

**STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(June 19, 2014 – BC Parks Office, Miracle Beach)**

SPPAC MEMBERS: Phil Stone, Erik Holbek, Darren Saare, Nick Page, Hardolph Wasteneys

Regrets: Tawney Lem, Alison Mewett, David Campbell, Peggy Carswell, Mick Taylor

BC Parks: Andy Smith

Public Members - Michelle Leech, Lindsay Elms

Acting Chair – Phil Stone

Recorder: John Milne

1. Introductions - Members and guests introduced themselves. Phil will act as chair on behalf of Tawney for this meeting.

2. Approved agenda - The previous SPPAC meeting's minutes were approved via email and have been posted on SPPAC's facebook page and BC Parks website.

3. Strathcona Update - Andy Smith

A detailed Strathcona report follows these minutes.

Andy circulated copies of the update to the public attendees.

Nyrstar is progressing with their closure plan. This plan is updated about every 5 years. Hardolph and Andy attended the last SPPAC/mine meeting along with other Government agency representatives. This meeting confirmed there is a lack of some information concerning various options in some areas of the closure plan. Studies are ongoing concerning what to do with the tailings from the mine. It was suggested that this plan act as an interim working plan that will be updated in a few years when more assessments have been completed and the best tailings reclamation option has been determined. Currently there are knowledge gaps, e.g. hydrological studies. Standards have changed over the years and new techniques for dealing with tailings have been developed. The Ministry of Mines will confirm with Nyrstar whether accepting this year's plan as an interim plan is acceptable. The next plan will include public input as part of this process, but the form of this input is yet to be determined. There has never been a chance for public input before with this kind of plan.

Some of SPPAC's input was included in Nyrstar's presentation.

Public input may take the form of a workshop type of event. It could also involve social media.

There appears to be advantages in storing the tailings under water to limit the exposure to oxygen.

Jim Mitchell Dam - Parks approved the project in 2013, but due to required changes dictated by Dam Safety Branch, the plan was changed. Although the new freeboard height hasn't changed between plans, work will now be on the downstream side of the dam. The extra fill will mean the old existing borrow pit along the access road will be expanded. As more fill will be needed than before, an amendment to the impact assessment was required and completed. There were no show stoppers, and therefore the plan has since been approved. Construction will begin in mid-July.

Phil mentioned that SPPAC had recommended improved boat access as part of this project. This is not part of the approval, but Nyrstar is still willing to discuss this to find a mutually agreeable solution.

Action - Andy will remind Ivor of the boat launch part of the project.

During construction there will be times during hauling when road access to the Bedwell Trail will involve a pilot car for public vehicles.

Park Enhancement Fund – Due to many good proposal submissions around the region, SWI unfortunately only received a \$1,000 PEF allocation from the \$4,000 they were hoping to receive.

BC Parks has purchased a TrailRider (one wheel cross between a wheelchair and rickshaw) at a cost of \$7,000, and will be available for public use through SWI. Andy is working closely in partnership with SWI. Information will be posted on the Strathcona Park and SWI websites. Experimental trips will start by mid-July around Helen McKenzie and Battleship Lakes. At that time recruitment of volunteer sherpas as well as “riders” will be pursued. Some marketing/advertising may be required to expose the public to what a TrailRider is.

The Friends of Strathcona Park have completed work on the new No Fire sign campaign. Signs are now being fabricated and will be installed this summer.

Volunteer groups - There was some success with volunteer groups developing agreements for ongoing work within the park, but not all groups were required to develop agreements if they weren't currently active within the park. SWI did not need a volunteer agreement as all their current activities are covered by a Park Use Permit. CDMC developed an agreement proposing maintenance and enhancement work along the the Glacier Trail, Gem Lake Trail and Plateau Traverse Trail. Gem Lake may not be accessible this season due to active logging until August.

Many other groups have developed and signed agreements elsewhere in the Province.

As the Heathens confirmed they will no longer be working in park at the last SPPAC meeting, there was an agreement to let the Crest Crags climbers' camp continue this year with perhaps an associated BBQ as a way to foster communication. This may also encourage more interest and involvement. Darren attended last year's camp and found the Heathens very welcoming and friendly.

