

MEETING MINUTES

MABR Roundtable Gathering Volume 22
Friday, March 4th, 2022 from 09:00am to 11:30am

Virtual meeting via Zoom.



Attendees (15)

Blain Sepos, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism, E.D.
Ceri Peacey, Community Representative
Cheryl Jones, Snaw-naw-as First Nation, Councillor
Chris Burger, City of Parksville, Liaison
Courtney Vaugeois, MABRRI, Assistant Research & Community Engagement Coordinator
Graham Sakaki, MABRRI, Regional Research Institute Manager
Jannah Stavroff, Community Representative
Kim Burden, Parksville & District and Qualicum Chamber of Commerce, E.D.
Lehann Wallace, Regional District of Nanaimo, Electoral Area G Director
Mandy Hobkirk, MABR, Coordinator
Pam Shaw, MABRRI, Research Director
Steve Adams, Mosaic Forest Management, Resource Technologist
Teunis Westbroek, Town of Qualicum Beach, Councillor
Tom Reid, Nature Trust of BC, West Coast Program Manager
Teagan, Fridays for Future Qualicum Beach, Presenter

Objectives

The main objectives of this Roundtable gathering are for participants to:

1. Continue to engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue with one another.
2. Hear from one another about regional/organizational/community updates.
3. Discuss past, present, and future events for the MABR/RI.

Welcome & Opening Prayer

- Mandy shared regrets and update from Chief Michael Recalma.
- Round of introductions and welcome for new member, Tom Reid (West Coast Program Manager for Nature Trust BC).

Agenda Adoption

- Addition by Teunis: Youth presentation by Teagan, member of Fridays for Future Qualicum.
- Agenda adopted.

MABR Updates

Maternity Leave Update – Mandy

- This is Mandy's last gathering before she starts maternity leave. The next gathering is scheduled for June, which Graham will facilitate. June's meeting will ideally be in person.
 - Chris suggested hosting a future gathering at the new Meadowood Community Centre when it is ready.

- Lehann suggested the Little Qualicum Hall for the next meeting. She will reach out to her contact and connect with Graham.
- Following the June gathering, Mandy hopes to facilitate future meetings.
- While Mandy is away, no internal newsletters will be shared. Instead, Community Representatives will be sharing their updates at the gatherings.

2022 MABR BioBlitz – Mandy

- The Annual BioBlitz is running from April 8th – 10th this year, under the umbrella of the Brant Wildlife Festival. The event will use the iNaturalist app again this year. There will also be prizes for each of the three days.
- Mandy will circulate the poster after this meeting for Roundtable members to share.
- MABRRI Senior Research Assistant, Anna Lawrence, will be coordinating the event next year while Mandy is away.

Regional Research, Stewardship, and Citizen Science Open House – Graham

- In 2019, MABRRI hosted a Regional Research Conference and they want to get back to sharing the work that is happening in the MABR through the upcoming regional open house.
- The open house will be the second day of a two-day event MABRRI is hosting.
 - The Traditional Plant Workshop will be hosted on March 15th from 1:00 – 4:00pm. The event sold out fast, but they have extra tickets held for any Roundtable members that would like to attend.
 - The open house will be held on March 16th from 2:00 – 8:00 pm. The open house will include presentations and booths from organizations, stewardship and citizen science groups to showcase the work they are doing in the region. MABRRI is hoping for a fun, interactive event and Graham is encouraging and hoping Municipal staff will be able to come to the event to show their support for the organizations in the region. The event is funded by the Canadian Mountain Network through the View from 2117 project.
 - Website: <https://mabrri.viu.ca/regional-research-stewardship-and-citizen-science-open-house>
- The open house will also be the launch event for the *MABR in Bloom: A Community Profile* report, which is the first vitality report for the MABR. Vitality reports can be a useful tool for decision-makers to learn about the health and well-being of their community.

Visiting Student Researcher from Germany – Mandy

- Jenni joined us during a zoom gathering last May to discuss her proposed research. At that meeting, she asked members to answer the question “what are the three main risks to the well-being of the Biosphere Region and its inhabitants looking at the next 15 years?”
 - The top 5 responses were:
 - population growth
 - development / lack of coordinated planning
 - climate change
 - loss of biodiversity / habitats /ecosystem functionality
 - freshwater availability
- Jenni decided to focus her research on potential alternatives to the current water-based sanitation system. Her project is titled “*the potential of waterfree sanitation for increasing water availability and nutrient circulation in the MABR*”

- The research will be focused on the Nanoose area, due to more properties being connected to septic tanks.
 - Lehann: The RDN may be able to provide some data to Jenni. Lehann is happy to help facilitate the connection between Jenni and the RDN.
- Jenni is happy to receive everyone's thoughts and feedback regarding focus area, topic and who to contact.
- She will come to Canada in the beginning of April and stay until the beginning of October to conduct interviews and gather information. Jenni is also seeking housing options.
 - Kim suggested her using a recreational vehicle that she could move from campsite to campsite over her stay.

