Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

2001-2006 Report Card Summary

Garry Oak Ecosystems and Species at Risk

Garry oak ecosystems are some of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada. They form the most northerly extent of the Garry oak range, which stretches south to California. Different in many ways from Garry oak ecosystems in the United States, those in Canada are only found as patches amidst Douglas-fir forest in a Mediterranean-like rainshadow pocket along the southeastern edge of Vancouver Island, on the adjacent Gulf Islands, and in two isolated patches on the mainland of British Columbia.

Garry oak and associated ecosystems are home to 118 species at risk of extinction in British Columbia. Of these, 31 are nationally endangered or threatened, 8 are of special concern and 3 others are already extirpated in Canada. To date (October 2006), 34 of these species are protected under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA); others will be added once their national status has been assessed. Garry oak plant communities have also been ranked as imperilled in British Columbia.

Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

The Team (aka GOERT) was formed in 1999 to provide a cooperative and coordinated long-term approach to conserving what is left of Garry oak and associated ecosystems and species at risk.

To guide recovery efforts, GOERT produced the National Recovery Strategy for Garry Oak and Associated Ecosystems and their Associated Species at Risk in Canada, 2001 – 2006. This recovery strategy provided a framework to guide the Team's actions, with clearly defined recovery goals, objectives and approaches.

Garry oak ecosystems are a hotspot of biodiversity, including at least:

- ***7 species of reptiles***
- ***7 species of amphibians***
- ***33 species of mammals***
- ***104 species of birds***
- ***694 species of plants***
- ***800+ species of insects and spiders***

Only 5% of Canada's historical Garry oak habitat remains in a near-natural condition.

5-Year Reporting

This summary provides highlights from the 5-Year Report Card, a document created to measure GOERT's progress toward its 2001-2006 goals and objectives. The Report Card also identifies successes and lessons learned over the last five years. Results of the reporting process will form the basis for revising the Team's recovery strategy for the next five years.

Protecting and recovering species at risk: an ecosystem-based approach

The Team's strategy identifies six complementary approaches, designed to protect and restore Garry oak and associated ecosystems. The strategy also ensures the individual needs of each species at risk are addressed.

Eight Recovery Implementation Groups (RIGs) were formed to address these approaches. One RIG also formed special committees to address the removal of invasive species from Garry oak and associated ecosystems and the need for native plant propagation to support restoration efforts.

More than 100 professionals, specialists and volunteers in the Team and its working groups completed many of the steps toward ecosystem recovery outlined in the 2001-2006 Strategy. A number of species at risk strategies are now in place, along with research, planning and restoration initiatives. The Team has also established a core of committed members to drive recovery action in the next five years.

Long-term goals for protection of ecosystems and species at risk

Goal 1:

*Establish **a network of Garry oak and associated ecosystem sites and landscape linkages** that:*

- *is representative of the full range of ecosystem variation across the geographic range in Canada*
- *sustains all the critical processes over the long term*
- *supports the full range of native biota over the long term*

Indicators of Success:

- *Inventoried, mapped and prioritized Garry oak ecosystems*
- *Developed and implemented an ongoing program of restoration and adaptive management of protected sites*
- *Network of protected areas expanded throughout the range of Garry oak and associated ecosystems in Canada*

Goal 2:

***Improve and secure the status of all species at risk in Garry oak and associated ecosystems**, except those that are globally extinct, so that they no longer have at-risk status*

Indicators of Success:

- *National species at risk status reports and recovery strategies completed as required for species in Garry oak and associated ecosystems*
- *Federal, provincial and local governments and land managers are working together to protect species at risk and their habitat*
- *Research, restoration and outreach has contributed to increased protection for species at risk in Garry oak and associated ecosystems through threat reduction, improved management, education, and development of formal protective measures (acquisitions and covenants)*

Three primary objectives ensure that recovery encompasses research, action and communication

