

October 22, 2020

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to affirm my support for the continued designation of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region.

In 1985, shortly after a 5 year battle to save the oldgrowth rainforest of Meares Island had been won, many local residents geared up for a second stage: the fight to protect the rest of Clayoquot Sound from the ravages of wholesale forest destruction. My personal contribution was to begin photographing this remarkable region for a campaign book, culminating five years later in Clayoquot; On the Wild Side, written by Cameron Young and published by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee. It was an enormous privilege for me to be able to personally visit and explore so many corners and hidden places of the sound. I believe I can honestly claim that, outside of the Native community, there are few who know the region as well as I do.

Not only does Clayoquot sound still hold the largest tracts of “productive” old growth temperate rainforest on Vancouver Island, it also has the most extensive mudflats. These are vitally important as a resting and feeding ground for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. The mudflats of southern Clayoquot Sound are the winter home for the largest number of Dusky Canada Geese north of the US border, and in spring is the most important feeding ground for migratory Whimbrels in British Columbia. Shorebird surveys conducted in the spring of 2020 revealed over 400 of these birds, far more than anywhere else in the province. The mudflats are similarly important for the diminutive Western Sandpiper. Surveys done in 2019 came up with a count of 100,000 Western Sandpipers, doubling the highest number previously recorded.

After the logging issue was largely resolved in 1995, and the area was subsequently declared a UNESCO Biosphere Region, many locals and supporters felt that this added another layer of protection. But today, the need for vigilance is as important as it ever was. Logging of old growth forest continues, albeit at a much reduced level, but given the forest destruction elsewhere on the island, it is still too much according to some. And the continued presence of fish farms is endangering wild salmon through the proliferation of sea lice. I believe that it is very important that Clayoquot Sound remains a designated UNESCO Biosphere Region. It is a reminder to the citizens of British Columbia and the world, that Clayoquot Sound is a very special place. It is my hope that what happens in Clayoquot Sound becomes an example of truly sound stewardship that can be emulated elsewhere. Certainly, such examples are desperately needed in today’s world.

Adrian Dorst