



**TOFINO MUDFLATS**  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Nov 14, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to submit this letter of strong support for the continued designation of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region, established in 2000. The changes that our region has experienced over the last 20 years highlight the value of this designation and the focus it puts on maintaining a sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship between people and place.

Our region has worked together for the past decade to advance the objectives of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve program, and I am writing this letter in my capacity as Chair of the Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Management Area Advisory Committee, a group which represents a variety of community stakeholders committed to promoting effective stewardship of one of our most cherished ecological assets. In addition to active participation in the meetings of the Committee itself, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust has championed a number of initiatives to raise awareness of the WMA among residents and visitors alike, as well as supported ongoing research and monitoring within the WMA.

I have worked as a biologist for many years, and I am well familiar with the common myth of 'wild untouched places' and the need to protect 'pristine' habitats. While there are indeed many truly remote and uninhabited areas in our world, the fact is that places like these are rarely front and center in any discussion about protection or stewardship or management. On the contrary, it is the habitats and ecosystems close to our towns and cities and population centers that we focus on and discuss in a deceptively binary way – they are either completely protected from any incursion or disturbance, or assumed to be compromised. I am constantly frustrated by our collective inability to recognize that we are far better off to think of how we can protect the nature we actually inhabit rather than the nature we never see.

The Tofino Mudflats WMA is one of the most ecologically important areas on Vancouver Island and yet it is also literally the front yard of our entire community. This habitat supports commercial and recreational use, it serves as a seaplane terminal and hosts a coast guard base. Many of our homes and businesses front directly onto the mudflats and it is no exaggeration to say that the entire town of Tofino is built and situated so as to take advantage of this unique natural asset. Despite all this, it only takes a few moments to boat or paddle a little way out into the inlet to be able to turn around and appreciate an entirely different perspective from which it is easy to appreciate how well integrated into the surrounding habitat the town really is. This kind of integration reflects a shared conviction that the community and the environment are not contiguous, but continuous. There is no sense that a boundary exists between town and nature but rather a feeling that it is possible to simultaneously live and work in both at once. To live in a place with jobs and services and amenities and in a healthy natural environment. There is ample historical evidence – much of it really quite recent – that this was not always the case. I strongly feel that the common attitude within our community today to embrace this balance is in large part attributable to the tireless work of many folks over the last few decades to demonstrate that such a balance and relationship between people and place is possible and beneficial. Front and center in the push to cultivate this balance is the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, who through countless community initiatives, funding streams, educational programs and general engagement have demonstrated that healthy communities and healthy habitats are one and the same, and that development and growth need not come at the cost of ecological integrity.

We are proud to support the continued Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere designation, and look forward to participating in the next ten years of activities in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Maftei', written in a cursive style.

Mark Maftei

Chair,  
Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Management Area Advisory Committee