

**STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
(September 30, 2011 – Rath Trevor Park, Parksville)**

**SPPAC MEMBERS:** Tawney Lem (Chair), Barb Baker, Philip Stone, David Campbell, Peggy Carswell, Nick Page, Allison Mewett, Erik Holbek

**BC Parks:** Andy Smith

**Guest Speakers/Presenters:** NVI Mine – Robert Behrendt, Ivor McWilliams  
Friends of Strathcona Park - Kel Kelly

**Recorder:** John Milne

**Absent:** Paul Erickson, Shyla Wiest

**Public** – Karl Stevenson, Ken Vandeburgt

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| 1. <b>Opening Remarks</b>   | Tawney Lem |
| a. Introductions  |            |
| b. Alison introduced herself and spoke about her background which is in planning with training in landscape architecture. |            |
| c. Paul Erickson – This was to be his last meeting, but he is absent. He will attend the next SPPAC meeting.              |            |
| 2. <b>Welcome new members:</b> Shyla Wiest and Alison Mewett  | All        |
| 3. <b>Confirm Previous Minutes</b> (June 17, 2011)  | All        |

The previous meeting's minutes were accepted as circulated.

**Action: Andy will post June's minutes on the BC Parks website.**

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| 4. <b>Nyrstar Mine</b> - Update and Q & A re: closure plan; bonding; clean fill;<br>- Jim Mitchell Lake Spillway Project | Robert Behrendt |
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The mine is now called "Nyrstar Myra Falls". Robert said Paul's review of the closure plan was thorough and thoughtful.

Robert showed slides outlining the history of Nyrstar. The company is only 4 years old, and is the largest producer of zinc in the world. Its' headquarters is in Zurich, and the name means "new direction" in Norwegian. Nyrstar whose focus had been on the processing side of the business, has been buying up mines worldwide to ensure a consistent supply of materials for its smelters. The purchase of Breakwater Resources was finalized in August 2011. Nyrstar has smelters in Finland, Canada, Australia, and an operation in China. With its acquisition of Breakwater it is now one of the top 5 Zinc producers in the world, with plans to acquire more mines in the future.

Nyrstar's long term vision up to 2020, is to capture more minerals now being wasted in processing, and to improve efficiency. Nyrstar's philosophy is one of preventing harm to both people and the environment, be open and honest, keep its word, take bold decisions, create value, use innovative and creative thinking, and be driven.

Nyrstar has put already committed an extra \$7.5 million into the trust fund for the mine's closure, with plans for the same contribution next year, and various raises in the years to come. The mine's closure plan has been under funded for some time and this is now being addressed. There is currently \$38 million in the trust fund to date, with a target of \$71 million over the next several years. The Ministry of Mines dictates the closure plan but with the mine located within a Provincial Park, the plan is referred to the Ministry of Environment/BC Parks for their input. Nyrstar has accepted the Ministry's figures for the closure fund.

Local mine staff have been working on the closure plan prior to being sold to Nyrstar, and new strategies/plans are continuously being developed. NVI Mine is also consulting with other companies specializing in mine reclamation.

There was a newspaper article in the summer about chronic under funding of closure costs for mines province-wide. Sites with acid mine drainage are treated differently than those without. Myra Falls is acid generating so its reclamation costs can be higher.

In the end this site will be 100% funded for reclamation.

Nick thinks this mine issues/reviews should be a higher priority for SPPAC rather than just relegated to the annual mine/SPPAC meeting. NVI is open to keeping SPPAC informed and working collaboratively to find preferred solutions to issues.

SPPAC would like to examine the structure it uses for dealing with the mine, not relying on just one designated expert member on SPPAC. SPPAC members want to be more involved in issues concerning the mine in Strathcona Park.

The mine's expected life is over 20 more years and potentially beyond. However, some parts of the mine site (45 ha) will be reclaimed and vegetated by 2015.

What areas can SPPAC have input on? The answer is all areas. The issue of what the land should look like when it is returned to Parks at the end of the reclamation process should be considered with a 100 year time line. Issues surrounding potential river/lack contamination and environmental aesthetics are examples of what needs to be considered and planned for during and after reclamation.

Nick asked that more information be made available to SPPAC (e.g. directly from the Ministry) and that SPPAC become more involved. Andy advised that all SPPAC members are welcome to attend the annual NVI/SPPAC meetings, however, only the costs of the SPPAC Mine rep and/or chairperson can be covered by the Ministry at this time. SPPAC members can provide input to all mine related matters at any time, through the Regional Manager.