KSS Salmonoid and Stream Stewardship Program – Mandy

- This was brought forward by Ray (QB Streamkeepers), who is looking for support for a Salmonoid and Stream Stewardship program at KSS. The program would focus on raising and releasing salmon, gathering data, restoring the creek, and stream and salmon stewardship. They will be focusing on Beach Creek and doing place-based learning.
- The program would be offered as an elective for students in grades 8 – 12. At this time, he is looking for the Roundtable's support.
 - Lehann: with World Water Day coming up (March 25th), Lehann is working with MVIHES and Friends of French Creek Conservation Society to conduct tree replanting and riparian area restoration for French Creek Community Park
 - She believes that Ray and a teacher from Ballenas are working on this also.
 - Sidebar: Lehann is wondering if Mosaic would have any fir or cedar trees that could be donated.
 - In concept, Lehann is in support of this project, but has questions about the logistics of the school district and whether they are in support of the project. She would like to hear from them regarding the project and their decision.
 - Mandy will seek out more details and share them with the Roundtable.
 - Graham suggested that at this moment, perhaps we share a letter of support for the concept of the program.
 - Mandy will ask Ray if he could provide an update at the next Roundtable.

ECCC Funding – Graham

- MABRRI applied to a funding opportunity from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to work on supporting advancement and designation of protected areas, key biodiversity areas, and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the MABR.
- ECCC funding has been approved for all Canadian Biosphere Reserves. The contract will be passed over to Graham to be signed in the coming weeks. Funding has been pre-approved at the budget level for five years, but they want to see what organizations can do in three years before approving the final two.
- ECCC has specifically mentioned a focus on OECMs (conservation designation for areas that are achieving the effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity outside of protected areas). OECMs will contribute to Canada's Pathway to Target 1.
- Graham is unsure how all the funds will be spent. They will be hiring a project coordinator for this project. It would be nice to host some kind of a planning conference or workshop to facilitate conversations around protected areas. Graham will provide an update at the June Roundtable.

- Lehann: the community is on the hunt for the final ~ \$256K for the Eagle Preserve by April 10th. The money is being raised by volunteers. If there is any possibility for the ECCC funding to be used for the Eagle Preserve, the RDN is happy to assist.
 - The Eagle Preserve will be a partnership agreement with the RDN and BC Parks Foundation. The RDN will support the ongoing management and protection of the area as a nature protected area. Tom agrees that this could be considered as a protected area for the ECCC project.
- Graham will look into this and check with ECCC. Graham and Lehann will follow-up outside of the meeting.

Presentation from Youth – Fridays for Future

- Teagan (local Fridays for Future group) is one of three students who strike every Friday to raise awareness of the climate emergency. She was inspired by the lack of awareness around the community and her school.
- Teagan’s group is presenting to the Town of QB on March 16th. They are asking the town to declare a climate emergency, commit to creating a community-wide climate action plan, and for equity and justice – which would include some safe city policies. They are also asking for updates to the 2010 Sustainability Plan.
 - Lehann: there may be some documents, studies, and reports at the RDN that could help the Fridays for the Future group understand some of the work/initiatives that the RDN is working on. Lehann is happy to help facilitate connections between the RDN staff and Teagan’s group.
 - Chris expressed his gratitude and support for the Fridays for the Future group.
 - Ceri invited Teagan to the tours of natural areas during the Brant Festival.
 - Graham expressed his gratitude to hear from youth. The MABR has struggled to get a youth representative and hopes Teagan would be open to applying to join the Roundtable.

Circle Updates from Roundtable Members

Ceri Peacey, Community Representative:

- Brant Wildlife Festival: they are having the festival lift off on April 1st.
- They will have 21 painted geese out for the Spot the Grant contest. The museums are engaged and they have a great display.
- A number of events are going on throughout the festival including:
 - Little Qualicum River Estuary tour (April 2nd)
 - The Deep Bay Marine Field Station is doing a tidal blitz (April 1st – 3rd) using the iNaturalist app and are opening for field station tours on April 2nd
 - Brant in the Bay (April 3rd)
 - Basic Bird ID with Lynne Brookes
 - NIWRA Eagle Release
 - MABR BioBlitz (April 8th – 10th)
 - Englishman River Estuary Tour (April 9th)
 - Film Festival (April 10th)
 - Hamilton Marsh tour (April 16th).
- Folks will be able to pre-register on the Bandwango app when it is up and running.

