

HEALTH TRAIL



The scenic Health Trail traverses the lower Mt. Elphinstone slopes through emerging old-growth forest, connecting three small isolated parcels that comprise the 139 ha Mt. Elphinstone Provincial Park. Located within the traditional territories of the shíshálh (Sechelt) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) First Nations, the existing park and surrounding mature forest are the focus of a decades-long campaign to create a more resilient 2,137 ha protected area.

This trail crosses several creeks on hand-built foot bridges. It winds through forest renowned for its recreational opportunities, including hiking, trail running, nature walks, mountain biking, wildcrafting, bird watching, and immune-boosting forest bathing. You may catch a glimpse of the resident bears, deer, elk, bobcats, or cougars. There's also a new trail feature called "The Educational Forest Experience," a series of 14 ecological interpretive signs, starting at Trailhead 1, that highlights many plant species and their traditional First Nations uses.

LENGTH & TIME: 8 km one way, 4 – 4.5 hours
DIFFICULTY: Moderate with some steeper sections
ELEVATION GAIN: 100 m
SEASON: Year-round
ACCESS:



Trailhead 1 is found along the B&K Rd. (aka Largo Rd.)
Trailhead 2 is along the Roberts Flume Forest Service Rd.
Trailhead 3, an exit point, is found at the end of this road.
OPTIONS: You can complete sections of the trail by returning the same way or plan a loop with connecting mountain bike trails. To hike the entire trail, consider arranging a car shuttle between Trailheads 1 and 3.

What is the Mt Elphinstone Park expansion proposal?

This proposal seeks to connect the three small isolated "biological islands," which form the 139 ha Mt. Elphinstone Provincial Park, into a single, ecologically robust 2,137 ha core protected area. This initiative, supported by the Sunshine Coast Regional District Bylaw 641, Ancient Forest Alliance, Sierra Club, Wilderness Committee, and many scientists, is included in the Roberts Creek Official Community Plan. Two-thirds of this mature and endangered forest ecosystem remains intact, while one-third has been logged and needs to be restored. Protection could take many forms: an expanded provincial park, an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (Tribal Park), or other conservation designations.

How can you help?

Please write:

+ **George Heyman** *BC Minister of Environment*
env.minister@gov.bc.ca

and cc:

+ **Jeff Juthans** *Land & Resource Specialist*, **jeff.juthans@gov.bc.ca**

+ **Nicholas Simons** *BC NDP MLA* **nicholas.simons.mla@leg.bc.ca**

For more information or to make a donation to help fund ELF's local forest protection campaigns, check out our website at:



loggingfocus.org

"We've got to somehow preserve the recovery of this forest ... even further so that our people can once again enjoy the old growth, the old forest."

— shíshálh hereditary chief (hiwus) Calvin Craigan

Why is an expanded protected area needed?

+ There's nothing like it left here

Lower and mid-elevation forests across the Sunshine Coast have largely been converted to tree farms and clearcuts. The Elphinstone forest is the best of the last. The only sizeable parks on the Lower Sunshine Coast are three mountaintop parks with a different ecosystem and limited year-round accessibility. Overall, parks and protected areas comprise 14.4% of B.C. but only 3.6% of the Sunshine Coast. That's insufficient for our growing communities' recreational needs, tourism, and protection of critical biodiversity.

+ Climate change resiliency

If our communities and forests are to be resilient in the face of a growing climate crisis, we need to protect these last remaining low- elevation natural forests. They are less fire prone, cooler than tree plantations, and store more carbon and water.

+ It's an ecosystem at risk


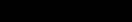
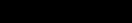
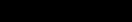

A 2015 conservation review by biologist Wayne McCrory concluded that the three small disconnected park parcels will become "islands of extinction" unless they are joined into a single, core protected area with wildlife corridors connected to other protected areas. No other park in this province is as fragmented. 83% of the proposed expansion area is a blue-listed (vulnerable) ecosystem, a repository for crucial pollinators, plants, and animals that may not survive here otherwise. Much of the area is within the depleted Coastal Western Hemlock dry maritime ecosystem with only 2.3% old growth left in our area. The province's own Old Growth Review Panel recommended in 2020 that ecosystems with less than 10% old forest remaining be deferred, not logged, as they're at "very high and near-term risk of permanent biodiversity loss."

+ It's now or never

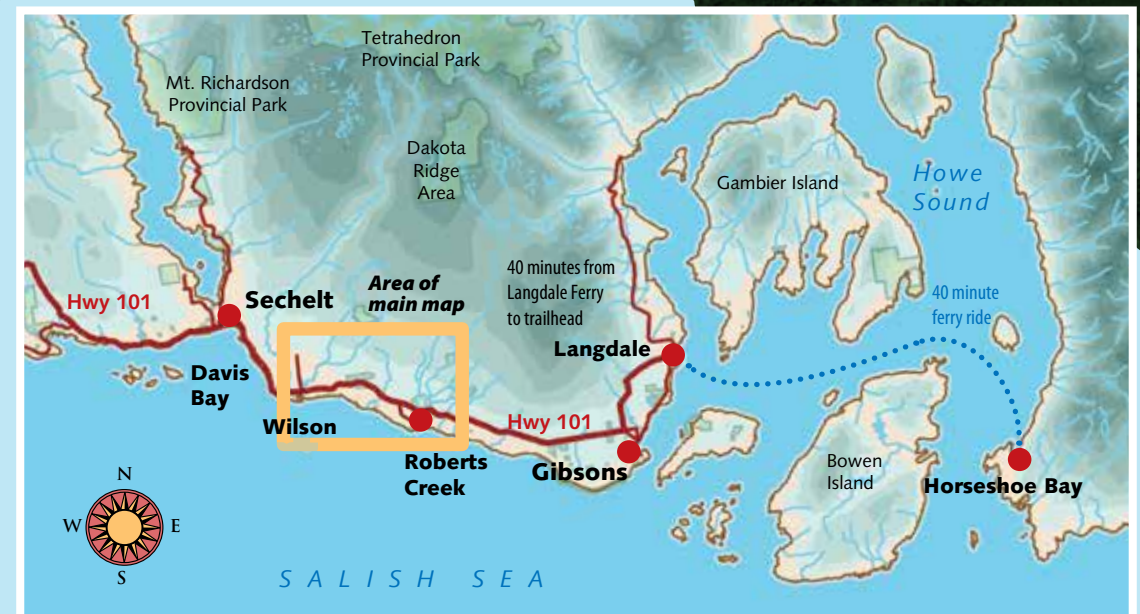
This mature, natural forest should be left to become tomorrow's old growth to replace what's been lost. In 2020, the UN declared this the "Decade of Ecosystem Restoration." It's never been more urgent. Let's start here, with our own ravaged local forests, our own life support systems.


ELPHINSTONE COMMUNITY HEALTH TRAIL

Let's do some Forest Bathing!

-  HEALTH TRAIL
-  Other Existing Trails
-  Access Routes
-  Proposed Mt. Elphinstone Park Expansion Boundaries
-  Mt Elphinstone Provincial Park

Expansion would increase park area from 140 ha to 2,137 ha



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