

**STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(March 9, 2012 – Rathrevor Park, Parksville) - FINAL MINUTES**

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

Absent - Peggy Carswell, David Campbell, Phillip Stone

BC Parks: Andy Smith; Ron Quilter

Recorder: John Milne

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| 1. Opening Remarks | Tawney Lem |
| 2. Welcome new member - Hardolph Wasteneys | All |

Hardolph attended the annual NVI/SPPAC/BC Parks meeting last month. He has a mining background, having worked for Westmin and Breakwater Companies at Myra Falls as a geologist. He has a research and exploration background and is specifically familiar with the NVI mine. Hardolph also has a personal connection with Strathcona Park Lodge.

SPPAC currently has ten members with the student member from Vancouver Island University recently resigning. It is possible that another student could join SPPAC in the future. Andy will follow up on this possibility.

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| 3. Confirm Previous Minutes (September 30, 2011) | All |
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Last meeting's minutes were accepted as circulated. Andy will have them posted to BC Parks website.

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| 4. Effectiveness of SPPAC | Tawney |
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Tawney spoke of evaluating the last few years' SPPAC activities with respect to navigating some difficult issues. There has been some informal email communication on this topic between committee members.

SPPAC needs ideas about how to improve external communications. There is currently no formal mechanism for communicating to the public. SPPAC has written some letters to Don Cadden, the Regional Director, but they have not been proactively available to the public. They should be available in order for SPPAC's activities to be transparent. Also, there is no formal mechanism for receiving public input, other than attendance of the public at SPPAC meetings.

Internal communication is also important as not all business can happen at meetings. There is a need to have some prior communication so members are prepared for meetings. To date, email has not been the most effective way to gather the input of all members.

SPPAC is advisory in nature. SPPAC's recommendations have been accepted at times and at times not. There is a question as to what should happen after advice is given, but either not accepted or an opposite decision is made by the Regional Director. Should SPPAC remain silent after making their

recommendations, or should there be some follow-up alternative(s) should they wish to have the recommendation(s) followed?

Some SPPAC members felt that their CWR Permit recommendations were “ignored”, meaning that valid recommendations were not implemented and that SPPAC was marginalized. Members further thought that Don Cadden did not seem to understand why SPPAC was created in the first place, i.e. to avoid conflict. This topic is referred to in the Larkin Report.

SPPAC believes now is the time to review the amendment process in order to learn from the experience and inform future processes. However, a comment from Don in an earlier letter has left the committee with the impression that Don is not interested in such a review. SPPAC members are feeling frustrated and angry.

Despite SPPAC’s recommendations not being implemented on the CWR issue, Ron thinks SPPAC has been very effective. He says there have only been a few cases of SPPAC's advice not being taken over the last 20 years. The types of issues brought to SPPAC have evolved. In the past, there were only a small number of complex issues that needed to be discussed in a greater amount of detail. Now, there are a larger number of issues that are brought to the committee at a broader level of detail. Ron said SPPAC’s letter of suggestions on the CWR PUP conditions were not ignored. Each point was seriously considered.

CWR issue has been the big issue over the last few years, and it is believed that some senior managers think SPPAC has been adversarial. Ron has defended SPPAC to management.

Andy also refuted Nick's point of view that SPPAC was ignored. He stated that all SPPAC’s suggestions were carefully considered by us and the Regional Director, but many were either already addressed elsewhere in the permit, or were already covered by policy or current regulations eg, campfires are not allowed anywhere in the backcountry already; permit fee amounts are set by BC Parks legislation; public access through CWR private land is beyond BC Parks authority but has already been addressed through letter of commitment; notification of any archaeological findings is already addressed; facility condition is already addressed and must be to BC Parks satisfaction; etc. Nick said that the recommendation that the 20 year term for the permit should have been reduced to 10 years was a valid suggestion. This issue was given careful consideration but it was decided that because the permit could be cancelled at any time for non-compliance or unacceptable environmental impacts, it was more beneficial to have a longer term commitment by the Permittee in order to ensure long term maintenance of trails and facilities. Andy also addressed the Regional Director’s response, clarifying that Don was open to receiving any “new” information, but did not want to prolong discussion about issues that had already been considered and addressed.

