

Kingcome River Estuary is one of the largest estuaries within the Pacific Ranges ecoregion along British Columbia's central coast. It is highly ranked owing to its large size, habitat diversity and species abundance. To date, over 810 hectares have been secured by PCJV partners.

André Breault,
Canadian Wildlife Service



Pacific Coast Joint Venture

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The biologically productive and diverse estuary habitat of the Pacific Coast has long been a conservation priority for the Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV). In British Columbia, estuary habitat comprises less than 3 percent of the coastline, but supports a variety of species including marine and terrestrial mammals, waterbirds, fish, invertebrates and salt-tolerant plants. Hundreds of thousands of resident and migratory birds winter or stage here during spring and fall migration. These species depend on these habitats and near shore organisms for survival.

Despite their importance and rarity, current estimates indicate that over 50 percent of British Columbia's estuaries are threatened by coastal development, modification and pollution. Conserving biologically important areas under increasing development pressure requires the achievement of two long-term goals: a) an objective, landscape-level scientific assessment to identify the most important areas for sustaining populations; and b) timely and efficient allocation of resources to conserve habitat.

In response to these needs, from 2001 to 2004 an initiative to identify, map and prioritize estuaries for conservation was undertaken by Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service, with support from PCJV partners. This effort was intended to update and build upon previous work that guided earlier conservation activities. At the landscape level, 442 estuaries were located and mapped according to standardized criteria, using geographic information system tools. In April 2004, the complete set of estuary maps and attributes were released to stakeholders.

Concurrent with this initiative, several spatially explicit biophysical data sets for coastal British Columbia were located, reviewed and collated. Existing data from these were overlaid on the estuary maps and attributes that overlapped each estuary were extracted and analyzed. From these analyses, each estuary was assigned a conservation ranking based on its individual contribution to provincial totals for the following categories: size, habitat composition, vegetation characteristics, waterbird abundance and herring spawn. Estuaries with the highest biological and physical values were identified from this process. Additionally, areas with missing data were flagged for future monitoring.

For PCJV planning, estuary ranking helps joint venture partners target resources toward prominent habitats for migratory bird populations that use estuaries on both sides of the border. A decision-making framework that integrates both landscape and biological information will serve as a useful model for prioritizing estuaries and other habitats for conservation action across the PCJV planning region. Such assessments also strengthen the landscape and biological foundations for decision-making in accordance with PCJV and North American Waterfowl Management Plan goals.

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Contributions (\$CN)

	2004	Total (1986-2004)
U.S. Federal	1,541,244	17,244,657
U.S. Non-Federal	1,080,897	17,939,251
Canadian	80,686,034	123,454,145
Total	83,308,175	158,638,054

Accomplishments (Acres)

	2004	Total (1986-2004)
Secured	6,985	106,943
Enhanced	1,482	88,446
Managed	1,482	84,698
Total*	6,985	106,943

* Secured, enhanced and managed acres are not additive. Acres are first secured, may then be enhanced and are subsequently placed under management.

Background Image:

Great Blue Heron

Ducks Unlimited Canada