

25th Anniversary Special Feature



Extra! Extra! Read All About It! NALT Turns 25 in 2020

And, we could not have done it without your support

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MILESTONES

The Lead-up

1991 – Barbara Hourston gathers a group of like-minded citizens who form the *Friends of Linley Valley*, later changed to *The Linley Valley Park Committee*, to search for ways to prevent development in the valley and secure parkland. Presentations are made to Nanaimo City Council and community agencies and interests.

OCTOBER 1, 1994 – The *Linley Valley Park Committee* organizes a workshop at Malaspina University. Tyhson Banighan of Turtle Island Earth Stewards takes us through the steps on how to set up a land trust. Several Vancouver Island groups attend.

1995 to 1997- Over the next two years, Cowichan Community Land Trust, the Nanaimo and Area Land Stewards (later changed to our present name), the Habitat Acquisition Trust (in Victoria), Comox Valley Land Trust, and The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) are formed.

NALT is Born: The First 10 Years

APRIL 19, 1995 – NALT becomes a registered Society, is granted the authority to hold conservation covenants registered on a property's title; and shortly after, receives charitable status. First AGM is held in June 1995.

FEBRUARY 1996 – NALT hosts a second gathering at Malaspina

University, which attracts 32 BC land trusts, to form the Land Trust Alliance of BC (LTABC).

SPRING 1996 – NALT starts work to develop a campaign to preserve natural parkland in the Linley Valley.

FALL 1996 – NALT co-signs its first conservation covenant with the Rosewall-Bonell Land Trust, for a small but significant property in Errington, adjacent to Little Mountain. Over the next 19 years, NALT will sign off on seven more covenants (with two others pending), and two voluntary stewardship agreements within the Nanaimo area.

1997 to 2000 – NALT assists The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) with fundraising for the purchase of South Winchelsea Island; and subse-



Founding Board Director, Barbara Hourston, Addresses NALT Members at an AGM.



The Project 2000 E-team Poses on a Large Woody Debris Structure They Installed in Departure Creek

NALT's mission is: *To support, promote and protect the natural values of land and water in our area.*

Nina Evans-Locke Receives the First PROJECT 2000 Stewardship Award



quently signs on to co-hold a covenant on the island with the Islands Trust Fund.

July 1997 – Initial funding is approved to start PROJECT 2000, an ambitious stream stewardship initiative designed and coordinated by Gail Adrienne for NALT. This project, carried out over four years in partnership with the City of Nanaimo, will encompass 10 creeks and streams, and 4 lakes—from Bloods Creek in Lantzville to Richards Creek in Cinnabar Valley. In each watershed, it will include door-to-door information drops, followed by community information meetings, organizing stream stewardship groups and streamside activities, Streamkeeper and Wetlandkeeper workshops, and presentation of

stewardship plaques to participating landowners. Funding sources include Environment Canada, Harmac, Canada Trust, Central Island Fisheries Partnership, and the Federal Summer Career Placement program.

September 28, 2007 - PROJECT 2000 organizes the first City-wide Rivers Day, with neighbourhood activities on Walley Creek, Departure Creek, the Cat Stream and Richards Creek.

October 1997 – NALT opens its first (very small) office on Victoria Road, to operate PROJECT 2000; Board meetings are still held in Barbara Hourston's front room and other locations donated by members.

April 22, 1998 – PROJECT 2000 organizes the first Earth Day event in Cappy Yates Park.

June 1999 – PROJECT 2000 leads interpretive walks to see the Chum salmon run along the Millstone River estuary as a celebration of Environment Week. More than 700 school children participate from Monday to Friday; more show up on the weekend with their families.

Most-asked question: "Is this the first time there has been a salmon run in the Millstone?" Uh, not exactly... The walks are repeated in 2000.

1998-2000 – NALT assists TLC to fundraise for a 40-acre property on a lower reach of the Nanaimo River, followed by an adjacent 100-acre property, subsequently leased to the RDN for a Regional Park.

