

Photo to be added for final publishing

Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy Management Plan

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**Squamish
First Nation**



BCParks

Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy Management Plan

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Acknowledgements

The Squamish Nation and BC Parks jointly prepared this management plan. The management planning process was coordinated by Vicki Haberl, Regional Planning Section Head, Lower Mainland Region, Environmental Stewardship and Parks and Protected Areas divisions, Ministry of Environment. Bryan Evans of Dovetail Consulting Inc prepared management plan drafts for review by BC Parks and the Squamish Nation, under contract to BC Parks.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide management of the Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy. The management plan:

- establishes long term strategic direction for the conservancy;
- sets out a vision for the future state of the conservancy;
- addresses current issues affecting that long term vision;
- guides day-to-day management for conservation of natural environments;
- identifies social, ceremonial and cultural uses by the Squamish Nation;
- defines appropriate levels and types of recreational activities and the location and kinds of facilities that will be developed to accommodate those uses; and
- identifies acceptable uses of conservancy resources.

1.2 Planning Area

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy is approximately 1,112 hectares in size and is adjacent to the northern boundary of Tantalus Provincial Park in south western British Columbia. The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy represents approximately 12 per cent of the 9,164 hectare Esté-tiwilh Kwékwayex Kwelháynexw ta Skwúwú7mesh Temixw, or Squamish Nation Wild Spirit Place, on the west side of the Squamish River between the Ashlu and Elaho watersheds. See Figures 1 and 2.

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy is also adjacent to Yelhixw, a Squamish Nation village site at the confluence of the Squamish River and Ashlu Creek.

1.3 Planning Process

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy falls within the traditional territory of the Squamish Nation. Under the Squamish Nation – British Columbia *Collaborative Agreement for the Management of Protected Areas in Squamish Nation Traditional Territory*, the parties have committed to joint development and/or review of protected area management plans. The Ministry of Environment and Squamish Nation have jointly developed this conservancy management plan consistent with the collaborative management agreement.

A Terms of Reference jointly developed by BC Parks and the Squamish Nation has guided this conservancy management planning process. Bryan Evans of Dovetail Consulting Inc. prepared management plan drafts with input from BC Parks and Squamish Nation representatives. Following completion of a complete first draft, agency, stakeholder and other First Nation review of this management plan was undertaken and revisions made as necessary to complete this management plan.