SPPAC's recommendation is to allow the Heathen's camp in the hope that some informal discussion about the future of the area might take place. This would be designated a one off, not linked to any volunteer work, as a sign of good faith and also to help explore the possibility of a new official walk-in campsite being constructed somewhere in the near vicinity of the crags. The Master Plan does suggest “investigating the opportunity to develop a group campsite subject to environmental impact assessment and First Nation consultation”. There would have to be user fees associated with such a camp should this be pursued. An additional benefit of an official camp would be an increase in BC Parks presence in the area. It was also suggested that a

“Climbers Steering Committee” could be developed to take exploring this idea further along with other climbing associated issues both within and outside parks.

Action – If a social event, i.e. BBQ is pursued, Andy can commit up to to \$500. Bill Phipps, Sandy Briggs and other local climbers will be asked if they would like to be involved in the formation of a Climbers Steering Committee.

Darren suggested it may be better just starting with the formation of a steering committee and leave the camp/barbeque idea to evolve more slowly. Erik believes that due to current high emotions perhaps it would be better to take some time to let things cool off.

Last year's Heathen's camp had a maximum of 15 people there at any one time.

4. Be a Park Hero - proposed concept - all

This will be deferred until Allison is present as it was her suggestion to discuss.

5. Crest Creek Crags - Phil Stone and Andy Smith
Proposal for climbing committee and climbing day.

See above discussion under section 3.

6. Nyrstar Closure Plan - Andy Smith

Also see the discussion under section 3.

7. Recent Changes to Permitting Process; Bill 4 and Amendments to the Park Act. - all

BC Parks permit application process has been amalgamated into the Government's Front CounterBC Branch. This has been done to create consistency and efficiencies for permitting applications to the Provincial Government. Parks staff will now be informed of applications through Front CounterBC rather than the now defunct Permit Authorization Service Bureau. Front CounterBC is a central receiver and referring branch. Various applications are sent out to the relevant Ministry and staff throughout the government.

The now passed Bill 4 allows research which may potentially lead or notto boundary adjustment proposals. The Boundary Adjustment Policy was created in 2010.

Updates

8. SPPAC Terms of Reference - all

-Discussion on amendments

Tawney has been leading this discussion. There is a list of suggested revisions which has been circulated within SPPAC. The amended Terms of Reference should be completed before the expiration this year of the terms of several SPPAC members.

The meeting went through Tawney's discussion paper item by item. The results are summarized below.

Mandate

Should SPPAC be limited to only providing recommendations to the Regional Director, or should they also be access to the Minister? Andy explained that the Regional Director is currently the designated Statutory Decision Maker making most decisions, unless due to circumstances and the Director feels it necessary to refer an issue/permit higher up. SPPAC has written the Minister before. Andy explained the levels of bureaucracy requires a process to filter issues. The Regional Director has signing authority for all permits. The Minister doesn't sign permits. It was agreed to leave this point out, but still suggest the ability for SPPAC to write the Minister in the future.

Management of park and adjacent issues - Can SPPAC comment on something outside the Park? Yes, this is possible, if there is some association. All proposed discussion should be pre-submitted to the SPPAC chair for consideration and discussion with other members prior to agreeing to hearing any presentation. Keep this in the suggested amended Terms of Reference.

Advisory vs decision making role - As this isn't likely to be agreed to this section should be left out.

Increase SPPAC's role for representing public concern - There is work to be done on this. Leave this in the list of suggestions.

Increase the mandate to give advice to BC Parks in general rather than just the Regional Manager with the idea of advising the Minister directly. It was decided to leave this section out.

Meeting Requirements

The suggestion is to increase the meeting requirement to at least 4 times a year. This reflects the reality of SPPAC more accurately. This is to be left in.

Meeting locations will vary to increase accessibility. This will be left in the list.

Meetings will be advertised on BC Parks website, social media and through other means. This will be included.

Composition

The composition of committee currently doesn't include stakeholders. It was recommended that the geographical representation criteria be kept. There is the possibility of conflicts of interest. This section is to be left out.

A SPPAC mailing list is being worked on. Keep this suggestion.

There is no budget for recruitment notices being placed in newspapers. It is recommended that social media be used instead. Keep this section.

The section about submitting letters of recommendation for applicants has not been followed. It is to be left out

Applications are reviewed by a BC Parks rep and the SPPAC chair prior to the Regional Director making final decision. Leave this in.

Selection criteria

Current criteria calls for 3 people with park knowledge. This should be left out as it is self evident. All members should have knowledge of the Park.