PROJECT 2000 Cat Stream Stewardship Meeting



1999-2000 – NALT organizes a number of successful workshops and events, often in partnership with other organizations—including a *Fools for Nature* dance, with the popular band *Wunderbread*—to raise both funds and community awareness. We also participate in other community events, such as the VIEX and the grand opening of the Woodgrove Mall expansion.

March 2000 – NALT moves to a more up-scale location—a heritage house on Skinner St—and opens a Stewardship Resource Centre.

July 2000 – NALT hosts its first annual summer picnic for members and supporters at the Van Kerkoerle property in Cassidy





Barbara Hourston Helps to Serve up a BBQ Salmon Lunch at the Annual Summer Picnic

August 2000 –With a grant from Environment Canada, NALT begins a Conservation Covenants Project coordinated by Sarah Bonar.

January 2001 – NALT begins the Linley Valley (Section 13) acquisition process with an appraisal and an “option to purchase” agreement with the owners. An agreement in principle is reached in June, and the Linley Valley Acquisition Campaign is officially launched on July 6th, 2001. NALT’s goal is to raise \$500,000 of the purchase price. For the next two years, this becomes NALT’s main focus—collecting support signatures, financial pledges and some donations. Many public events and presentations are held, including the *Artists in the Valley* event in the spring of 2002—when 35 artists create and donate works depicting the valley, followed by a month-long touring art auction moving from Parkville to Ladysmith, and a grand finale in Nanaimo. It raises more than \$10,000.

Spring 2001 – NALT ‘s fledgling native plants nursery moves from the back yard of the Stewardship Centre to a portion of the Van Kerkoerle property in Cassidy; volunteers begin to expand stocks through propagation, salvage and donations.

October 2001 to September 2003 - With funding for the Covenants Project ended, NALT launches a new project: the Business Stewardship Project, with a focus on automotive businesses in the Diver Lake area, funded again by Environment Canada. Sarah Bonar is again hired as project coordinator. A second phase of this project will be funded for another year, beginning in September 2002.



Natural Abundance Native Plant Nursery Volunteers

March 1st, 2002 – The house on Skinner Street has been sold, and NALT moves again--to a generous sized utilitarian office space at 140 Wallace Street.

October 2002 – The City of Nanaimo agrees to contribute \$1.563M towards the Linley Valley purchase of Section 13 if NALT raises the other \$500,000 by March 31, 2003. This deadline is later extended to June 30, 2003, and NALT achieves its goal by that date! This success gains NALT a reputation as a credible and capable organization—one that accomplishes what it sets out to do.

February to April 2003 – NALT and the RDN partner to carry out an abbreviated version of PROJECT 2000—raising watershed protection awareness on Haslam Creek that runs through Cassidy, and the creeks of Cedar, with community meetings in those areas.



Summer 2003 – As the Linley Valley acquisition campaign comes to a finish, hikers on Mount Benson become alarmed by recent logging near the summit, and appeal to NALT to “save” the mountain. NALT initially resists, still busy with final closure of the previous campaign; then agrees to take on the challenge to secure four lots totalling 523 acres of privately owned property near the summit.

Fall 2003 – NALT meets with the RDN, who agrees to cover the cost of two appraisals: a real estate valuation and timber valuation for Mount Benson. Both come in surprisingly low, and meetings with the owners begin.

Spring 2004 – A *Coalition to Save Mount Benson* (later changed to *the Mount Benson Legacy Group*), comprised of NALT and seven other local groups, is formed to develop strategies for acquisition of the properties; NALT agrees to take on the administrative role.



A Group of Hikers Pauses to Survey Recent Logging on Mt. Benson 2005.

April 2004 – With a small surplus from the acquisition campaign, NALT undertakes the Linley Valley Campaign Phase II, which is essentially watching DL 56 and other properties in the valley for opportunities to secure more parkland, while carrying out ongoing construction and maintenance of trail boardwalks and bridges in DL 56 (BC crown land). This work continues to the present day.

August 2004 – The Nanaimo and Area Land Stewards Society has an official name-change to Nanaimo & Area Land Trust Society (NALT).