Chris Burger, City of Parksville:

- Chris has received concerns around the Parksville Wetlands as there have been some changes occurring in this very sensitive area.
- There have been issues going on around the wetlands, some of which have not been reported on in the media. There have been some fires in that area, and because of this, they needed to build up some of the trails to provide road access for fire apparatus. This is the primary reason for the work that is being done, however, they are also enhancing some trails.
- The City has been trying to ensure that the movement of water in the wetland areas is as least disturbed as possible. There have also been some homeless issues in this part of the City, which poses some potential challenges/risk around the Parksville Wetlands.
 - There was some attention to the area regarding the potential civic arena and pool. It is important to consider how we can make it available for the community to enjoy so they can understand it and help protect it. With the new water treatment facility, the aquifer has now had significant demand levels reduced. This will help preserve the wetland.

Lehann Wallace, Regional District of Nanaimo:

- The acquisition of the French Creek estuary lands for conservation is not something that the RDN has typically done in the past. Park acquisitions in general have been to create recreational activities. This is a sensitive wetland and estuary and Lehann is very grateful for the work that the community has done to make this possible.
 - Link to fundraiser: <https://www.bcparksfoundation.ca/projects/enhance/french-creek-estuary/>
- The key project for Lehann right now is the French Creek Estuary project. She is receiving many comments of relief that this land will not be developed.
- Regional Growth Strategy Review is underway at the RDN (called Sharing our Future 2040). This is collecting people's input for shaping up the future. People are invited to share their feedback, get engaged, and complete a questionnaire by March 25th.

Teunis Westbroek, Town of Qualicum Beach:

- Following Teagan's presentation, Teunis would like to pursue Teagan as the youth representative for the Roundtable. Chris agrees that Teagan would be a great representative, as she showed that she is a great young leader. Graham, Kim, and Pam indicated their support.
- Mandy will send over the youth representative application to Teagan.

Pam Shaw, MABRRI:

- MABRRI is continually looking at ways to get the Research Institute involved in new projects. MABRRI had a meeting Friday afternoon to discuss how the biosphere region can get involved with another biosphere reserve in Ghana.
- Pam is also meeting with the other biosphere reserves in BC to discuss collaboration and if there is something they can do at a provincial level to facilitate collaboration with the province. They have a meeting in the coming months and Pam will provide an update at the next Roundtable gathering.

Blain Sepos, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism:

- Parksville Qualicum Beach has been one of the highest performing tourist destinations in all of Canada since the pandemic started. Partially due to lots of open natural places for people to go and feel safe.

- PQB is suffering a lot from the lack of staff, almost at the crisis level. Many businesses will likely need to close or scale back their operations. The use of technology is important at this time so PQB Tourism is pulling together a grant to offer to the stakeholders to adopt technology in lieu of staffing – up to \$3,000 per business (digital menus, online check ins, etc.). They want to be able to help business overcome these challenges as much as possible.
- In 2018, the province of BC changed the purpose and use of the hotel tax and allowed it to be collected by short-term rentals (e.g. Airbnb). When they allowed for the tax to be collected by these accommodations, they allowed it to be used for affordable housing. An affordable housing program is about to be launched (similar to a rent bank) to support accommodation workers. If a worker is having trouble making ends meet for month-to-month basis they can apply to access this fund. They have dedicated \$50,000 to this pilot program in the first year.
- The Tourism Master Plan - the board of directors are working through final terms of reference and they will have a request going out to seek a consultant to develop the plan. They would like to have a member from the Roundtable sit on the steering committee.

Kim Burden, Parksville & District and Qualicum Chamber of Commerce:

- They have been fortunate to hire two people to help with various programs at the Chamber, working in Parksville and Qualicum Beach in regards to marketing and events. They also have a new staff member managing the Parksville visitor center.
- The business awards are coming up (March 24th at the Qualicum Beach Civic Center), as well as a joint meeting between the two Chambers (Parksville and Qualicum). The topic for the joint meeting for this year is reconciliation.
- They have obtained an electric cargo van, which helps to fulfill one of their value statements “increasing our reach without increasing our footprint”.
- DELVI: a 15,000 square foot warehouse is being used as a pilot project for local businesses to use. Currently there are a dozen businesses in there. It also acts as an emergency warehousing location for businesses in need (Island Cleaning Supplies recently had a fire and within a day were able to move into this facility and were back up and running). DELVI will move into a larger warehouse in late 2023.

