

**The Bowen Island Conservancy
Caring for Nature Initiative
A Synopsis for Presentation to Bowen Island Municipality Council
July 8, 2024**

This is a synopsis of the presentation that will describe the *Caring for Nature initiative* and invites Council to offer any additional ideas or concepts that you would like the Bowen Island Conservancy to consider.

Introduction

Biodiversity encompasses all species and their ecological relationships within a given area, serving as a vital indicator of Nature's health and resilience. A biodiversity conservation plan for Bowen Island would help offset the impacts of ongoing development and climate change, and ensure that the Island's natural heritage, so valued by the community, is protected against increasing decline. The Bowen Island Conservancy (BIC) is therefore launching a *Caring for Nature initiative*, with an initial 2-year phase (2024-2026) focused on releasing an actionable Bowen Island Biodiversity Conservation Plan. The plan will be developed through a collaborative, public process that harmonizes scientific insights with community values, and we have recruited a professional team of islanders to advance this work.

Our Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Caring for Nature (C4N) initiative is to safeguard the natural heritage of Bowen Island for future generations.

Specifically, Phase 1 of the C4N Initiative (2023-2025) aims to:

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan:** Craft an actionable biodiversity conservation plan that will serve as a blueprint for growing a conservation network on Bowen Island. This plan will be shaped by an interactive public process, ensuring alignment with community values and scientific principles.
2. **Raise Awareness and Garner Support:** Foster community engagement through various mediums—open houses, workshops, presentations, videos, and a detailed poster map—to build support for biodiversity conservation.
- 1) **Create Accessible Resources:** Develop online resources of maps and reports to support community involvement in biodiversity conservation efforts.

Our Timetable

Launched as a long-term program in 2023, the first phase of the C4N initiative runs until 2026, and is funded by the Sitka Foundation (2024-2026), Knick Knack Nook (2024), and private donors. A draft of the biodiversity plan is anticipated by autumn 2025.

Our Team

As we began putting the C4N Initiative together we were delighted by the response of many individuals and their willingness to help. The result is that the C4N Initiative is now guided by a steering committee of islanders including professional biologists, nature interpreters, marketing and communications specialists, graphic artists, a community planner, and GIS map specialists. Two elected BIM councillors and a BIM staff member liaise with the committee. Much of the work of the steering committee is done through two groups: the scientific assessment team and the public engagement team. The initiative head is Bob Turner, a BIC Director.

Steering Committee Members

- Bob Turner, PhD: Project Lead, Geoscientist, BIC Director, former BIM Mayor
- Bonny Brokenshire: Environmental professional, former BIM Manager Environment Parks
- John Dowler: Multimedia Designer, Web strategy and design, Cartography and GIS
- Paula Hay: Community Planner with First Nations Experience
- Will Husby, MSc: Natural Heritage Interpretation Consultant, Author, Graphic Designer
- Sheree Johnston: Strategic Marketing, Research and Communications professional
- Louise Loik: Journalist, Author and Environmental Communicator
- Jeff Matheson, MSc: Professional Biologist, GIS Specialist
- Erica Olsen, MSc: Professional Biologist with First Nations Experience
- Wendy Palen, PhD: Conservation Biologist, SFU Biological Sciences Faculty
- Alan Whitehead, MSc: Professional Biologist, volunteer warden, BI Ecological Reserve
- Thomas D. Sisk, PhD: Conservation Biologist, Emeritus Faculty, Northern Arizona University, Adjunct SFU
- Edward Wachtman, PhD: Behavioural research and Communications professional

Liaisons to Steering Committee

- Sue Ellen Fast: BIM Councillor, Islands Trustee
- Judi Gedy: BIM Councillor, Islands Trustee
- Carla Skuce: BIM Parks and Environment Coordinator

Partnerships

BIC has a Memorandum of Understanding with BIM that includes data sharing and collaboration, providing a mechanism for findings and insights from the Bowen Biodiversity Conservation Plan to be used by the Municipality as it formulates and executes strategies for development and infrastructure provision in coming years. Ongoing discussions with the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound UNESCO Biosphere team will align the C4N Initiative with the Biosphere's biodiversity mapping and conservation efforts.

Scientific assessment

Scientific assessment for the C4N initiative involves the compilation and review of Bowen map data from various sources including BIM, Islands Trust, Metro Vancouver, and the Province of

BC. Compilation of *iNaturalist*, *eBird*, and other relevant data as well as species distribution modelling is underway through Simon Fraser University.

This environmental data will be integrated with conservation lands mapping (e.g. parks, nature reserves, riparian and wetland buffers, environmental covenanted areas) to assess the protection of various island natural habitats (e.g. wetlands, coastal bluffs, mature forest, old forest), assess connectivity of wildlands across the island, and highlight outstanding conservation risks and opportunities. Taken together, these data and the expected products of analysis and mapping will provide the backbone for efforts to identify key conservation opportunities on the island, assess the costs and benefits of specific conservation actions, and identify information gaps to be filled by subsequent efforts of BIC and its partners.

A significant legacy of this initial phase will be a spatial database and mapping interface, complete with simple tools that allow the public to query and assimilate relevant information. This capacity will drive a participatory approach for exploring key questions that will guide Bowen's efforts to match future development with effective conservation.

Community Engagement

The Bowen Biodiversity Conservation Plan will be shaped through an interactive, public process that aligns science with community values. Initial community engagement has begun with articles in the Undercurrent, social media posts, website updates, and an informational video. Our current nature photo contest aims to spark interest in Bowen Island's biodiversity.

This fall, we will host an educational open house and a community engagement workshop to gather input on species of concern, valued natural areas, and perceived risks.

This community advice and insight will be used in concert with expert opinion to inform the analysis, planning, and mapping required to develop conservation priorities, and will be presented back to the community for further discussion and refinement.

Conclusion

The Caring for Nature initiative represents a pivotal moment for biodiversity conservation on Bowen Island. By uniting scientific effort with community values, we can create an enduring blueprint for biodiversity conservation that will help protect our island's natural heritage for generations to come. Together, we can ensure that Bowen Island remains a vibrant sanctuary for nature.

We invite BIM Council to offer any additional ideas or concepts that you would like us to consider.