October 20, 2004 – The NALT Board approves a motion to formally conduct negotiations with the Mt. Benson property owners, in consultation with others on the *Coalition*. Thus, begins a 3 1/2 year process of off-and-on negotiations—initially between *the Coalition* and the owners; later the RDN and the owners—until a purchase price of \$950,000 is finally agreed on. A formal agreement between the RDN and NALT includes the following key points: NALT and the RDN will each raise half the purchase price; the RDN will hold the property title and be responsible for park management; NALT will hold the conservation covenant on title and be responsible for annual monitoring and related costs. Logging continues on the property for another summer—until NALT insists that it halt or the offer will be withdrawn.

Coming of Age: The Second Decade

2005 – NALT begins a partnership with the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT) to carry out a stewardship project over the next six years that will attempt to protect the last-known small flock of Coastal Vesper Sparrows on the BC coast, which is nesting at the Cassidy Airport. Sadly this project has to be discontinued in 2011, after some years of challenging communications with the airport. The airport expands, and changes its management practices—and the flock disappears.



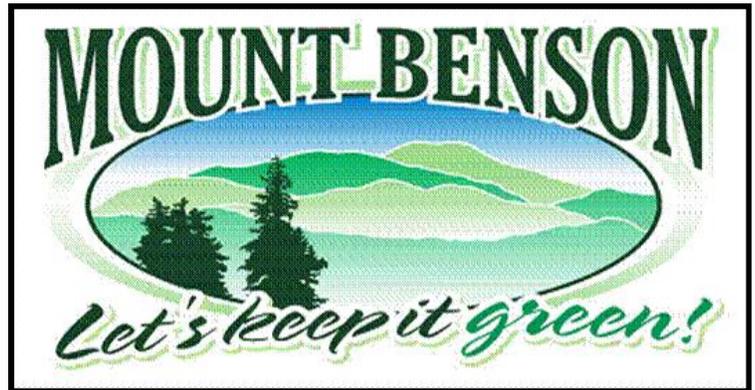
Volunteers of All Ages Pitched in to Build the Linley Valley Boardwalk



Vesper Sparrow and Nestlings - photo Suzanne Beauchesne.

February 2006 – NALT launches the Mount Benson Acquisition fundraising campaign at a community-wide gathering at Bowen Park Auditorium, which includes live music by local musicians featured on the recently-released CD titled *Ode to Mount Benson*, a nostalgic sharing of memoirs, anecdotes and archive photos, and an appeal for donations and pledges. This is the start of many events and activities devoted to raising NALT’s portion of the purchase price for the properties--\$475,000. Some of the more ambitious fundraisers are noted here.

July 16, 2006 and July 29, 2007— With support from the City of Nanaimo, experienced community organizers, and more than 100 volunteers, NALT organizes two annual music festivals called *Music for the Mountain* to raise money for the mountain. The first is successful in every way, and nets \$15,000— plus a flood of donations. Unfortunately, the second event is not so successful, due a mix of factors— including poor weather and fewer ticket sales. It loses money, and we decide not to pursue this demanding venture any longer.



The Run for the Mountain has Raised Tens of Thousands for Mt. Benson Acquisition.



September 2006 – The 1st Annual Run for the Mountain, a 6 km walk/run around Westwood Lake organized by the Running Room’s Manager Mike Thibodeau, raises about \$5,000 for the Mt Benson Campaign. That event has continued every year until the present, adding more funds each year to the Mount Benson Phase II account (now totalling more than \$100,000).

October 26, 2006 – The concept of an annual NALT calendar is launched at a Benson Beer & Burger night at the Windward Pub, with proceeds to go to the Mount Benson Acquisition campaign. The NALT calendar has been produced and marketed by NALT almost every year since—making a modest profit of \$2,000 to \$3,000 each year. In 2013, proceeds are re-allocated to a Nanaimo River initiative.

February 17, 2007 – *Mountain Moments*, a gala dinner and live and silent auction at the Coast Bastion Inn raises about \$20,000.