Current criteria calls for 5 areas of expertise. This should be rewritten as guidelines. The only expert knowledge needed on SPPAC is geology because of the mine presence in the Park.

The emphasis on technical skills should be reduced and more people with general knowledge of the Park be considered.

A person should be selected on their own merit, not as a group member. This should be left in. Current practice has been hesitant to include people from certain groups.

Procedures

The annual review of SPPAC's chair should be deleted. It has not been the practice followed and chairs need to continue to serve for continuity.

A minimum turnover of two members per year has not been followed. Currently a seven year term was the maximum, and two the minimum. Some in the past have gone beyond seven years. It was suggested that some of the current members whose terms are up be kept on and to increase the maximum number of committee members to provide flexibility of turnover. Two to three current members could stay an extra year to allow for a smoother transition. There could be temporary adjustments to some terms to provide continuity. It was also suggested that succession planning be left out of the terms of reference. It seems there is no clear consensus on this area.

Clarification is needed on the Regional Director's right to terminate the committee. It was suggested this be left out. An explanation is needed.

Currently the Terms of Reference say if someone misses two meetings a year, their membership should be reviewed. This should be left in, some directions for the chair could be added to refer to when managing the committee.

SPPAC may call public meetings. This will be left in. SPPAC may call a meeting to gather information and receive input on an issue. Funding for such meetings will be at the discretion of the Regional Director.

Recommendations

If SPPAC's advice is not followed, there should be reasons given why. This will be left in

If there is no consensus from SPPAC on an issue then all opinions are forwarded to the Regional Manager. This is already the practice.

Remuneration - ?

This was not discussed.

Roles and responsibilities - ?

This was not discussed.

Additional Suggested Sections

Conflict of interest - If a member has a conflict, they should declare it and leave the meeting for that part of the discussion. This should be added to the Terms of Reference. Note that local government advisory committees have published conflict of interest guidelines.

Issue Resolution with Regional Manager - This was left out.

Roles and Responsibilities of Members - Members should participate in online discussions between meetings, come to meetings prepared, and stay informed on park issues and public perspectives.

Subcommittees - These are not covered by the Terms of Reference. This should be left in so it can be discussed.

Format of meetings - Should other meeting formats be explored? Maybe there should be fewer or no physical meetings, but rather on-line or via conference calls. The feeling of SPPAC is that face to face meetings are much better. While the public may attend SPPAC meetings, it should be clarified that they are not public meeting as in the sense that the public are not being formally involved in discussions. SPPAC could still have other means of communication between members on a special need basis. Leave this out of the Terms of Reference

Action - Set date for meeting with Don Cadden. This will be done.

9. Recruitment and new chair person. - All

Darren asked someone from Port Alberni to apply to join SPPAC. Hardolph asked Greg Johnson and two others as well. They will send the names to Andy.

Action - Andy will also ask for applications from interested candidates on the BC Parks Strathcona Park website.

Darren (and/or Eric) suggested Philip Stone stay on as chair to assist with continuity. Phil advised that he would consider it if there were no objections.

Public comments - none

Andy asked if he should pursue something else for the Plateau Ranger Hut since the Alpine Club proposal didn't work out. Hardolph will ask some people in the Nordic Club to see if they are interested. Andy will talk to Gord Campbell to see if his group is interested.

10. Next meeting and closing comments

The next SPPAC meeting will be on Thursday, October 9th at the Black Creek, Miracle Beach Office.

Strathcona Update for SPPAC
June 19, 2014 (BC Parks Black Creek Office)

Strathcona Staffing

Park Facility Operator - Jerry McArthur, Windy Park Operations, has now started his last season under the current contract. The Strathcona Backcountry Maintenance contract is being re-tendered and will be awarded by November, 2014.

Seasonal staff - one Senior and a “shared” Regular Ranger have now started. Jeff Hoy is returning as the Senior Ranger (Peter Hehl has now left BC Parks) with a term of April 28th to November 7th. Adam Vojnic, as the shared Black Creek Ranger, is new to BC Parks with a term of June 2nd to September 3rd.