Objectives	*Outcomes*
Objective 1: *Develop the information base necessary for ecosystem and species recovery.*	• *Mapped the historical and current extent of Garry oak ecosystems on Vancouver Island* • *Created a list of 118 unprotected Garry oak ecosystem sites and identified 25 priority sites (mapped and inventoried 22 of these sites)* • *Inventoried and monitored species at risk populations at dozens of sites* • *Completed recovery strategies for 20 species listed under the Species At Risk Act* • *Liaised and cooperated with ~100 researchers working on Garry oak ecosystems to promote and facilitate research on priority recovery topics, develop and maintain a database of researchers, hold 3 Research Colloquia, and facilitate networking and information transfer* • *Developed and compiled techniques for growing approximately 100 native plant species, resulting in increased propagation success and production of native plants* • *Created a Decision Support Tool to assist land managers and restoration groups with invasive species removal planning, and produced Field Manuals for species at risk and invasive species (21 invasive species and 37 species at risk included in manuals to date, with additions planned)* • *Developed a system for identifying and classifying Garry oak ecosystems*
Objective 2: *Protect and manage sites and species at risk to minimize immediate losses of ecosystems and species.*	• *Developed and implemented a restoration program that includes support for partners removing invasive plants at ≥53 sites, as well as invasive species removal, photopoint monitoring, vegetation sampling and native species planting at 5 key restoration sites* • *Provided information and support to partners who protected at least 17 sites (total of ~900 hectares) that included Garry oak ecosystems over the 2001-2006 period* • *Worked directly with land managers of parks and other protected areas to develop site-specific management plans and improve protection of Garry oak ecosystems and species at risk*
Objective 3: *Motivate public and private protection and stewardship activities by supplying critical information to the appropriate audiences.*	• *Public and private protection and stewardship of Garry oak and associated ecosystems and species at risk were facilitated by Team outreach staff through several methods, including workshops, meetings and presentations. For example, field and classroom workshops on species at risk were held for staff in three municipalities, resulting in at least 25 policy changes and innovations to protect rare species, such as change in mowing regimes, fencing and interpretive signs* • *Resources were distributed by outreach staff and through the Team's website, including: the Decision Support Tool for Invasive Species Management, Invasive Species and Species at Risk Field Manuals (~900 sets of field manuals are now in the hands of land managers and stewards), informational maps, posters and brochures* • *Outreach staff attended key public events to publicize the need to protect the ecosystems and their species at risk, as well as attending public meetings to work with partners to effect site protection* • *Assisted partners with fundraising and networking, wrote letters of support for community restoration projects and acted as a clearinghouse of information for those working on Garry oak ecosystems recovery*

Summary of the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team's success

True to its beginnings, GOERT has maintained strong support from volunteers and agencies:

- *volunteer time increased from just over 4 person years in 2001-02, to 6 person years in 2005-06*
- *salaried person-years contributed to the Team's work have more than doubled*
- *financial contributions to the Team have more than tripled*

Each Recovery Implementation Group made substantial contributions towards the recovery of Garry oak and associated ecosystems and their species at risk. The completion of three multi-species recovery strategies for 20 species at risk is a significant achievement on its own. These recovery strategies are the first strategies for terrestrial species in Canada to be finalized under the Species at Risk Act. Aside from this accomplishment, the Team also worked in a systematic manner to inventory, monitor, research, restore and protect key sites, while also maintaining high levels of volunteer involvement and increasing public awareness of the importance of Garry oak and associated ecosystems.

GOERT has been remarkably successful in establishing its species at risk recovery program and building an ecologically sound and cost-effective program that addresses protection of the broader ecosystems on which these species depend. GOERT has collected necessary data, tested adaptive management techniques, and created the tools and networks necessary to protect Garry oak and associated ecosystems and to begin species at risk recovery action.

With recovery tools and partnerships in place and a strong organizational structure established, GOERT is ready to move forward into the next phase of on-the-ground recovery action.

For more details on the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team or the 5-Year Report Card, please visit GOERT's website at: www.goert.ca or email us at info@goert.ca.

This report was prepared by Shyanne Smith, RIG Coordinator for GOERT, with the assistance of Kaaren Lewis and with contributions from a number of past and present GOERT members, contractors and volunteers. Special thanks to: Pat Boyle, Laura Byrne, Carmen Cadrin, Trudy Chatwin, Brenda Costanzo, Tim Ennis, Matt Fairbarns, Marilyn Fuchs, Michelle Gorman, Louise Goulet, Rob Hagel, Jennifer Heron, Fred Hook, Chris Junck, Jan Kirkby, Ted Lea, Carolyn Masson, Mike Meagher, Moralea Milne, Eileen Palmer, Dave Polster, Brian Reader, Carolyn Stewart, Ardice Todosichuk, and Lynn Woodgate. Many thanks to you all for your help, and to all of GOERT's members and volunteers for making this program such a success. The financial support provided to GOERT over the years by the Habitat Stewardship Program, Parks Canada Agency, BC Ministry of Environment, Habitat Conservation Trust and several private donors is gratefully acknowledged.

Canada
The Habitat Stewardship Program of the Government of Canada

Parks Canada Parcs Canada

British Columbia