Tawney thinks the CWR permit process as well as the Park Master Plan Amendment process needs evaluating as there may be flaws. The CWR permit issue needs to be taken out of it, and SPPAC should focus on improvement of the process.

There was a discussion about how the Master Plan was written, what it said, and how the horse issue was phrased. What happens in the future if another issue comes up that is not specifically dealt with in the plan? The process needs to be looked at in order to pre-empt another similar controversy.

Andy clarified that the Master Plan did not need to be amended to approve horse use in the lower Bedwell valley but the Amendment (2010) was pursued to provide clarity about horse use in the park which the original plan did not adequately address. The process we have gone through provided in-depth research on horse use, direct and indirect impacts and where and under what conditions horse

use would be considered in the park. The plan is much stronger and detailed as a result and addresses aspects that were not even considered issues previously, e.g. types of road corridors, feed, manure management, etc. He thinks that the public perception of the process as being specifically designed to allow horses in the Bedwell is absolutely wrong. The fact that the lower Bedwell road corridor is included only speaks to its suitability under the stronger criteria.

Ideas on improving SPPAC's effectiveness were discussed as follows:

- Communication with external parties:
 - SPPAC meeting minutes are available to the public. Can their release be speeded up? Can they be approved by email so they can be posted in a more timely manner? Currently they have to be edited by Tawney, Ron and Andy which delays the process. SPPAC should have a more prominent place on the BC Parks Strathcona Park website.
 - SPPAC has been invited to the FMCBC meetings. SPPAC's terms of reference do not specifically state that members can attend external meetings to provide information about SPPAC, or to gather information from the public. Andy says members should be able to get information from various sources such as meetings and report back to SPPAC. However, they shouldn't speak on behalf of SPPAC formally. Members could clarify and explain things at meetings then bring information back to SPPAC. SPPAC should not be seen as replacing government, but rather as an unbiased group that can collect information. In the past (the later 1990's) the SPPAC chair ran the Master Plan hearings which worked well.
 - SPPAC meetings are public so what is discussed there can be reported. Members shouldn't engage in debate at other meetings as a SPPAC representative, but can still have individual opinions. Keeping a separation between speaking one's own mind from speaking on behalf of SPPAC is the issue.
 - SPPAC needs to be proactive. Perhaps reporting out to local newspapers should be considered by the Regional Director. There could also be links from various organizations to the SPPAC minutes. SPPAC letters to the Regional Director could also be posted on the SPPAC website. The Regional Director's rationale for decisions could also be made public. Perhaps a distribution list could be used to send out information by email similar to how newsletters used to be sent out to a mailing list.
 - Various groups could be asked for input to SPPAC regarding concerns they may have. The downside of this is SPPAC could be inundated with input. Perhaps SPPAC should not actively seek out issues, but if members receive them they should direct them to the appropriate Parks staff person. A balance is needed between the public providing information to SPPAC, and providing information to BC Parks (which should be encouraged as always the first step in addressing an issue). This includes Parks not being a gatekeeper of issues discussed by SPPAC. The SPPAC agenda should continue to be set by both parties as it always has been.
 - SPPAC could use Survey Monkey to help gather input on the public's opinion on certain issues.

With Regional Director's approval, a SPPAC facebook page could be created and people could join. This could be very effective. There is a Parks facebook page already. See <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Strathcona-Provincial-Park/108170695869754>.

Ron brought up Phillip's letter to the media written as a member of SPPAC. He advised that some of its content is either inaccurate or misleading.

If a SPPAC member is writing to the media, they should state that it's their personal opinion, not SPPAC's opinion, unless it is. There is a desire to maintain a good relationship between SPPAC and Parks staff. However, SPPAC should be able to push and further discuss an issue if it thinks it's necessary.

Andy mentioned the Public Affairs Bureau and how staff must go through official channels. Staff have no ability to respond to inaccurate or inflammatory information in the media (e.g. letters or articles). How would SPPAC be perceived if they posted such articles/letters without any review or discussion?