Tom Reid, Nature Trust of BC:

- The West Coast Conservation Land Management Program is a partnership that includes the Nature Trust of BC, Ducks Unlimited, ECCO, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Province, and HCTF.
- The Nature Trust is still very focused in the biosphere region. They acquired the art gallery on the Englishman River Estuary. They are in process of removing the house (repurposing to a new location) and will be doing a complete restoration of the site.
- At the estuary, they have been coming up on the end of a 5-year restoration project
 - Removing the remaining road structures and diking systems that were in the estuary over the last few years
 - Recently finished a project in partnership with Surfside RV Resort. Worked with Nanoose Nation to look at how they can restore shellfish productivity at the site. They will plant marine riparian vegetation on the site with interpretive signs fairly soon.
- One of their larger projects (now in year 3) is a coast-wide estuary monitoring program (15 sites being monitored for ecosystem resilience with climate change). One site is the Englishman Estuary.
 - Website for the project: www.estuaryresilience.ca

- Have also been conducting migratory bird surveys for several years at the Englishman Estuary, collecting juvenile salmonid data, and monitoring migratory shorebirds.
- Still focused on land acquisitions. Looking at other opportunities, specifically the Little Qualicum Watershed.
- Working with the province, they have developed an evaluation framework for high value habitat areas along the coast. They have used this many times over the last few years.
- They also work with VIU's RMOT program, having the students on the beach monitoring the beach closure for dogs, engaging with the public, etc. They have been working with them for 17 years now and provide funding, recognizing that students are on a limited budget.
- Starting to look at the PQB Wildlife Management Area and see if they can do an update to the plan to provide more land use guidance. There should be updates to follow in the coming months.

Steve Adams, Mosaic Forest Management:

- Mosaic's 2021 Sustainability Progress Report will be released in the coming weeks. It was a successful year, with some of the highlights including:
 - 7.9 million seedlings made it into the ground
 - They donated 188 thousand seedlings to organizations in the area
 - They are continuing to support the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Marmot Recovery team effort
 - Donated \$240K to support 17 different salmon programs and the marmot program
 - Donated over \$4,000 to programs and organizations in the area (educational and youth programs, food bank programs, etc.)
 - They nearly have another campground established (on Loon Lake)
 - They will continue with the internship program for First Nation students. They just hired another student this year. Also donated over \$127K toward First Nation scholarships and training programs
- Steve will share the progress report once it has been finalized.

Cheryl Jones, Snaw-naw-as First Nation:

- Expressed gratitude to the members of the Roundtable for the work that they are doing and the support that her Nation has received through their programs.
- The Nation is starting their daycare building this year. It is a \$3.5 billion project and they are working to fundraise the remaining funds for the project.
- The boat ramp will also start this year.
- The campground is 80% done with the building of the new shower building. Working with BC Hydro on this project.
- The lighting is done at the gas station now. They started the process of building a trail last year.
- They will start their waterfront project (near the boat ramp) this year also. This will be a better set up for when they host events – will include a stage and parking.
- Regarding the housing crisis, Nanoose FN has arranged an agreement with BC Housing and will have 5 houses set up this year.

Jannah Stavroff, Community Representative:

- The Area F Official Community Plan process has restarted with consultation. It seems that people are not very engaged via Zoom. Appears they will need to be careful with water moving forward.
 - Things are moving quicker now as they have received restructuring process approval from the province.
- Jannah has been trying to touch base with agriculture stakeholders in the area. The Coombs Farmers Institute has an annual general meeting coming up and there have been changes coming from the province.
 - Seedy Sunday coming up on the 27th also.
- The Good Food Box program (where one can order at-cost or below-cost fruits and vegetables) is moving back into the MABR. The program is based out of Nanaimo and there will be a pickup location at Oceanside Community Church in Errington.

Closing

- The next Roundtable gathering is scheduled for June 3rd, 2022 from 10:00am – 12:30pm at the Oceanside Place Arena.

Appendix A

MABR Roundtable Gathering Vol. 22 Agenda

Friday, March 4th, 2021 from 09:00am to 11:30am
Virtual Meeting via Zoom.

Roundtable contact: Mandy Hobkirk - (250) 709-7678

Objectives

The main objectives of this Roundtable gathering are for participants to:

1. Continue to engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue with one another.
2. Hear from one another about regional/organizational/community updates.
3. Discuss past, present, and future events for the MABR/RI.

AGENDA

Time	Activity
09:00 – 09:10	Welcome/Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Words of welcome• Acknowledgement of First Nation unceded Territory• Around the circle brief introductions• Review and collectively adopt agenda• Reminder of the MABR Roundtable Culture of Engagement
09:10 – 10:20	MABR Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maternity Leave Update – Mandy• 2022 MABR BioBlitz – Mandy• Regional Research, Stewardship, and Citizen Science Open House – Graham• Visiting Student Researcher from Germany – Mandy• KSS Salmonoid and Stream Stewardship Program – Mandy• ECCC Funding – Graham
10:20 – 10:25	Coffee Break/Health Break
10:25 – 11:25	Roundtable member updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What's new with your organization?
11:25 – 11:30	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final reflections• Next Roundtable date and host• Closing words