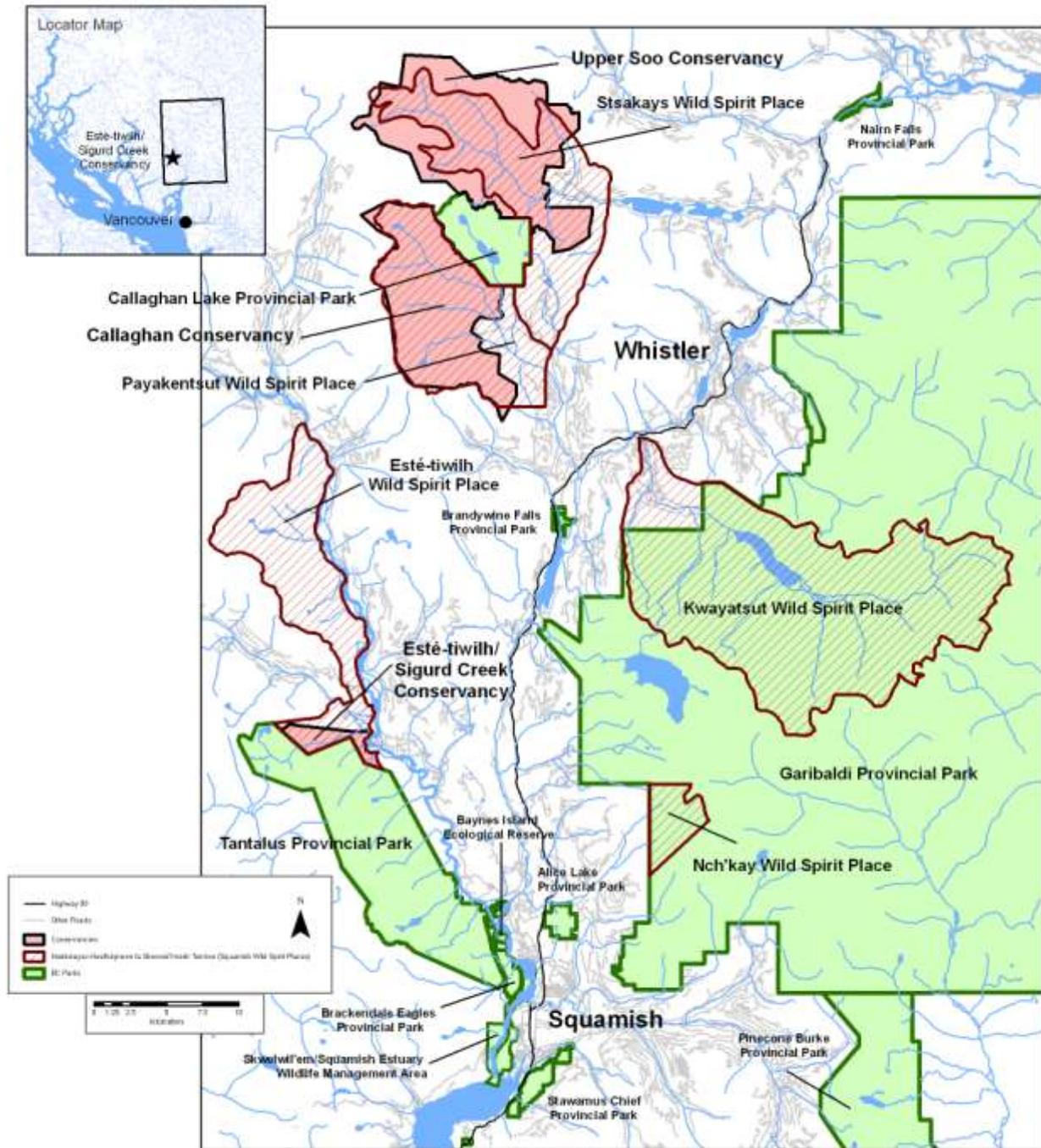


Figure 1: Regional Context Map

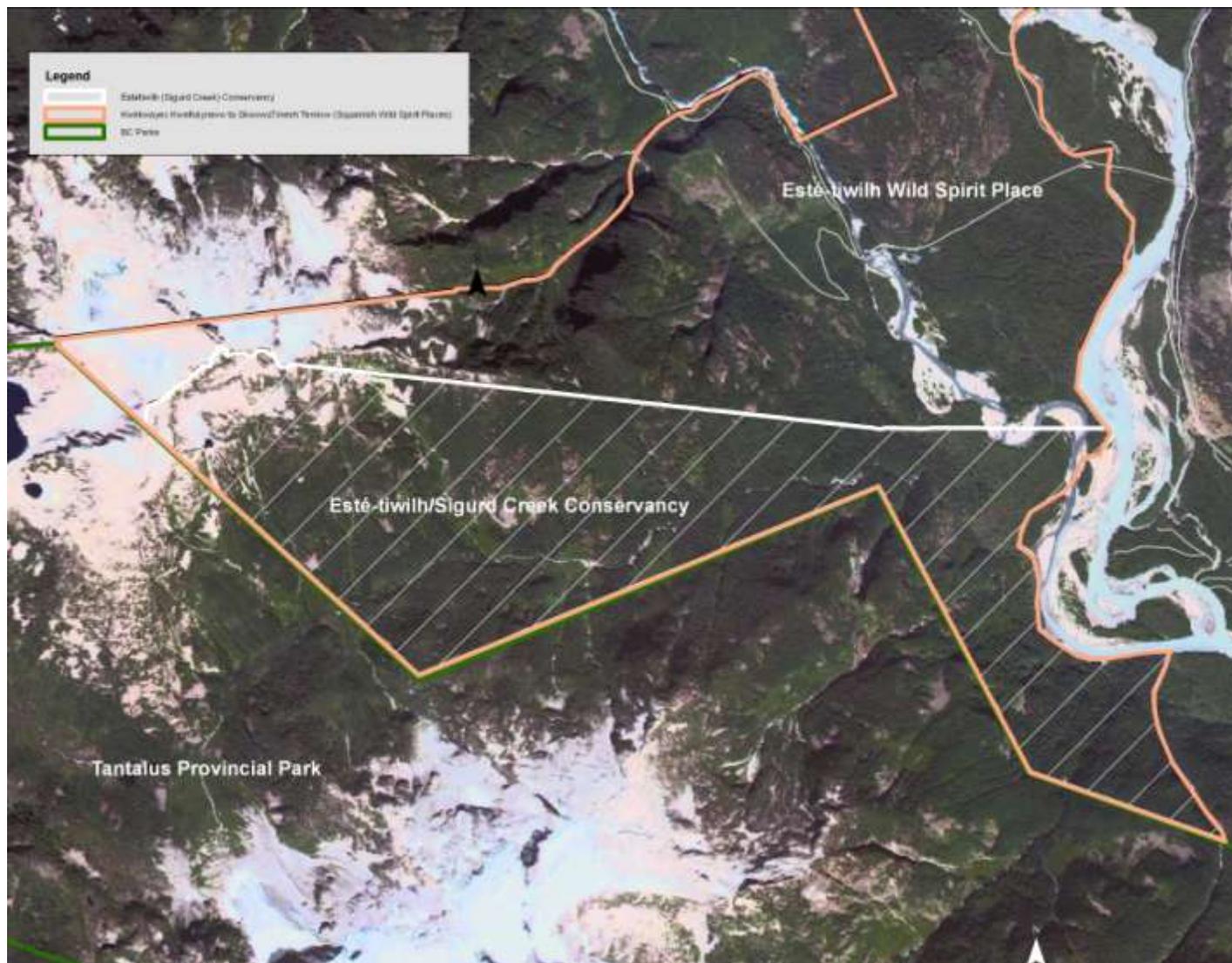


Figure 2: Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy

1.4 Management Commitments

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy is within the traditional territory of the Squamish Nation. In 2001, the Squamish Nation completed their land use plan, *Xay Temixw: Sacred Land*. The Squamish Nation land use plan identified several areas in Squamish Nation traditional territory to be set aside as protected areas, called *Kwékwayex Kwelháynexw ta Skwxwú7mesh Temixw*, also known as Squamish Nation Wild Spirit Places, or WSPs.

In June 2007, the Squamish Nation and British Columbia entered into the *Agreement on Land Use Planning between the Squamish Nation and the Province of British Columbia (Squamish Nation LUPA)*. Under the agreement, the Province agreed to establish new protected areas, including Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy. The agreement sets out the purposes and objectives for the conservancy, as follows:

- The primary objectives for the conservancy shall be the protection and maintenance of the biological diversity and natural environments, including wildlife habitat values, the preservation and maintenance of social, ceremonial and cultural uses by the Squamish Nation, and the protection and enhancement of any cultural and heritage resources.
- The conservancy will be collaboratively managed between the Province, pursuant to its provincial conservancy legislation, and the Squamish Nation, pursuant to its equivalent Squamish Nation legislative or administrative mechanisms through a Collaborative Management Agreement to be entered into between British Columbia and the Squamish Nation.
- Industrial logging, mining, hydro-electric development, new roads, and commercial development in the conservancy are prohibited.
- Squamish Nation and British Columbia may, by mutual agreement, identify development activities that they will recommend are acceptable uses within the conservancy.

In June 2007, the Squamish Nation and British Columbia entered into a *Collaborative Agreement for the Management of Protected Areas in Squamish Nation Traditional Territory* (the collaborative management agreement) to promote collaboration and communication between them in the management and planning of protected areas in Squamish Nation traditional territory. The development of this management plan has been guided by, and is consistent with, the Squamish Nation LUPA and the collaborative management agreement. Where there is a discrepancy between this plan and the Squamish Nation LUPA and collaborative management agreement, the latter will take precedence.