1) New Backcountry Maintenance Contract – the new BC Parks “PRISM” program (Parks Recreation Integrated Services Management) is being implemented this year resulting in many new maintenance contracts being re-tendered throughout the Province. The new contracts while focussed mostly on Frontcountry Operations, also include Backcountry Operations, i.e. Strathcona and Cape Scott. The opportunity to bid on the Strathcona Backcountry contract has been posted as a Request for Proposals (RFP) on BC Bid (<http://www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca/open.dll/welcome>). There will be a Bidders meeting at Black Creek on July 2nd. Closing date is August 1, 2014. The term of the contract will be for 10 years.

2) Nyrstar

- Nyrstar hosted a Mine Closure meeting for all key stakeholders and authorizing agencies in Campbell River on May 13, 2014. BC Parks, Andy Smith and SPPAC representative, Hardolph Wastenays attended and provided comments. While the meeting provided all closure plan information as previously presented to SPPAC on February 7, 2014, it was interesting to hear comments and questions from the other authorizing agencies. The presentation did provide some further clarification, especially concerning the “wetland” option. The wetland label was applied to this only to describe how the tailings were going to be below the water table and not necessarily how the surface was going to be completed/treated. The tailings would be spread out on the valley floor and after construction of a dam at the lower end, the ground water would back up enough to keep the tailings material below the water table, thereby rendering tailings inert. The surface could be planned as a “wetland” but it is our understanding at this time that the surface could also be planned as a forest ecosystem. This is only one of several options being considered at this time, but greater analyses is still required to be able to confirm the feasibility and weigh pros and cons. The other options that have and are being considered are “traditional”, involving the contouring, covering with clean fill and then planting; lake, involving the building of a much larger dam to create a lake in the Myra Valley (not likely practical, too costly and little support at this time). As the preparation of a closure plan is a Ministry of Mines requirement, it is up to them to approve or reject plans. The meeting concluded with the Ministry of Mines representatives advising that with the need for Nyrstar and their consultants to gather more information, analyse data and consult public, prior to concluding which option is best. The Ministry will most likely consider this plan to be an interim working plan with a much more defined plan to be submitted in the future, i.e. three years. Ministry of Mines will confirm this by letter to Nyrstar sometime this summer.

- Jim Mitchell Lake Dam modification project – Nyrstar is ready to start construction and waiting for BC Parks final approval. While we have already given the company approval last year, because of some design changes BC Parks requested an amendment to the Level 2 Impact Assessment to ensure all changes and potential impacts were identified and considered. The company provided an amendment and BC Parks completed their review the first week of June requesting a response to some further questions. As there weren't any major concerns with the changes, once BC Parks receives the response, it is anticipated the Regional Director will issue another letter of approval. Work should commence in July 2014.

3) Capital Projects - Funding has been confirmed allowing for the completion of the 1/3 portion of Battleship/Kwai Lake enhancements (2/3 of this project was completed in 2013). The 2014 work will be completed by the same contractor "Great Installations" and will begin late August. In addition, some design/planning funds have been secured to prepare a plan for enhancements along the Helen Mackenzie Lake trail (between lake junction and west where trail starts up headwall towards Ranger Cabin). Only the worst sections of this trail will be focussed on, as it is not practical to invest a significant amount of funds in a costly complete upgrade.

4) CWR Park Use Permit – CWR has confirmed that they will start planning and developing work plans for the Bedwell Valley trail enhancement project this spring and summer season. BC Parks hope to review draft in early Fall to allow for ground trothing and modifications to plan if needed. No trail enhancement work can begin without BC Parks approval of plans.

5) Croteau Lake Group Site – BC Parks hopes to complete Level 1 Impacts Assessment process in June. The Level 1 will dictate the need of a Level 2 if warranted. If a Level 2 is required, that will be pursued this summer season. If no Level 2 is required, design plans will be developed for the site and if time permits, there is a possibility that some development may occur during the Fall (when contractor is on site for the completion of the trail enhancement project).

6) Backcountry

Bedwell Lakes Trail Upgrades – No new progress since last update. The project to repair/replace the long section of boardwalk that skirts the Baby Bedwell lake shore, while completed in 2013, did not meet standards and will be modified by contractor in Spring, 2014.

The toilet at Main Bedwell Lake is starting to rot and an assessment is scheduled for early this season to determine if the toilet can be repaired or should be replaced.

A new area map sign will be developed for the two information shelters located at Baby and Main Bedwell Lakes. The new map sign will show trails and surrounding peaks, lakes and rivers.