There is an interest from members to become more involved and to inform themselves. The question is how to do this. This feeling was reiterated several times in the discussion.

The mine's next closure plan has to be submitted by 2014. There are meetings between Nyrstar and Ministry of Mines scheduled to discuss closure plans coming up in November. NVI staff may be able to report back to SPPAC at the next meeting. There are plans for 2011 and 2012 to reclaim some tailings disposal, and these will be submitted.

Nystar has an opportunity to establish a standard for public consultation and create a new consultation process. SPPAC asked if there are existing closure plans that could be used as a template. Robert has only heard of one other mine in the world operating within a park. NVI may set the standard. Nyrstar could help SPPAC and communities build their knowledge capacity by providing a workshop to help them understand the closure process. Ivor advised that if Nyrstar wishes community input then it may be obligated to help the communities understand the process. There are very few mines in the world that have actually gone through a full closure process. This is either because closure processes weren't previously required, or few of today's operating mines have reached the end of their lives.

It was asked if funding could be made available from the Ministry of Mines to finance SPPAC's involvement.

**Action: Andy indicated that this is doubtful but will make enquiries.**

SPPAC wants more of a role in public consultation from the Ministry of Mines regarding the closure plan. SPPAC's role is to advise Parks' Regional Manager (Don Cadden) regarding the mine. SPPAC wants more information about what is going on, and wants to take a more active part in the process. Andy clarified that he informs SPPAC of all relevant mine issues and has consistently obtained update reports from the mine prior to all SPPAC meetings and when appropriate or needed, has arranged for Mine staff to make presentations at SPPAC meetings. In addition, there is an annual SPPAC/NVI meeting where all members are welcome to attend.

SPPAC will look internally to see how to deal with this, and then consider recommendations for consultation with the broader public as well.

SPPAC could be a catalyst to set up a process to include more people with more expertise to work with the mine on the closure plan. This would yield more information to SPPAC to help with their understanding.

**Action: Peggy will send out an overview of the process for consultation with the Inland Island Highway project in the Comox Valley area as an example of a possible process to follow.**

Ivor was supportive of this idea. He will also find out how SPPAC can have input.

SPPAC will ultimately make recommendations to the Regional Manager about any consultation process with Nyrstar.

**Jim Mitchell Lake project update** –DFO has signed off on this. NVI has been requested to do some modification work to the existing earth/rock dam but is still deciding whether to focus this work on the upstream side of the dam or the downstream side. Construction will take place next year. After completion of the new spillway, power production could be 100% green most years, with little to no use of diesel fuel generators.

Andy said DFO has supported the project.

**Clean Fill** – Andy spoke about recent discussions with the mine about their need for clean fill to cap reclamation sites. Where does it come from? It is now coming from a currently disturbed site, but eventually the mine will need to find more sources. They are now looking at an area composed of glacial till adjacent to the road just past the core shacks enroute to the mine site. A visual buffer along the road would be left and material would be removed from the back of the site. NVI still needs to do more assessments and planning prior to proposing this plan to BC Parks. The Myra Valley is a hanging valley with lateral moraines along the sides where there is potential clean fill. Clean fill is defined as having less than 0.1% sulphur content. This topic will be discussed further in the future when more information/plans are available.

**PUP status** – Park staff are working on a draft for each of the 3 Park Use Permits that are being renewed in 2012. The two power related permits in the Class A, Strathcona Park will be amalgamated into one. The mine operations portion in the Class B, Strathcona Westmin Park will remain as a separate PUP. It is hoped that the draft permits will be prepared by November then presented to the mine for review and discussion. No substantive changes are anticipated; they are just to be modernized, wording clarified, and a new permit format followed. The draft permits will be shared with SPPAC.

#### **5. Mining Industry and Financial Securities**

Nick Page

Nick referred to a report he has on Raven Coal mine at Buckley Bay. This was circulated to the group by email. See item 4 above for the discussion on securities.

#### **6. Volunteer Agreements** – Brought Forward from June meeting

Tawney

SPPAC was looking at ways to support and encourage volunteer projects in the Park. There was a recent meeting held between the Assistant Deputy Minister, CPAWS and others that in part discussed BC Parks funding. Andy asked the Assistant Deputy Minister for some information on this meeting, but was not able to get a response by the time of the meeting. There seems to be some interest from the government in improving the climate for volunteer projects.

SPPAC requests more information from the ADM regarding this topic.