1.5 Legislative Framework

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy was established in 2008, under Schedule E of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

The management and development of Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy will be based upon land use and collaborative management agreements between British Columbia and the Squamish Nation (as described below), the *Protected Areas Act of British Columbia*, the *Park Act*, the *Park, Conservancy*

and Recreation Area Regulations, Provincial and Squamish Nation policies, the role of the conservancy in the overall system of provincial parks and protected areas in British Columbia, and this management plan.

Section 8 of the *Park Act* directs that any interest in land within a conservancy must be authorized by a park use permit. Section 9 directs that most uses of a natural resource in a conservancy must be authorized by a park use permit. A park use permit can only be issued if the use or activity will not hinder, restrict, prevent or inhibit the development or use of the conservancy in accordance with the four reasons for setting aside a conservancy, as follows:

- the protection and maintenance of their biological diversity and natural environments;
- the preservation and maintenance of social, ceremonial and cultural uses of First Nations;
- the protection and maintenance of their recreation values; and,
- to ensure that development and use of their natural resources occurs in a sustainable manner consistent with the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) and(c).

1.6 Management Issues

Key management issues for the conservancy are as follows:

- Continuation of Squamish Nation cultural uses and traditional resource harvesting activities
- Conservation of native biodiversity
- Providing visitor information
- Maintenance of water quality
- Management of recreation activities
- Management of tenures and park use permits

Objectives and strategies to address these issues are outlined in section 3.3.

2.0 Roles and Values of the Conservancy

2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

The primary role of the conservancy is to protect an important area identified by the Squamish Nation as a Kwékwayex Kwelháynexw ta Skwxwú7mesh temixw, or Squamish Nation Wild Spirit Place. The conservancy further supports the backcountry recreational values and uses of Tantalus Provincial Park and the Sigurd Creek area.

2.2 Cultural Heritage

Values

Traditional use in the Sigurd Creek watershed specifically is not well documented although it is well known that Squamish Nation hunters accessed higher elevation forests and mountains in the area to hunt, especially for deer and mountain goat. Mountains and higher elevation lakes and forests are important landscapes for cultural journeys and spiritual quests, and are used for training Squamish Nation youth in traditional cultural practices.

Skwxwú7mesh Chiyaxw represents Squamish Nation traditional laws governing lands and resource use and management, as well as Squamish Nation cultural and spiritual uses. Skwxwú7mesh Chiyaxw will guide Squamish Nation members' cultural and traditional renewable resource harvesting activities in the conservancy. These activities include:

- gathering traditional Squamish Nation foods;
- gathering plants used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes;
- hunting, trapping, and fishing;
- cutting selected trees for ceremonial or artistic purposes;
- conducting, teaching or demonstrating ceremonies of traditional, spiritual or religious significance;
- seeking cultural or spiritual inspiration; and,
- construction and use of shelters (such as camps and longhouses) essential to the pursuit of the above activities.

Role

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy contributes to the protection of cultural features and landscapes of importance to the Squamish Nation. The conservancy is one component of the larger Squamish Nation Esté-tiwilh Wild Spirit Place (WSP), identified in the Squamish Nation's land use plan, *Xay Temixw: Sacred Land* (2001). Wild Spirit Places were identified and designated for the purpose of protecting pristine landscapes for their natural qualities and for the continuation of Squamish Nation cultural practices and traditional resource harvesting activities that depend on remoteness, naturalness and solitude.

2.3 Biological Diversity and Natural Environment

Values

Given its small size (1,112 hectares), the Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy does not contribute significantly to representation of the ecological diversity of the region. The conservancy does contribute to protecting Sigurd Creek as an intact watershed, which is rare in south western British Columbia.

The conservancy also adds to regional scale biodiversity protection provided by the complex of adjacent or contiguous protected areas that includes Tantalus Provincial Park, Baynes Island Ecological Reserve, Brackendale Eagles Provincial Park and Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary Wildlife Management Area. Collectively, these areas represent 14,043 hectares of protected or specially managed lands in the lower Squamish River watershed.

Sigurd Creek and numerous smaller creeks drain east through the conservancy into the Squamish River. The terrain is steep with fast current flows, especially following periods of heavy precipitation. Fisheries values are considered low. Water quality and aquatic habitat information is not available for the conservancy at this time.

Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy lies within the Southern Pacific Ranges Ecosection and contains portions of the Alpine, Mountain Hemlock and Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zones. Vegetation in the conservancy is typical of these zones and ranges from alpine parkland to large coastal western hemlock and western redcedar stands. Most of the forests in the conservancy have been subject only to natural disturbance and are considered old growth.

Detailed vegetation inventory is not available for the conservancy area and it is therefore not feasible to identify whether rare or unique species, values or plant communities are present. There are no rare or endangered species or plant communities identified within the conservancy by the Conservation Data Centre (CDC). However, it is possible that due to the old growth values of the conservancy and the extent of development on adjacent lands that rare or unique values and plant communities may occur here.

Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy contributes to or contains the habitat requirements for species associated with its three biogeoclimatic zones in coastal British Columbia. These species include Grizzly Bear, American Black Bear, Grey Wolf, Wolverine, Mountain Goat, Elk, and Black-tailed Deer. Other species such as Tailed Frog, Spotted Owl, and Marbled Murrelet may also occur within the conservancy. Some of the species mentioned above are listed as Red or Blue listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Many of the wildlife species will utilize habitat both within and outside the conservancy, and adjacent Tantalus Provincial Park. Management of wildlife values will, therefore, need to be based on cross-boundary values.

Role

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy contributes to important conservation values:

- The conservancy contributes to protection of habitat for species such as American Black Bear, Elk, Black-tailed Deer, Cougar, Mountain Goat, Grey Wolf, Grizzly Bear and Wolverine.
- The conservancy provides known secure routes for Grizzly Bear from spring/summer forage locations to the salmon forage locations on the Squamish River floodplain.
- Portions of the eastern slopes of Tantalus are recognized as potential Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet habitat, which may extend into Sigurd Creek and the conservancy.
- The conservancy contains some mid and high elevation old-growth forests.
- The conservancy augments the existing Tantalus Provincial Park by protecting an additional 1100 hectares and completing the protection of the Sigurd Creek watershed.

2.4 Recreation

Values

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy, and the adjacent areas within Tantalus Provincial Park, offer opportunities for hiking, backcountry camping, mountaineering, and backcountry skiing. The conservancy is within easy access of the town of Squamish, the Resort Municipality of Whistler, and the heavily populated areas of the Lower Mainland.

The conservancy provides hiking access on the Sigurd Creek Trail through an undeveloped old growth forested valley. The Sigurd Creek trail provides access to a route up Sigurd Peak, as well as scenic viewpoints of the Squamish River valley, and the impressive Crooked Falls. The Sigurd Creek Trail also connects with a trail leading into the Pelion and Ossa Mountains area within Tantalus Park. This is one of the popular mountaineering areas of the park.

The Sigurd Creek Trail is currently a rough trail, offering the opportunity for trail improvements, and potential trail connections to the Pokosha Creek area, and to Sigurd Lake. Improvements for wilderness campsites should also be considered in the future to support approved recreation activities in the area. Due to the small size of the conservancy, a hut or shelter is not permitted.

Role

Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy contributes to the collective tourism values within the Sea-to-Sky Corridor and the communities of Squamish and Whistler. The conservancy also enhances the recreational and tourism values of the adjacent Tantalus Provincial Park by providing additional protected landscapes and alternative backcountry access to the northern portions of the park.

2.5 Development and Use of Natural Resources

Values

Other than recreation tenures, there are no commercial or industrial uses of natural resources within the conservancy.

Role

The conservancy is dedicated to conservation, cultural use, and low intensity backcountry recreation with limited infrastructure development. No development of natural resources is contemplated in this management plan.

2.6 Priorities/Balance of Conservancy Roles

As is stated in the *Agreement on Land Use Planning between the Squamish Nation and British Columbia*, the primary objectives for the conservancy are the protection and maintenance of the biological diversity and natural environments, including wildlife habitat values; the preservation and maintenance of social, ceremonial and cultural uses by the Squamish Nation; and, the protection and enhancement of any cultural and heritage resources. Public use and enjoyment is an important role for the conservancy, and low intensity, self-propelled recreational use will be encouraged, consistent with maintaining the ecological and cultural values of the conservancy.

