Sanctuary to protect the wintering population of up to 600 swans. Forestry holdings in the estuary have changed ownership several times in the past decade.

Ducks Unlimited Canada projects in this area include the PECP purchase of 96.8 hectares of backshore meadow to secure critical grazing areas for waterfowl, the restoration of natural tidal flows into the lower parts of the parcel to improve fish access and promote estuary plant communities, and an ongoing PECP project to have at least 50 hectares of the harbour itself designated as a conservation area. The development of a management plan for the estuary is also underway.



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Ducks Unlimited Canada, founded in 1938, is a private nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to the conservation of wetlands for the benefit of North America's waterfowl, wildlife and people.