SPPAC referred to its June discussion about volunteer projects in the Park, and notes that the topic was also discussed at the ADM/CPAWS meeting. SPPAC would like to receive some information about this meeting and receive more information relating to potential volunteer funding, insurance, and adequate staff to support projects, etc. SPPAC would like to learn more or participate in any future discussions regarding the encouragement of volunteer projects.

There was a discussion about having enough Park staff to supervise volunteers so the resource can be properly utilized.

**Action – SPPAC will write a letter to the new ADM through the Regional Manager requesting that resources be made available to take advantage of volunteer resources to take on projects in Parks. (Tawney to develop first draft, then circulate to the group)**

Individuals can write letters to anyone they want to, but not as SPPAC members.

7. **Letter to Don Cadden** (brought forward from June – re: PUP Ads)

Nick

There was an action item from the last meeting for Nick to draft a letter regarding the PUP ads. The concern was about a PUP being advertised in the paper with no specific information. The letter was to give some suggestions about criteria for an announcement. The cost of a newspaper announcement should be paid by the proponent. A letter has not yet been drafted. There are some policy changes coming from BC Parks, but nothing official has been heard yet.

**Action: SPPAC will write a letter to Don Cadden re: recommendations about PUP ads. (Nick to develop first draft, then circulate to the group).**

8. **FOSP – Summer Work Project & Festival**

Kel Kelly

**Trail Project** – Friends of Strathcona Park negotiated with Andy and Ron for a second volunteer agreement for its upper Bedwell valley trail project. Kel stated this project demonstrates volunteers can keep trails open so Parks don't need commercial interests to do so. This year's project met the interests of both FOSP and BC Parks. The volunteers worked on an 11 km long section this summer. A total of 25 volunteers took part in the project even though they faced heavy rains. Groups were divided into 2 groups to comply with WCB safety regulations limiting groups to 15 when meeting minimum requirements in such areas.

One group worked from the top down, the other from the bottom up. All clearing was done by hand. The trail was rerouted in a few areas due to some extreme windfalls, and to avoid some sensitive areas. The rest of the work was on the existing trail. Three short side trails to viewpoints overlooking waterfalls were cleared. Ten people went over the "hump" to Tofino and out. All but one condition in the agreement were followed (flagging was put up but not yet removed in an unauthorized area).

There were no injuries, and a good time was had by all. The oldest participant was 72, and the youngest 16.

There is currently no proposal for next year, but FOSP are currently discussing ideas. FOSP are hoping for further collaborative successes.

FOSP wants to figure out how to improve public access to parks in the future.

Andy commented that this was a successful project. The project was planned and implemented with BC Parks support. While some unauthorized flagging was left up, Kel had said this was for safety reasons in order for volunteers to find their way out- that is why the flagging was not taken down. It is hard to find a route in the forest where there is no trail unless it is flagged. The issue was discussed between Kel and Andy and while putting the flagging up for safety is understood, there was no reason not to take it down on the way out as this route is not authorized. Kel advised that this will be discussed with FOSP directors at their next meeting. Andy advised, BC Parks generally do not approve of flagging in parks. Further, the flagged route is not an authorized trail so its use should not be encouraged. Therefore, Parks has requested the flagging be removed as soon as possible.

It was noted that CWR has done its own flagging in many places in the Bedwell Valley. Andy advised that CWR will be requested to take down any unauthorized flagging as well. BC Parks has maintained that there is no need for the establishment of a second trail with its associated impacts when an existing trail, (historically supported by FOSP), will be upgraded and maintained when a Park Use Permit for CWR has been signed off. Andy clarified that the FOSP project this year focused on a higher portion of the existing official trail. While some lower down work was approved in 2010 to provide temporary access by volunteers, the FOSP would like to develop an additional 5 km route through this area. Kel said the CWR horse trail would be to a different standard than the proposed FOSP trail, and in his opinion may not be as desirable for hiking and believes hikers don't enjoy hiking on trails used by horses.

While FOSP's proposed route is not supported or approved, BC Parks advised that unless there are specific closures, there is nothing to stop someone from hiking in any backcountry area. In this case, the official trail remains closed due to current safety hazards (unsafe bridges). Therefore, BC Parks does not want to encourage people to use the trail at this time due to this trail closure, and has requested FOSP remove all unauthorized flagging which had been put up during this summer's work project.

There was a discussion around the impacts of hikers, horses, roads, etc in the Bedwell. One SPPAC member questioned why SPPAC would want to support the development of a 2<sup>nd</sup> trail in the same area due to the additional impacts it would present. A suggestion was made to wait and see what happens with the CWR proposal.