November 17, 2007 – Internationally renowned artist Fred Peters paints an original acrylic of Mount Benson before a gathered crowd, which is then auctioned off. Fred also provides 40 signed and numbered prints, which are sold by the gallery over the coming months and years, with all proceeds going to Mount Benson. Over time, all the prints are sold, raising a total of more than \$11,000 for Mount Benson acquisitions.

December 2, 2007 – A rally to save Moorecroft camp kicks off a campaign to raise funds, and NALT agrees to support and advise the newly-formed *Friends of Moorecroft*. NALT works with this group and with the RDN for three years, until the RDN takes the lead and moves into a partnership with the Nature Trust of BC.



This Photo of Mount Benson Towering Over Nanaimo’s Harbour, Taken by Michael Vann, was Featured During the Month of August in NALT’s Inaugural Calendar

December 2007 – By the end of the year, about \$325,000 of the funds NALT needs for the purchase Mount Benson has been raised.

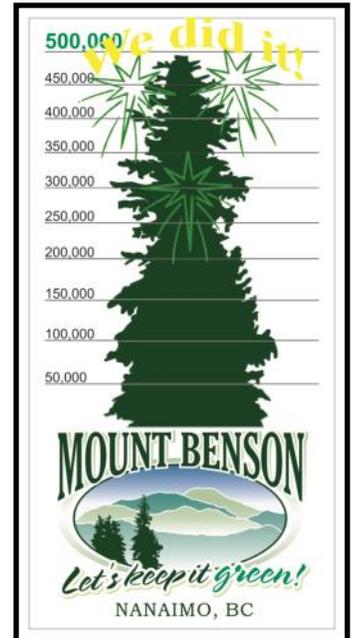


A NALT JCP Crew Builds Bridges at the Parnassian Woods

Spring 2008 – A NALT crew funded by a federal employment grant constructs an eco-friendly greenhouse, shed and office for NALT’s *Natural Abundance Native Plant Nursery* on the Van Kerkoerle property in Cassidy.

July 1, 2008 – With a \$50,000 grant from Mountain Equipment Co-op, NALT achieves its goal of \$475,000 for the acquisition campaign. An outdoor celebration is organized below the mountain, and the final installment cheque handed over to the RDN.

2008 and ongoing - NALT declares a Mount Benson Campaign Phase II, which begins with two federal employment grants that fund field crews coordinated first by Austen Scott, then Paul Chapman, to work on trail upgrades and signage; and continues to accumulate of funds through the annual run and donations, to prepare for further land acquisition to expand the park. This is an ongoing initiative, continuing to the present.



January 2009 and ongoing – NALT and RDN staff and Board representatives work together to develop and adopt a Park Management Plan, and subsequently, to develop and agree on the wording of a Conservation Covenant for the Mount Benson Regional Park.

August 16, 2009 – The annual NALT picnic at the Van Kerkoerle property is combined with a house-warming and tours of the new house built for Peter and Anneke after the home that they built with love and lived in for 40 years was destroyed by a fire in October 2008.

January 2010 – As a result of a letter-writing campaign to the Ministry of Lands and Forests spearheaded by NALT, DL 56 in the Linley Valley becomes one of five BC Crown land properties in the region featuring endangered Coastal Douglas fir habitat that are declared protected.

January 2010 – Barbara Hourston, a NALT founder and original Board Director, steps down from the Board but remains active with NALT.

April 24, 2010 – NALT’s 1st Annual Wild Greens Festival to celebrate and raise awareness of incorporating wild foods into our diet is organized by the Edible Native Plant Project and held at Bowen Park. It is wildly successful, with a crowd of 500 in attendance. That event is now in its 6th year, and attendance has reached 1,200 to 1,400 annually.

