

**STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
FINAL MINUTES of  
October 19, 2012– Rath Trevor Park, Parksville**

**SPPAC MEMBERS:** Tawney Lem (Chair), Philip Stone, David Campbell, Peggy Carswell, Erik Holbek, Hardolph Wasteneys

**Regrets:** Allison Mewett, Nick Page

**BC Parks:** Andy Smith

**Recorder:** John Milne

**Nyrstar Mine:** Ivor McWilliams, Robert Behrendt

**Public:** Michael Taylor

**1. Opening Remarks**

**Tawney Lem**

Tawney welcomed everyone and called for introductions

- 2. Approve agenda** – The public comment period was moved up so Michael Taylor could leave and return to Gold River. **All**

- 3. Approve July 13, 2012 minutes** **All**

The last meeting's minutes were accepted as circulated.

**Action – These minutes will be posted on BC Parks' website. Andy will arrange this.**

**4. NVI Update**

**Ivor / Robert**

Ivor and Robert gave an update on what has been happening at the Myra Falls mine. They gave a Powerpoint Presentation which was given to BC Parks and SPPAC.

Robert introduced Nyrstar and spoke of its goals. This year and last year were both successful. The life of the mine is likely to be determined by the life of the tailings disposal facilities. Mine staff is working on a 20 year plan. Regarding safety, the mine operation has almost one year without a lost time injury, and they almost made 2 years without a reportable environmental non-compliance. However on October 5<sup>th</sup> approximately 300 litres of slurry escaped on to the roadside by Myra Creek, which unfortunately was considered a non compliance.

The mine currently employs 287 people, and more are to be added over the next couple of years bringing total employment to almost 400 people. Almost 100% of the mine's electrical power will be supplied by hydro sources once the Jim Mitchell spillway enhancement project is completed in 2013. This has been a very busy year for staff as they dealt with permits, closure plans, and reclamation plans. The Mine is a healthy efficient operation right now. Robert said the culture on site has changed, and a main objective is to keep people and the environment safe. The business is now officially called Nyrstar Myra Falls Ltd.

Phillip asked about the potential to make public access around Jim Mitchell Lake easier. Currently there is no trail along the lake shore. A safe crossing of the dam and spillway would help access the south side of the lake which is a more logical route. There is a safety issue as a result of stumps and mud at the upper (west) end of the lake if someone is using a canoe for access. There could also be a better portage between Jim Mitchell and Thelwood Lakes.

Andy asked if there is a real need and desire for a trail around Jim Mitchell Lake. He suspects use is not that great and anyone travelling towards Thelwood Lake can use boat/canoe access. The rest of the committee had no further comments. SPPAC should ask other groups such as FOSP, FMCBC and CDMC for their opinion. Something could be put in local newspapers or on the website to gain feedback on this issue.

Robert will take a look at the south side of Jim Mitchell to see if building a trail is feasible. Access would require a bridge, as access over the spillway is not possible.

It was asked if there is a list of other potential projects like this for Strathcona. Andy says he maintains a project list which is updated annually. Peggy suggested engaging with the broader public to discuss potential projects and partnerships. Peggy complemented Nyrstar staff on their attitude and how things have changed from the old days.

On October 5<sup>th</sup> there was a slurry spill resulting from the failure of a buried clamp causing a pipeline to rupture. This type of clamp was previously removed and banned from use on the site however this one was buried and as a result its presence was unknown. About 300 L spilled onto the roadside near the Backfill Plant and some ended up in Myra Creek. As required, the incident was immediately reported to the Provincial Emergency Response Program (PEP). Sampling was done, and the spill was cleaned up and the pipe repaired using a weld rather than clamp. Slurry is ground up rock with some minerals in it. 90% of the minerals are recovered from the ore, and the 10% not recovered is in this waste material. It is inert, but acidic. Tests showed all metal levels complied except for lead. The slurry was to be pumped underground into a mined out area for disposal.

The annual Ministry of Environment inspection was conducted a week later. Nyrstar takes non-compliances seriously. The inspection reports have a lot of detail in them. Part of the protocol for a reportable incident is to notify Parks, the City Campbell River, VIHA, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

The Ministry of Environment and/or Environment Canada may or may not issue fines for such incidents. Fines are more likely if there appears to be frequent incidents and a lack of care.

As requested Nyrstar will make these reports available to SPPAC when completed.

Peggy asked if any public interest groups monitor the mine area. Other than the government regulating divisions, the local Campbell River Environmental Committee may. Strathcona Park Lodge also monitors water quality regularly at their site.

**Environmental Performance** – The Ministry of Energy and Mines geotechnical inspection was done on Sept 20, and the annual Ministry of Environment inspection was done on Oct 12th.

**Park Use Permits** – The old PUP's were renewed for another 20 years until 2032. Three old permits became two new ones. One new PUP covers the mining operations in the Class B park, while the other PUP covers activities in the hydro associated activities/facilities within the Class A park.

Nyrstar's Reclamation Security Bond has been increased to \$45.8 million from \$38.3 million. More increases to this bond are planned over the next 3 years to bring the total to approximately \$70 million. This fund protects the taxpayers so they don't have to pay for reclamation. There are additional securities required by the Park Use Permits to cover current operations and any non-compliance while the mine is operating. While there is adequate funds for complete reclamation, it is interesting to note that the majority of reclamation costs relate to treating water not revegetation.