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Vision

The Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy is managed in a manner that protects and maintains the wilderness qualities of the Sigurd Creek watershed. The conservancy provides a sanctuary for social, ceremonial and cultural use by the Squamish Nation, as well as for low impact backcountry recreational use and enjoyment of the public. The area is managed to minimize impacts to natural and cultural values, while offering opportunities to enjoy and appreciate those values.

3.2 Zoning

The entirety of Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy is zoned as a Cultural Zone to protect landscapes that are important for First Nations cultural values and uses.¹ Low impact, non-mechanized recreation is compatible with this zone type.

No facilities will be developed at this time in the conservancy. Some cultural infrastructure may be developed at a later date, e.g., Squamish Nation camp, or marker poles.

¹ Where there is a discrepancy between the zone management direction and this management plan, this management plan will take precedence.

3.3 Management Objectives and Strategies

This section compiles the management issues, objectives, and strategies for the conservancy. See also Appendix A (Appropriate Uses Table).

Issues	Objective	Strategies	Priority
Continuation of Squamish Nation cultural uses and traditional resource harvesting activities	Protect the natural values and aesthetic qualities that support the cultural use and renewable resource harvesting activities of First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain ongoing communication and working relationships with the Squamish Nation consistent with the <i>Collaborative Agreement for the Management of Protected Areas in Squamish Nation Traditional Territory</i>. • Develop strategies that will promote and enable traditional activities by present and future generations of the Squamish Nation. • Work in a co-operative manner with agencies involved in adjacent development to incorporate appropriate management considerations for protection of conservancy values. • Ensure any proposed development or facilities (e.g. Squamish Nation camp or cabin) in the conservancy are aesthetically pleasing, culturally appropriate and blend with the natural environment. 	H
Conservation of native biodiversity	Maintain natural ecological processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any new trails or trail upgrades are sensitive to the critical habitats and requirements of wildlife. • Review the Tantalus Provincial Park fire management plan and revise as required to include the conservancy. • Work in a co-operative manner with other agencies to manage biodiversity values that extend across conservancy boundaries. Encourage agencies to adopt appropriate management techniques that will not adversely impact conservancy values. • Work in a co-operative manner with agencies, organizations and individuals to identify, research and monitor wildlife, particularly rare or endangered species, wildlife habitats or plant communities. 	H

Issues	Objective	Strategies	Priority
Providing visitor information	Build support and understanding of the cultural and conservation values of the conservancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor information will identify the Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy as a component of the larger Esté-tiwilh Kwékwayex Kwelháynexw ta Skwxwú7mesh Temixw (Squamish Nation Wild Spirit Place). • The conservancy will be included in standard BC Parks information brochures, maps and agency website as well as through Squamish Nation communication materials. • All signage and communication materials should reflect the collaborative management of the conservancy by the Squamish Nation and BC Parks and have a ‘branding’ as a Squamish Nation Kwékwayex Kwelháynexw ta Skwxwú7mesh Temixw (Squamish Nation Wild Spirit Place). Where appropriate, Squamish Nation language should be included in communication materials. • Interpretive themes will focus on the remote, undisturbed qualities of the Sigurd Creek valley and the importance of the area for First Nation cultural uses as a Squamish Nation Kwékwayex Kwelháynexw ta Skwxwú7mesh Temixw (Squamish Nation Wild Spirit Place) as well as the value of the area for backcountry recreation dependent on a pristine environment. 	H
Maintenance of water quality	Maintain fresh water systems in their natural condition free from contaminants or pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sanitary facilities (e.g. pit toilets) are properly designed, located and managed within the conservancy. • Ensure any conservancy developments are constructed and maintained so as to minimize soil erosion and surface water flow. • Provide the public with information on minimizing impacts to water quality in the backcountry. • Prohibit fish stocking in alpine or sub-alpine lakes. 	M

