

MORRISON HEADWATERS NATURE PRESERVE CAMPAIGN

Backgrounder 2019

Nature Preserve

The headwaters of Morrison Creek have been recognized as a top-priority for conservation in the Comox Valley. The expansive, undeveloped wilderness oasis nestled between the margins of the Village of Cumberland and the City of Courtenay provides habitat for an extraordinary diversity of wildlife including keystone species such as wide-ranging carnivores, robust runs of salmon and is the only home on earth to the endangered Morrison Creek Lamprey.

Project Scope

The Morrison Headwaters was identified by Comox Valley Land Trust's (CVLT) science-based conservation plan as a top-priority for conservation in the Comox Valley based on its high viability, high threat (agricultural and industrial development) and high opportunities scores.

This private land parcel (55-acres) has become available for sale in the Morrison Headwaters and is an integral part of the CVLT's larger vision for further land acquisition in the area. One 24-acre (9.7 ha) parcel of private land in the Morrison headwaters has already been protected by the BC Government, and is known as the Beecher Linton Conservation Area.



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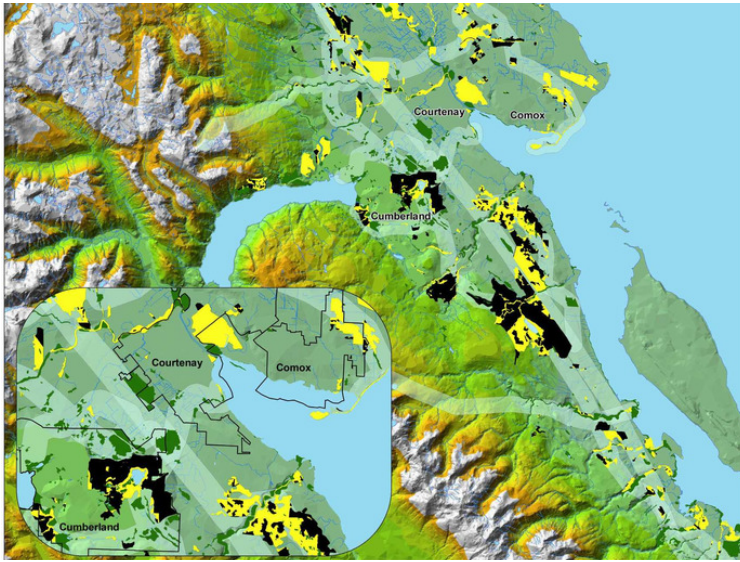
Species at Risk

Morrison Creek Lamprey
Little Brown Bat
Barn Swallow
Northern Red-legged Frog
Band-Tailed Pigeon
Roosevelt Elk

Olive-sided Flycatcher
Common Nighthawk
Great Blue Heron
Cutthroat Trout
Northern Pygmy-owl

Numerous species at risk have been identified on the property including mammals, fish, amphibians, and birds. The Morrison Creek Lamprey is known only from the Morrison Creek Watershed, and is considered endangered by both the Province of BC and the Government of Canada. Critical Habitat for the lamprey as well as for the Pacific population of Western Painted Turtle have recently been proposed under the Species At Risk Act (SARA) in extensive areas of the Morrison headwaters.

The thriving ecosystem of beaver ponds, swamps and marshes naturally restricts human access throughout the majority of the headwaters resulting in a wilderness oasis limited from human disturbances.



Conservation Strategy

At 600-acres (243 ha) the headwaters area exceeds the minimum thresholds established by BC government scientists for long term viability of its mosaic of ecological communities. Further, the headwaters area is connected to other conservation initiatives including the work of the Cumberland Community Forest Society to acquire the Perseverance Creek watershed, and the work of Project Watershed in the K'ómoks estuary. These three mutually-supportive conservation initiatives present a rare opportunity to protect a truly landscape-scale conservation area on the east side of Vancouver Island.

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Project Details

CVLT has until March 31st, 2019 to raise the required funds to close the deal. Including the cost of the land, staff-time, legals and appraisals, the total project budget is \$870,000. Success with this project will be the first step towards a campaign to protect the entire Morrison Headwaters area. The parcel includes 390m of the mainstream of Morrison Creek, 300m of Nellie Creek (a tributary to Morrison Creek) and 225m of another unnamed tributary. These waterways include extensive riparian areas and associated wetlands (~60% of the property) while forested upland areas make up the balance (~40% of property). The CVLT is relying on the support of the community to secure the future of this vital area.

Historical Significance

The property is within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation and includes the original Leung farm. The Leung family is credited as being one of the most important agricultural producers supporting the development of Cumberland and Courtenay in the early 1900s. The property aligns with what was known as the China Trail, an old wagon road linking the Leung farm and Gwilt Mill to the townsites of Bevan and Puntledge to the north and Cumberland to the south.

This trail is enjoyed by local residents for recreational access including walking, hiking and horseback riding. Non-motorized access will be permitted to continue on existing trails throughout the property, creating a natural legacy in the Comox Valley for all to enjoy now and in the future.