

## BOUNDARY BAY CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

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The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee (BBCC) was established in 1988 to enhance public awareness and appreciation of the global significance of the Fraser River estuary ecosystem in British Columbia. Incorporated on January 16, 1990 (#S-0025759), the BBCC consists of individual and group memberships as well as supporting groups. The BBCC recognizes the importance of the Fraser River estuary and surrounding agricultural land in maintaining much of the wildlife habitats around Boundary Bay, Roberts Bank and Sturgeon Bank. The group works cooperatively to retain links between agriculture and conservationist goals.

The Committee has worked with many groups to obtain protection and recognition for wildlife and habitats in the Fraser River Estuary ecosystem. After years of providing information to the federal government and international organizations, in 2001, Boundary Bay, Roberts Bank and Sturgeon Bank in the Fraser River estuary ecosystem were recognized as the most significant Important Bird Area (IBA) out of 597 sites in Canada. In 2004 the same area was designated as a Hemispheric Site in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Program.

In 1995, 11,000 hectares of Boundary Bay outside the dyke were designated as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) by the province. In 1998, Sturgeon Bank was designated a WMA, and the BC government also has plans to give Roberts Bank the same designation. Management plans have been prepared for all areas by BC Environment, but have not been finalized. Roberts and Sturgeon Banks are primarily provincially-owned crown land, except a small portion on Westham Island which is part of the federal Alaksen National Wildlife Area, containing the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Research studies increasingly demonstrate the importance of the surrounding farmlands to the adjacent wetlands and coastal ecosystems.

Rich in intertidal eelgrass beds, marshes and mudflats, Roberts Bank at the estuary of the Fraser River provides habitat not only for millions of resident and migratory birds, but also for migrating salmon and three pods of resident endangered Orca whales which feed off the banks of the estuary. In 1969 a coal port was built at the mouth of the Fraser River estuary. A container port was added in the 1980s. Current and planned port expansions as well as transportation infrastructure will result in loss of critical habitat in the Fraser River estuary.

Transportation plans for the estuary and surrounding farmlands include dredging and filling; expanded roads and a new freeway; expanded railways and rail yards on farmland; and container facilities on the foreshore and farmland. Recent airport expansion has brought airplane flight paths closer to the birds. There is also the potential for water pollution from urban and industrial developments along the Fraser River, as well as the risk of oil and ballast pollution arising from shipping in the Georgia Strait, Roberts Bank and the Fraser River.