

**Jim Wright, 8300 Osgoode Drive, re Item 8 (Sep 28, 2015)**

Mayor Brodie and councillors,

On behalf of the Garden City Conservation Society, I support the Ecological Network Management Strategy and the investigating of possible YVR expansion that could impact the Sturgeon Banks.

If YVR's plans *do* have a Sturgeon Banks impact, it will affect two of the Ecological Strategies, which are the West Dike Strategy and the Sturgeon Bank Wildlife Management. That has prompted me to use the area beyond the West Dike for a sort of brief case study that supports the Ecological Network Management Strategy in a key way. The City's part of that area, just beyond the dike, is the Grauer Lands.

Of course, adopting the Management Strategy implies an unwritten aspect, which is a commitment to implement. I'll draw on the Grauer Lands to highlight the City's opportunity to overcome disconnects between the Strategy intents and what *can* happen. In my example, I think the disconnect is a *systemic* problem, which means we won't blame anyone. The system did it.

The example occurred in the summer of 2013. Five backhoes on the tidal wetland of the Grauer Lands destroyed the extensive array of habitat logs. I'm talking about decades of large naturally arranged driftwood logs that were the spectacular foreground in a breathtaking viewscape as one looked northward to coastal mountains beyond Bowen Island. After I came across it happening, I went back once more to see the effects. The logs had been piled together except for some odd little clusters. I later found that the two kinds of structure were termed a "corral" and "bird perches." I used to walk or cycle there a lot, often several times a week. However, it's so upsetting that I haven't been able to face walking or cycling on the West Dike again.

Here's the disconnect part. That large backhoe operation was **not** mentioned in the approved plan for the Grauer Lands. (There was nothing about moving the driftwood logs.) And it had **not** been *cleared* with the parks committee or *mentioned* to the chair.

Some benefits for Ducks Unlimited and perhaps for salmonids were later given. However, there was evidently no study to compare the ecological value of what was destroyed with the anticipated value from the intervention.

We do know that a salmonid habitat enhancement project that's been successful in the last couple of years in the Seymour River estuary in North Vancouver has done the **opposite**, bringing large logs **into** the area and tethering them so they remain functional, helping protect the fish from seals. A [\*Vancouver Sun\* article](#) last month (August 19, 2015) used the term "habitat complexity," for what they've gained, which is what we've lost. It provides "plenty of tiny nooks and crannies for the plants and animals."

It is certainly **not** obvious that the intervention in the ecosystem beyond the West Dike was wise. The one *obvious* course of action was to proceed with care after a study of conservation effects, with consultation and approvals, but that is what did **not** happen.

So. It is clear that the most important piece of the Ecological Network Management Strategy is **not within** the document. It is a deep shared commitment to implement it at each opportunity. That needs to happen within the heart and mind of each council member as she or he ratifies the Ecological Network Management Strategy. From there, council can fix the system. Then the **potentially** excellent Strategy will truly **be** excellent.