**Festival** – FOSP’s Wilderness Festival was a celebration of BC Parks’ 100 year birthday. It took place on August 20, and 270 people showed up. Presenters included Strathcona Park Lodge, Comox Valley Kayaks, Avian rescue, a geology workshop, short and long hikes, yoga, massage, and others. FOSP used shuttle buses to minimize traffic. Nyrstar Mine graded the road to the Bedwell Lakes Trail and provided portal-potties. The site was totally clean afterwards. Lots of children attended.

**9. Human/Wildlife Impacts** (article)

Nick Page

There was a journal article on the impacts of hikers keeping wildlife away from trails in the Rocky Mountain National Parks. Wolves move away and elk move in for protection around a lightly used trail. If trails are more heavily used then the potential impacts to wildlife movement increases. The question is what are the impacts of hikers and horses in the Bedwell? Conservation values are certainly affected. In this regard, one member of SPPAC questioned why an alternative trail by FOSP should be supported as this was just compounding impacts in the area.

**10. CWR Permit Status**

Andy

This process is ongoing. The PUP is still being drafted. Some information has been shared with CWR. The PUP will be forwarded to SPPAC for input and then to the Regional Manager to be signed off. It is expected to be finished this month (October 2011) and in SPPAC’s hands then. CWR says they are still interested in pursuing this project. It was asked if their new project in the Yukon is more attractive to them, will it have an impact on this one? Response – the two projects are independent of each other.

SPPAC will have to have input within a couple of weeks of the PUP being circulated. SPPAC will respond by email.

PUP fees are set by a Provincial Fee Schedule which can include an annual fee and/or a per client amount.

FOSP will be told when permit is signed off.

**11. Centennial Events** – Parks Day, Family Fun Day

Andy

There were many province wide events to celebrate Parks’ Centennial. In Strathcona, there was Parks Day, and a Family Fun Day focused on access. It included young and old, and many wheelchair participants. Minister Lake and the ADM, Lori Halls, attended as well as the Federal Minister of State for Transportation, Steven Fletcher. This day was planned jointly by BC Parks and the local Campbell River and Comox Valley Access Committee’s as well as the Wilderness Accessibility Committee. Strathcona Wilderness Institute was also involved.

Parks Day celebrations at the Strathcona Park Wilderness Centre at Paradise Meadows and at Buttle Lake included theatre performances although the one at Buttle Lake was rained out.

**12. Strathcona Park Update**

- Staffing – Two seasonal staff, Gemma Riggs and Geoff Popowich, did a great job. Their terms finished this week.
- Seasonal Start Up – Heavy snow delayed backcountry trail and campsite openings until the beginning of August. Accessibility for the public was affected by lingering snow right into mid August.
- Capital Projects – 7 hand pumps were replaced and sites upgraded, cost \$44,000; Strathcona Corridor upgrades (replacing highway signs, 4 picnic tables at the Elk Portal, inspection of Della Falls cable car and new bear caches), cost \$45,000 (almost completed); Forbidden Plateau repairs to trails, cost \$35,000, bids close October 4<sup>th</sup>, to be completed by October 31<sup>st</sup>; upgrades to various trail sections in the Forbidden Plateau area are proposed for next year, with a budget of up to \$100,000.
- Permits – The Backcountry Operations Permit is to be re-tendered over the winter and will be advertised on BC Bid website. The NVI (Nyrstar) Mine Permit renewal (discussed above) is being worked on and will be renewed for another 20 years. The Mount Washington Resort Permit renewal is being finalized with no changes

anticipated. Its term will be for a minimum of 10 years although the Resort is asking for a 15 year term. This should be completed by the end of October.

- Della Falls Trail – The new cable car survived the winter's heavy snow in good shape. The upper campsite was officially reopened and a backcountry "Z-Best" toilet and a food cache installed. Windfalls along the trail were removed and more brushing will hopefully be completed this fall. A new boat taxi service for Great Central Lake replaced the Ark Resort's service in mid season and a round trip to the end of the lake is \$200.
- Heber Diversion Penstock Decommissioning – This project may get going again in 2012. SPPAC will be advised.
- Vancouver Island Marmot Re-introduction – (report from Don Doyle) Marmots re-introduced in 2010 had poor survival due to harsh winter. Possibly only 25% survived at Castle Crag, Morrison Spire, Sunrise Lake, and Henshaw Creek release sites. It looks like none survived at the Drinkwater site. The problem lies in the first year survival.