Elk River Trail Upgrades – The only new work planned for this season is to fly in two new aluminum food caches to replace old style cable caches. The aluminum bins have been modified to provide hooks on the inside for people to hang their supplies around inside perimeter rather than placing bags on the bottom on top of each other. BC Hydro may assist with fly in during their met station replacement project nearby.

Arnica Lake – No new progress. The human waste issue continues. Rangers will be directed to explore yet another new z-best toilet site again this season (new site flooded in 2013). If unsuccessful a different solution will need to be explored, i.e. fly-out; new type of alpine composter (haven't found one yet that would work).

Repairs to some of the tent pads and a bridge replacement are still required. We will continue to look for adequate PRV (maintenance) budget to address these issues.

Gold Lake Access – No new updates. The logging road leading to the eastern access trail to Gold Lake is getting very rough and needing 4x4 or at least trucks. Most vehicles will not be able to access the last 1.5 km. Coincidentally, the Ministry of Forests contacted BC Parks to advise that the last approximate 5-6 km of road past Grilse Creek was going to be decommissioned, probably in 2014, due to unsafe bridge and lack of forestry need. The road will probably remain accessible to ATV and/or trail bikes, but not vehicles. Use has been declining at Gold Lake due to poor access, so this may reduce use to minimal leaving the question as to what, if anything we should do about this trail.

Della Falls Trail - It is hoped that the Port Alberni Search and Rescue team will again offer their support by providing volunteers for a trail brushing/ windfall clearing weekend. Confirmation and the details have to be worked out.

7) Park Enhancement Funds (PEF) – The Island Region was allocated additional funds for 2014, and Volunteer Groups had the opportunity to submit proposals for park projects up to \$3500 each. Like previous years, all proposals were assessed by the Regional Management Team and they made their final selections the first week of June. The supported projects specifically including Strathcona are: Strathcona Wilderness Society (SWI) - Program Support = \$1,000; Royal BC Museum - Study of High Elevation Invertebrates in Vancouver Island Provincial Parks = \$5,000. In addition to the regional PEF program, BC Parks is also supporting SWI with the acquisition a TrailRider and partnering with them to establish the long term envisioned Strathcona Park TrailRider Program. The TrailRider is a one wheel all-terrain wheelchair powered by volunteer “sherpas”. SWI has applied for a grant which if successful will be used to purchase the unit and if unsuccessful BC Parks will cover at least half of the \$7,000 unit. The 2013 PEF, Friends of Strathcona Park new “NO Fire” sign initiative is still ongoing, but at fabrication stage. Five new interpretive style signs will be installed at key trailheads this summer.

8) Volunteer Community Engagement Services Contract

Jeff Hoy, Senior Ranger was contracted for 10 weeks over the Winter/Spring to provide assistance to local Volunteer groups in clarifying and preparing new Volunteer Agreements to those that needed/wanted them. The Comox District Mountaineering Club finalized a new agreement in May, while the Comox Lake Bluffs Ecological Reserve Wardens completed a new agreement in April. Although the Strathcona Wilderness Institute was provided an option to transfer their existing permits into a Volunteer Agreement, because they had an existing permit there was no real benefit for doing a transfer. Both the Natural History Society and the Friends of Strathcona Park were also offered the opportunity to develop a long term volunteer agreement, but because they have no current work plans for within the park, they declined the offer at this time. The Heathens Mountaineering Club were also asked to enter into an agreement for their work at Crest Creek Crag, but although they do require one to provide the necessary authorization, they have not only declined but have turned the requirement into a hot issue that has led to their withdrawal of volunteer efforts at the Crag. BC Parks continues to offer the opportunity to the Heathens but they are refusing to cooperate

resulting in the need to advise the group they can no longer work in the park. The Strathcona Park Lodge has suggested a climbing day/BBQ be offered at the Craggs to bring members of the climbing community together to discuss the future of the Crest Creek Craggs area and how to move forward rather than backwards.

10) Strathcona Potential Projects List – No update (waiting for SPPAC member response). A list and corresponding location map was developed and presented to SPPAC identifying potential projects and initiatives within Strathcona Park worth considering for future implementation. The non-prioritized list was developed only to identify projects and intended to be used to add to or delete as more input and discussion takes place. The projects do not have any committed funds associated with them, although current Park Enhancement Funds in Strathcona's account could be a potential funding source should various projects be supported. Some of these projects or initiatives could also be pursued in partnership with local support groups if they are interested.