In the future, SPPAC wishes to be actively involved in reviewing and/or designing a Master Plan amendment process and a process for evaluating complex and potentially controversial park use permit applications like CWR's. SPPAC was reminded that they should make recommendation to the Regional Director that BC Parks engage the public, if an issue is deemed important enough.

- Internal Communication
 - How can SPPAC get input from all its members between meetings? Email can result in a long string of comments so it is easy to miss points. Hardolph spoke of "Power Noodle" as a way of effectively communicating. All members need to be involved in the discussions, or at least make a short comment that they have no issue.
 - There should be an orientation package for new members. Andy will send links to Alison and Hardolph so they have access to information. The Larkin Report should be sent to all SPPAC members so they can see the background of how SPPAC was created and why.

Peter Rothermel stated SPPAC has a very important role. The park website could be dressed up a bit, but people still have to go there to find information. The public also bears responsibility for seeking out information.

Ron reiterated that BC Parks also values SPPAC's input.

5. NVI/SPPAC Mtg - Update and Q & A Tawney/Hardolph

The annual meeting was held on Feb 24th. Paul was there as were Tawney, Barb and Hardolph. NVI gave its annual overview. The biggest change over this last year was the sale of the mine from Breakwater Resources to Nyrstar a Belgian smelting company. Asked what changes this sale may force, NVI staff indicated that there have been few to date, with the biggest change being that the type and frequency of reporting demands have gone up. In the few years prior to the sale, the mine safety record has gone from the worst to the best mine in BC. However, Nyrstar wants to improve its safety record even more. Environmental monitoring is a priority. Nystar has also agreed to increase the Security/Bonding amount. Construction projects are being reviewed. Next year's issue is new clean fill and where it comes from. The real test will be how things develop in the coming years.

Many new companies start off trying to make a big impression, then things slowly return to normal. Safety is WCB driven and an industry wide priority. Insurance liability related to safety is an issue for all mines.

Future tailings storage and the supply of clean fill are topics to be addressed.

SPPAC would like to know who, from Ministry of Mines, they can speak to, to clarify issues around Mines regulations, reclamation standards, bonding etc. Nyrstar staff is one source, but who else can offer unbiased information? Why did the mine's bonding go from \$12 million to \$71 million? Who in the Ministry of Mines decided this? Nyrstar staff advised that increasing bonds is an industry wide move at this time because costs of reclamation have gone up substantially. Andy suggested that Anne Moody, Senior Reclamation Inspector with the Ministry of Mines is available to talk to SPPAC.

There is a perception that Ministry of Mines standards may not be rigorous enough, so sometimes third party standards are used instead. Are there such standards that SPPAC can review in comparison to the Ministry standards?

SPPAC wants clarification on which Ministries and Agencies are responsible for what. A chart in the Strathcona Westmin Master Plan gives an overview of these responsibilities.

Discussion took place about the rehabilitation of the site with concerns about revegetation, water quality, and earthquake proofing the tailings pond. External consultants are being used by the mine to help with these issues. SPPAC can request presentations from these consultants, and can also make recommendations about how the reclamation is done.

All SPPAC members received a copy of the NVI meeting presentation prior to this meeting.

6. NVI Closure Plan and SPPAC Input Discussion

Tawney

SPPAC can define how they would like to become involved in the process. This involvement may concern aesthetics or technical issues, or both. Site visits are always possible. It was suggested that another tour of the site be organized for SPPAC members, but if not logistically possible for everyone, SPPAC members are welcome to come individually if they pre-arrange the visit. There was a question of what presentations or workshops could be organized for SPPAC. One concern is improving access for the public through the mine site. Some visitors looking for trails reach the mine and turn around and leave as they think they're in the wrong place. While there is signage, perhaps better or more signs or better locations for signs could help solve this problem. SPPAC would like to meet with Nyrstar's experts/consultants and become meaningfully involved in the closure process.

