



June 17, 2024

The Honourable Nathan Cullen, MLA
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Room 310, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Sent via email: LWRS.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Cullen,

The Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) is the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) area association representing the interests of local governments and member First Nations in the British Columbia region of Vancouver Island, qathet, the Sunshine Coast, Central Coast and North Coast. After consideration at the AVICC Annual Convention in April 2024, AVICC members endorsed a resolution, sponsored by the City of Parksville, that is of interest to your Ministry:

AVICC Regional Resolution R2- *Conservation of Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region*

The resolution and background information are enclosed for your review and attention. Since this resolution is regional in nature, it will not be forwarded to UBCM for consideration at the UBCM Convention in September. Watershed security and land conservation have been identified as being a priority for AVICC members, and we would welcome your comments on this matter.

If you have any questions, or require further information, please contact Theresa Dennison, AVICC Executive Coordinator, at 236-237-1202 or at tdennison@avicc.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Geselbracht', is written over a light blue wavy graphic element.

President Ben Geselbracht, AVICC
Councillor, City of Nanaimo

Enclosure

cc: Hon. George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Fin Donnelly, MLA, Parliamentary Secretary for Watershed Restoration

AVICC Resolution

R2: Conservation of Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region

WHEREAS the UNESCO-designated Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR) includes five watershed regions and the Coastal Douglas-fir moist maritime biogeoclimatic subzone, which is the smallest and most at-risk zone in BC and is of conservation concern;

AND WHEREAS habitat loss and fragmentation due to human development and unsustainable consumption and production patterns are among the major causes of diminishing biodiversity within the MABR;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AVICC urge the Province to conserve through purchase thirty percent of lands within the MABR to meet the thirty percent of BC's land by 2030 provincial conservation target;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT AVICC urge the Province, in accordance with the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation signed between Canada, British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), to include land conservation policies within the MABR.

ON MOTION, was ENDORSED

Background for AVICC Resolution:

R2: Conservation of Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region

The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council was signed in November 2023. The agreement includes objectives for protection in four areas, including habitat and ecosystem conservation and protection, habitat enhancement and restoration, species at risk protection and recovery, and foundational knowledge and information sharing. One key goal identified is to "advance Canada and BC's commitment to protect at least 30 per cent of B.C.'s land by 2030."¹

The Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR) was designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve in the year 2000. In 2014, Vancouver Island University took over management of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region and established a roundtable which involves representatives from Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose) First Nation, Qualicum First Nation, the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, the Regional District of Nanaimo, the BC Ministry of Environment, the Vancouver Island Conservation Land Management Program, Island Timberlands, TimberWest, and Vancouver Island University.²

The MABR includes five watershed regions, ecologically significant estuaries, and the Coastal Douglas-fir moist maritime biogeoclimatic subzone (CDFmm). While the CDFmm contains the highest diversity of plant species in BC and the highest diversity of over-wintering bird species in Canada, it is the smallest and most at-risk zone in BC and is of conservation concern (Biodiversity BC, 2008). Furthermore, the CDFmm is home to the highest number of species and ecosystems at risk in BC, many of which are ranked globally as imperilled or critically imperilled³ including Garry oak ecosystems, of which less than 5% remain in near-natural conditions⁴.

Protection of this ecologically important region fits within the mandate of the Tripartite Framework agreement on Nature Conservation.

¹ Government of Canada Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (2023). *Backgrounder - Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council*.

Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2023/11/tripartite-framework-agreement-on-nature-conservation-between-canada-british-columbia-and-the-first-nations-leadership-council.html>

² Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region.

Retrieved from: <https://www.mabr.ca/history>

³ Coastal Douglas Fir and Associated Ecosystems Conservation Partnership.

Retrieved from: <https://www.cdfcp.ca/about-the-cdfcp/#:~:text=The%20CDFmm%20is%20home%20to,must%20altered%20by%20human%20activities.>

⁴ McPhee et al. (2000). *Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory: East Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands 1993-1997*.

Retrieved from:

https://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/acat/documents/r2124/SEI_4206_rpt2_111099716576_7025110f245d45caa101abdef711671d.pdf