Issues	Objective	Strategies	Priority
Management of recreation activities	Continue to provide backcountry hiking and skiing opportunities in a wilderness setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain, and if necessary improve, the existing Sigurd Creek trail. Consider future development of trail connections to Sigurd Lake and to Pokosha Creek. • Monitor recreation use and, where necessary, take steps to manage the type, amount and location of recreation activities where, in the opinion of BC Parks or the Squamish Nation, the aesthetic, cultural and/or ecological values of the conservancy are being negatively impacted. • Use and visitation to the conservancy will not be actively promoted other than road access signage. Appropriate highway signage will be provided to clarify road access to the conservancy. Signage within the conservancy will be minimized, other than at the trailhead and/or parking lot access. • Construction of backcountry recreational huts or cabins will be prohibited. 	M
Management of tenures and park use permits	Ensure that resource use tenures protect the conservation, cultural and recreational values within the conservancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in a co-operative manner with other agencies to manage conservation, recreation and cultural values that extend beyond conservancy boundaries. Encourage agencies to adopt appropriate land management techniques that will not adversely impact conservancy values. • Retain self-propelled (non-motorized) recreation tenures if applicable. • Trail maintenance will be encouraged with local stewardship groups. 	M

4.0 Plan Implementation

4.1 Collaborative Relationship

Squamish Nation and BC Parks will work together to plan, administer and manage the conservancy through application of the laws, policies, and regulations under the *Park Act*, relevant Squamish Nation policies, and consistent with the *Collaborative Agreement for the Management of Protected Areas in Squamish Nation Traditional Territory*.

4.2 Management Strategies

The strategies are listed by priority in section 3.3. Implementation of these actions is dependent upon the availability of BC Parks and Squamish Nation financial and staff resources, and will be affected by the needs of other parks and protected areas in the Lower Mainland Region. Approval of this management plan does not constitute approval of funding for implementation. In addition, BC Parks and Squamish Nation may seek corporate, community or interagency partnerships to implement many of the actions in this management plan.

The conservancy administrative office will be located at the Environmental Stewardship and Parks and Protected Areas divisions, Lower Mainland Region Office. Park operations will be based at the nearest field office.

4.3 Future Planning

Although no specific future planning is envisioned beyond the term of this management plan, BC Parks and Squamish Nation will coordinate the review of the management plan as required. Currently, Squamish Nation is involved in treaty negotiations with senior levels of government. Squamish Nation's contributions to this management plan are recognized and understood to be without prejudice to future treaty negotiations. Once formal treaty agreements have been reached with the Squamish Nation, this management plan will be reviewed to determine whether it is in compliance with treaty. If it is not in compliance, then this management plan will be revised accordingly. Changes will be made through an open public review process to build understanding of what these changes mean to the conservancy and its use.

Appendix A – Appropriate Uses Table

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses	Comments
First Nation Traditional Use ²	Y	
Hunting	Y	
Fishing	Y	
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	N	Not permitted
Mountain Biking	N	Not permitted
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y	MoE will advise Squamish Nation if guided hunting occurs in the conservancy.
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	Y	
Guide Outfitting – non mechanised (mountaineering, backpacking)	Y	
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N	Not permitted
Heli-skiing	N	Not permitted
Heli-hiking	N	Allowed only for duration of pre-existing commercial recreation tenure.
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N	Not permitted.
Backcountry Huts	N	Not permitted
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N	Not permitted
Road Access	N	No roads are permitted in the conservancy
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N	Not permitted.
Off-road Access (motorised)	N	Not permitted
Motorised Water Use	N	Not permitted
Recreational Aircraft Access	N	Not permitted
Commercial Aircraft Access	N	Not permitted
Commercial Filming	Y	Subject to management plan objectives and strategies
Fire Management	Y	Subject to fire management plan
Forest Insect/Disease Control	Y	
Noxious Weed Control	Y	
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	Y	
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M	
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M	

Y allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

N not allowed M: may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N1 allowed for expressed management purposes only

² Traditional use includes gathering traditional foods; gathering plants used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes; hunting, trapping, and fishing; cutting selected trees for ceremonial or artistic purposes; conducting, teaching or demonstrating ceremonies of traditional, spiritual or religious significance; seeking cultural or spiritual inspiration; and, construction and use of shelters (such as camps and longhouses) essential to the pursuit of the above activities.