SPPAC wants the mine site to look natural when after it has been reclaimed. The Ministry of Mines representative suggested that intervention would be needed to re-establish vegetation, and questioned whether fertilizer would be allowed in the Park. Fertilization is allowed when BC Parks agrees the circumstances require it to establish a sustainable ecosystem, but the type, application rates and frequency would need to be approved on a case by case basis. Considering the other toxins present at the site, fertilizer impacts would be insignificant compared to the other impacts. The larger question is what the overall vision is for the site after the mine closes and the area is rehabilitated. The overall reclamation plan is important so the short term reclamation projects over the years fit into the whole long term concept.

Some of this broader vision has already been discussed. Some reclamation (original Tailings Disposal Facility = 25% of site) is to be started soon. Some experimental revegetation sites have failed, therefore NVI staff need to learn what will be the most successful treatment(s) in the future. The Strathcona-Westmin Master Plan covers this general vision. The closure plan is more specific and is updated more often. Reclamation will be done with native species. The need now is for more details.

The Tailings Disposal Facility reclamation plan has been drafted and just recently submitted to Ministry of Mines for their review and disbursement to other government agencies including BC Parks. The next overall mine Closure Plan is still being developed (new one is required approximately every five years).

SPPAC would like to get a copy of the plan, and then discuss with Anne Moody from the Ministry of Mines at a future SPPAC meeting. SPPAC should concentrate on the broader questions. The consensus of SPPAC is that more detailed information is needed. SPPAC recommends getting a copy of the draft plan for the next meeting, and asking Anne and Ivor to come to next meeting.

The long term goal is to return the mine site to Class 'A' park status. There will be some buildings remaining and some hydro production kept for running the pumps and a need for some staff to be there for long term monitoring and any waste treatment required.

The mine's PUPs are being renewed now. There will be little change with the focus being on upgrading the permits into present day format, while clarifying previously confusing wording and/or deleting any items that are no longer relevant. New site plans and drawings will be included with the new permits. Hardolph will ask Andy to ask NVI for mapping information that he has been trying to get. Information will be brought to SPPAC when available.

The Jim Mitchell spillway project will go ahead this summer. The earthen dam will be raised 3 m as well mandated by Dam Safety to allow for adequate "freeboard" in storm conditions. There will be an increased need for more material to do this and is expected to come from both an old coffer dam on the lake bottom which is exposed at low water and the original gravel pit located nearby in the Class 'B' park.

The mine is also currently exploring a new clean fill site near the core racks. Test pits have been dug to confirm type and depth of fill and NVI has advised of good results. If moving ahead (likely) a detailed plan will be submitted to BC Parks and Ministry of Mines for review and approval. The project will require logging of this area with the sale of any merchantable timber going into the Park Enhancement Fund. This was talked about at a previous SPPAC meeting.

7. Volunteer Strategy Update & SPPAC Input Discussion Tawney/Andy

SPPAC wrote to the Regional Director in October asking for more staff time in order to coordinate volunteer work. This issue has been talked about at other stakeholder meetings. This issue has been identified provincially and as a result, a Provincial Volunteer Strategy is being created. Andy is on this strategy committee. There are nine province wide workshops being held to receive public feedback. The themes being considered at these meetings are liability coverage, recognition of volunteers, communication, a simplified application process, facilitating networking, use of power tools, needs for work, merging management and volunteer priorities, youth, and partnerships.

A summary of the workshops will be provided later this Spring or Summer. There may be long term, mid term and short term goals created from this process. A big problem for Parks is having the resources to match volunteer desires. There is a need to build trust and work together efficiently. WCB regulations do not apply to volunteers, however, Parks policy is to treat the safety of volunteers the same as their employees so the same WCB regulations are used.

Resources for volunteer projects are limited. Parks budget this year will be approximately the same as last year. This represents a cut as other costs are increasing.

Parks may be able to post its annual management plan on the park website so groups could see what is needed and hopefully take on some of the projects. The Volunteer Strategy Committee is also looking into the possibility of a volunteer specific website where volunteers could view previously identified projects in any park. This would ensure support from BC Parks staff and potentially move the project ahead more efficiently.