For the 2011 releases there were mixed results. Predators killed the dominant male and female at Greig's Ridge. 2 litters (3 pups) survived at Tibetan showing they can survive and reproduce with a tough winter. In the summer of 2011 there were four releases in Strathcona Park to supplement existing populations (3 marmots to Castle Crag, 3 to Henshaw Creek, 5 to Morrison Spire, and 9 to Greig's Ridge).

Plans for 2012 are to continue to supplement existing colonies and to create some new ones. The issue of first year survivability is to be addressed by releasing them on Mount Washington then relocating them after they have survived their first winter. This should be more cost effective. This summer 17 marmots in 3 groups were released at Mount Washington and should be relocated next year. There should be 30 – 40 captive bred marmots for release next year and 15 – 25 others to be relocated from Mount Washington. Between ½ to 2/3 of these are destined for Strathcona Park.

- Andy went to a conference called Healthy by Nature. Participants included parks staff as well as a great diversity of other sectors including education, health, youth, city planners, etc as well as some prominent international speakers. This process requires all sectors to collaborate with each other. All the information and research is available to show the benefits of Nature and to present such a case to politicians. Lobbyists need to tailor their presentations to whichever ministry is being lobbied. This is a global movement. We must involve children by age 12 to get them interested in nature.

### **13. Mount Washington water management and Paradise Meadows – Nick**

Water management at Mount Washington Resort needs better planning, especially concerning sediment management and water quality. Nick would like an update from Mount Washington Resort for the next SPPAC meeting. Andy said a research project was done there this summer, but was less useful than expected due to the heavy snow pack. How can we get Mount Washington to take the issue more seriously?

Note – The Resort's Local Area Plan is being redone in the near future. This is a Comox Valley Regional District process. SPPAC could make presentations at their hearings.

**Action – SPPAC will notify Don Cadden about this issue by letter, and request that he discuss this with the water management branch. (Allison to develop the first draft, then circulate to the group)**

This is time sensitive as hearings start very soon. To assist Allison with the draft letter, Eric will send Alison a letter he wrote a few years ago.

SPPAC members can also attend the public meetings as individuals.

Andy said BC Parks doesn't have authority over lands outside parks. The Ministry of Environment's, Environmental Protection Division in Nanaimo normally deals with these issues outside of parks.

Alison has personally seen what appears to be significant impacts in creeks in Paradise Meadows. There could also be impacts from the use of sand and salt in winter. Sediment control is not sufficient. The Highways Department is responsible for impacts from the road.

#### **14. Public Question Period.**

**Karl Stevenson** – Karl complimented SPPAC on its deliberations.

Karl commented on impacts of the trail on elk in the Bedwell. The trail went in to provide access for people to monitor the area. The Bedwell Valley is renewing itself. Karl spent a lot of time laying out the trail for the FOSP project and planning the route. A horse trail will trash the area. Regulations are meaningless as CWR will be self monitoring. Commercial interests do what they want. There is no room for intangible values in this process. Why does the public interest mean nothing?

The Park Master Plan calls for public consultation to avoid conflict, but didn't spell out what that should look like. There should be Master Plan updates that also update the role of SPPAC, for example, criteria for writing letters, the consultation process, etc.

Question – CWR has no idea how much their project will cost or how much to maintain it. Will the government sign the permit without any engineering being done? Andy answered that the permit is tiered, that is, Parks will authorize engineering first, then a work plan and finally a management plan that has to be approved. The PUP will not let them proceed without further approvals.

**Ken Vandeburgt** – Ken has gone through some mining reports for the Bedwell Valley. He asked if there have been any studies done of water quality there looking for acid mine drainage. Andy said not that he is aware of, although the Level 2 Impact Assessment done for the trail did include some water assessment. Are there any plans to do any? No. Should something be done?

These mining reports talk about the history of the road in the Bedwell. There have been many bridges built and washed out. People don't have good knowledge of the ground. It is impossible to cross the river with a horse without a bridge in some places, specifically lower in the valley. The CWR route is overgrown with small alder and no views. The FOSP proposed route has views and is better for hiking.

Ken recommends SPPAC do some field trips into areas being considered in the future.

**Kei** – Thanks. The SPPAC group is respectful and people are listening. He complimented Tawney for her skills as chair.

**Next Meeting: 1) Regular – January 20 agenda topic NVI, keep other topics to minimum**

**NVI SPPAC –Anyone can attend, but there is no budget for travel beyond the chair and Paul. Paul needs to be contacted to see what times work for him. The meeting could be moved to the evening. It was suggested meeting after the next SPPAC meeting so the committee can discuss issues between themselves. Invite John Wilson to be a geology resource.**