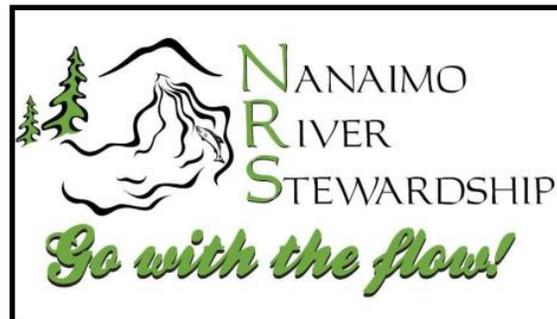


The First Wild Foods Festival Proved Wildly Popular and Has Resulted in an Annual Festival Which is now a Popular Right of Spring in Nanaimo

June 2010 – When Martha Warde dies at the age of 93, NALT is named in her will as heir to her 22-acre property in Qualicum Bay, with the provision that NALT honours her wish to keep the property in its natural, treed state. It is Coastal Douglas fir habitat. Since the ALR status of the property precludes a conservation covenant, NALT drafts a Voluntary Stewardship Agreement and co-signs this document with the estate executor.

January 2011 – The NALT Board moves Nanaimo River to the top of its priority list, and commits to a comprehensive baseline study of the state of the watershed and all of its values. NALT staff submit an application for a federal employment grant to organize a Nanaimo River Symposium in the coming months.

April 16, 2011 - NALT partners with the City of Nanaimo on the 2nd annual Wild Foods Festival, in tandem with Earth Day.



June 18, 2011 – At the official opening of the Moorecroft Regional Park, NALT presents a cheque of \$37,500 to the Nature Trust of BC – all the funds raised by *the Friends of Moorecroft*.

September 23-25, 2011 –The *Nanaimo River Symposium*, organized by NALT and partners and funded in part by a federal employment grant, takes place at Vancouver Island University. The symposium leads to the formation of a Nanaimo River Watershed Working Group.

Fall 2011 – NALT's financial crunch is eased by a large donation of shares from a local couple who are members. A portion of the funds are allocated to an account to begin a Nanaimo River Acquisition Campaign, with the goal to purchase property on the river.

February 12, 2013 – The first meeting of the newly-formed Nanaimo River Watershed Roundtable (NRWR)—an outcome of the Working Group—is held at Beban Park complex, with 27 people representing 14 stakeholders in attendance. A first task identified is to expand that representation.

January 2014 – NALT's annual report to the RDN Board shows that for the combined yearly funding from the RDN and the City (a total of \$60,000) NALT gives back to those two jurisdictions an average financial return of between 7-8 to 1, plus many direct services.

June 5, 2014 – Title to the 22-acre Martha Warde property is transferred to NALT; NALT Board and staff travel to Qualicum Bay to walk the property, view the house, and enjoy an outdoor picnic with the tenant caretakers, Peter and Kerry Mason.

September 24, 2014 – NALT meets with TimberWest/Couverdon to begin discussion about acquisition options around their properties on the Nanaimo River. NALT drafts a proposal for purchase and sets up discussions with the RDN and VIU.

Fall 2013 to March 2015 – Betty Penston, former NALT employee, voluntarily undertakes the mammoth task of documenting NALT's key historical activities and turning points over the past 20 years. The resulting 24-page document is the basis for this *Milestones* handout.



A Group of Gabriola Students Poses Post Planting as Part of the Efforts to Enhance Fish Habitat in Departure Creek.

March-April 2015 – NALT's 20th AGM is held on March 18th, with guest speaker Richard Hebda, curator of the Royal BC Museum talking about the implications of climate change; NALT celebrates its 20th anniversary on April 19th, with a special presentation by ethno-botanist Nancy Turner on the evening of April 21st, focussing on her book *Earth's Blanket*.

December 2015 - Anneke and Peter Van Kerkoerle transfer their Cassidy property, home to NALT's native plant nursery, with a Life Estate registered on title allowing Anneke and Peter to continue to live on the land they love.

January 2016 - Negotiations for the Conservation Covenant on the Mount Benson Regional Park are completed and, soon after, the covenant is registered on title, thereby protecting the natural features of the park in perpetuity.

March 2016 - NALT responds to renewed interest in Streamkeeper Workshops hosting two in 2016 and in subsequent year as well.

April 2016 - NALT's long time Conservation Covenant Specialist, Anne Kerr, steps back from her volunteer position and passes the baton to Bailee McColl.



Fall colours at the NALT nursery



The Mount Benson Regional Park Conservation Covenant ensures the natural values secured through the acquisition campaign.