Peter Rothermel said workshops were held during working hours so some couldn't attend. The online feedback process isn't available yet. Andy is willing to arrange a meeting for Peter's group with a staff person at an appropriate time. Andy will check on the online survey to make it available to Peter. Peter needs a few weeks lead time for a meeting to get people out to it. The next FMCBC is on April 7th at Quality Foods in Qualicum Beach. Peter requested some workshop guidelines so that the group could discuss the volunteer issues independently thereby avoiding the need to have BC Parks staff present. Andy will send information to Peter.

Parks' will share their Annual Management Plan list with SPPAC for their information.

8. CWR Permit – CWR plans and timelines

Tawney

The PUP has been finalized and the Permittee will initiate it's design planning this year. All plans have to be approved by BC Parks prior to any work taking place on the ground. CWR is currently is/has finalizing their securities and will also be setting up plots to monitor trail conditions and potential impacts. Tawney asked for a copy of the final PUP as SPPAC hasn't received a copy yet.

FOSP has a lawyer and is preparing a potential legal case to challenge the PUP. This will take a few more weeks.

9. Mt. Washington Local Area Plan – review of future draft

Tawney

SPPAC wrote Don about the impacts of Mount Washington Resort on the park. Examples were given of changes seen over the years. SPPAC asked for a comprehensive water management plan and a monitoring plan to be put in place. Don replied Parks have already expressed similar concerns and letters have been sent to the Regional District consultant. The draft LAP should be available later this month or in April. This process is being lead by the Comox Valley Regional District as (the Resort is outside the park).

SPPAC would like to review the draft plan when it is available. The website is at <http://www.mountwashingtonirpc.ca/index.html> SPPAC may have to communicate by email when the draft is published as the whole process is to be completed by May which is before the next SPPAC meeting.

10. Public Question Period

Peter Rothermel asked about the ranger cabin at Helen McKenzie and its possible rental to the Alpine Club of Canada. If it was to be rented it would have to be made available to the general public, not just one group, so anyone could use it if they wanted to. The proposal came in from the ACC which mainly described making modifications to the cabin, but Andy sent the proposal back asking for more details on the actual use of the cabin. Parks has indicated they would consider proposals for Ranger Cabin use but only if there are public benefits. Peter says ACC would be good stewards, but most Vancouver Island members are anti-huts. This would be a good location for avalanche courses. If the cabin was available to all there would be more public benefit. Agreed.

A question was asked about the relationship between this proposal and a commercial guide who already has a permit to operate in the park. Andy explained that the ACC certified guide had identified the potential opportunity and discussed it with the ACC to have them submit a proposal.

Having the ACC taking care of the hut is one thing, but if random groups use it there is more risk. It was not built for public use, but for Park Rangers. Currently the facility is used in the summer by the Park Facility Operator, but is underutilized both in summer and winter.

Propane is flown in to the cabin to supplement wood burning heat (wood is flown in each Fall ready for Spring/Summer and in case of Winter emergencies). Could this be done while sewage is being flown out at end of season to ensure extra helicopter trips are not being made? Yes – this is what is being done now.

Is SPPAC supportive? There seems to be some interest and agreement about the underutilization of the cabin. Public benefit is important

Other updates by Andy:

- Andy reported on potential capital projects this year depending on approved budgets. Priorities are backcountry trails and Paradise Meadows bridge repair. He is hoping for \$100,000 but the amount available is not yet known.
- More interpretive wheelchair accessible signage at the visitor's center is needed.
- The Heber diversion decommissioning is going ahead as previously discussed.
- The backcountry operator contract has been renewed for 2 years (Bedwell trail, Elk River trail, Forbidden Plateau trail).
- Snowmobile compliance work is continuing this season. Park staff are going visiting staging areas on random weekends (Wood Mountain, the Strathcona Parkway and Piggot Creek) to meet and advise snowmobilers about park boundaries and restrictions. Helicopter patrols are also planned. Snowmobiles are not illegal within Wood Mountain Park, but warned about going into Strathcona (no ATV's or 4x4's allowed in summer).

Next Meeting: June 15, 2012