November 2016 - Management Plans for the Parnassian Woods and Martha Warde properties are completed. Additional information will be added in subsequent years.

2016 - The Nursery Committee continues to expand NALT's Natural Abundance Nursery's profile in the community with workshops, restoration activities, landscaping consultation and plant sales.

March - April 2017 - Water to Earth Month is celebrated throughout the region in a series of events marking the month between World Water Day and Earth Day. With the City of Nanaimo, the RDN and other partners NALT organizes and delivers activities for the celebration.

2017 - NALT supports restoration activities on Departure Creek, Walley Creek and Plum Creek and assists several groups to participate in the RDN Community Water Monitoring Network.

August 2017 - NALT's founding Executive Director, Gail Adrienne, steps down due to injury. Paul Chapman is appointed Acting Executive Director.

Fall 2017 - Planning continues for the Nanaimo Water Stewardship Symposium with the City of Nanaimo, RDN and other partners.

March 2018 - Ava Breakwell is hired as Conservation Covenants Manager.

May 2018 - The NALT Strategic Plan is presented to the membership at the AGM. The plan directs conservation priorities and continuity and succession planning.

June 2018 - NALT's Conservation Covenants portfolio expands to include Siddoo Park and Link Island.



A fieldtrip to the Five Acre Farm as part of the 2018 Water Stewardship Symposium in Nanaimo

October 2018 - Paul Chapman is named Executive Director.

January 2019 - Through Job Creation Partnership funding, NALT hires a team to produce a video on the ecology, etiquette and safety of hiking and other outdoor pursuits—[Hiking - Safe and Sound](#). Completed in 2020, this video is available for community viewing at no cost and is a catalyst for a community discussion of how and why we access our natural spaces.



The well attended 2019 Water Stewardship Symposium in Parksville shared stewardship experiences from federal and local governments as well as the stewardship sector.

February 2019 - As part of a concerned group of community members and organizations, NALT begins to discuss strategies for the protection of privately held properties on the Westwood Ridges.

April 2019 - the Parksville Water Stewardship Symposium is the second in a series presented by NALT, the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC and other partners. This symposium follows a successful event in Nanaimo in 2018 and sets in motion a series to explore the success and challenges of fresh water stewardship in the Nanaimo region and other areas of Vancouver Island.



Nanaimo City Councillors and Staff discuss Walley Creek stewardship with local Streamkeepers.

October 2019 - With the help of the Nanaimo Watershed Health Community of Practice, NALT organizes a tour of local Streamkeeper initiatives for City of Nanaimo Council and Staff. The tour included a visit at a Millstone River farm, an area of the Millstone where the Island Water Fly Fishers have worked to improve water quality, the site of the Walley Creek Streamkeepers recent restoration work and a tour of Departure Creek by Jena-Michel Hanssens of the Departure Creek Streamkeepers.

October 2019 - With RDN Team Watersmart, NALT delivers a wetland restoration workshop on the grounds of the Pacific Cohousing complex in Nanaimo.

November 2019 - NALT adds the Salish View Nature Reserve and Rainbow Island on Quamichan Lake to its Conservation Covenant protected properties.

February 2020 - NALT presents a lecture by Briony Penn, author of *A Year on the Wild Side*, as well as *Stories from the Magic Canoe of Wa'xaid*, her collaboration with Xenaksiala elder Cecil Paul, as part of the ongoing free NALT seminar series.



Attendees enjoy an evening of stewardship stories with author and renowned conservationist Briony Penn.

2020 - By March 2020, requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have affected all aspects of NALT operations and all of the community as well. Throughout it all the NALT nursery remained operational, the NALT office was staffed and plans to produce a 2020 Water Stewardship Symposium, Rivers Day Celebrations, Beck Creek outreach to identify opportunities to improve water quality, stewardship activities on Departure Creek, Walley Creek, Knarston Creek and the Chase River continue. NALT is working with the City of Nanaimo and RDN to control invasive plant species, expand stewardship of wetlands and other fresh water bodies and to promote Team Watersmart activities in schools.