**Water Quality Objectives** - New objectives are being developed to cover Myra Creek, Thelwood Creek and/or Buttle Lake. This is being done for benchmarking and guidance, not for regulatory reasons. These benchmarks are likely to concentrate on Zinc as it is soluble and easy to sample for and is a good indicator of other metals. This water quality data will be useful when the mine closes. Regulatory objectives are different in that metal levels must be under a certain number at all times. Myra Creek has elevated levels of some metals due to natural sources even without the mine. When new mines, benchmarks are now set before mining begins. This is an old mine, and therefore benchmarks were set prior to operations beginning. This work benchmark development is done by professionals, not mine employees. It will take a few years to establish this data. This was initiated by the Ministry of Environment.

**Jim Mitchell Spillway Upgrade** – The project has not yet been officially approved as BC Parks (Andy) is waiting to get details concerning any potential impacts resulting from the need to remove more gravel and rock from the original borrow pit area and other work associated with the need to raise the earthen dam an additional metre. The Dam Safety department was not comfortable with the height of the earthen dam. It had to be raised by putting material on top, which was a new parameter. More information is required to confirm how much material is needed, where it is being taken from and any associated potential impacts. This had not been covered in the original impact assessment so it must be dealt with before approval is given.

## 2012 Construction Projects –

**Raising Lynx Tailings Facility** - The tailings pond berm was enhanced this year and in each subsequent year it will grow in height to contain the waste material. This is being built to withstand a minimum of a 1 in 1,000 year seismic event. Nyrstar is still hoping to put most of their waste material underground. The goal is to keep the paste plant running when the mine closes and put as much waste underground as possible, including material now stored on the surface. Any water escaping from the tailings facility is captured by a pipe and treated.

**Core Rack Area Borrow** or **CRAB** as it is known, is the current source of clean fill (clean glacial till left from a glacier). This is needed because no other sources are available. Old sources are either mined out or currently inaccessible. This fill will be used to both complete the seismic upgrade work of the Tailings Disposal Facility (TDF) in 2012-13 and to place a cover on the TDF over the next 3 years.

There are a number of other sources available on closure, e.g. under the mill, but this won't be enough to complete the reclamation, so the mine will have to find more clean fill eventually. The CRAB is estimated to contain 250,000 cu m and it will take 300,000 cu m to cover the TDF waste

Peggy asked about the impacts of removing the forest to access the fill. Ivor advised that for each ha of area disturbed, 6 - 7 ha can be reclaimed. The possibility of importing material into the site is negated by the risk of importing non-native species into the Park.

The Park Use Permits do allow these activities and impacts, which were always understood with the mine operation and closure.

Andy explained the PUP's allow operations only in certain identified areas of Strathcona Westmin Park. While activities may be allowed, any plans impacting new areas must be approved by BC Parks as well as Ministry of Mines and therefore SPPAC will have opportunities for review. Peggy said with cutbacks and current government philosophy and practice, there are fewer opportunities for public consultation. She would like to see more public engagement in such decisions, and agrees with Ivor that there are more people than those in this room that should be involved with these large complex issues. SPPAC needs to have a detailed discussion about outreach with the public (a separate topic). How do we share information with the public?

The TDF berm is to shield the tailings inside its enclosure from being released into Myra Creek in the event of a major earthquake. The engineered berm should ensure all tailings are contained during any major event.

The TDF Closure Plan was submitted to the Ministry in Feb 2012. Some responses, including BC Parks were received by Ministry of Mines, but Nyrstar has not had an official response from the Ministry of Mines. Nyrstar should hear something soon.

The Lynx Diversion Ditch Review is underway. The TDF ground water model is being expanded for site wide application, but must wait for the Ministry to respond. This is a frustrating wait.

Hardolph asked about structural geology information concerning old slides and potential risks of major bedrock slides from above the mine site. Ivor said this kind of assessment has never been requested by Ministry of Mines and therefore not done to his knowledge. Some surveys showed no risk to the Lynx Diversion from potential slides of rock debris. The Old Lynx Slide happened about 600 years ago. Ivor said they are asked about mapping debris flows, but not asked about bedrock type failures.

### 5. Letter from Ron Quilter

Ron Quilter, the current Section Head, will be retiring after 35 years with BC Parks. As Ron was unable to attend this meeting due to an accident (currently recovering) prepared a letter for Andy to read expressing his thoughts about SPPAC. Ron considers SPPAC one of his career highlights and passed on his thanks to all members while noting some of SPPAC's accomplishments over the years.

### 6. Public Comment Period

Michael Taylor from Gold River thanked SPPAC for what it's done over the years. His first point was about the profile of SPPAC and how there is a need to encourage public input. SPPAC is the best and only forum for the public to have input currently, unless there is a major issue of some sort to prompt a more official and timely public process. He suggested

streamlining the mechanisms for input to make it easier for the public... Michael's background is in land use management in Australia. He believes conflict comes from the lack of communication. There are other models about that could potentially be reviewed which may help avoid confrontation. Michael said Strathcona Park appears to be an island, surrounded physically by logging operations and community development, as well as from a decision making perspective. An example of this lack of communication was an issue regarding BC Hydro and the climbing community when the Crest Creek Crags area was impacted while the company did maintenance work. This conflict could have been avoided by B.C. Hydro talking to the public.

Another issue is the continued loss of access to the Park. It is getting more difficult to get into the Park for various reasons in a multiple places. In Australia there is legislation forcing stakeholders to communicate. This could perhaps be done here if even on a volunteer basis. Informing people can prevent a lot of problems.

Tawney agrees that communication and effectiveness must be priorities for SPPAC. SPPAC needs to be more proactive, rather than reactive. Michael emphasized there needs to be a mechanism for improving communication.

Phillip commented about how business is done here in B.C., with Ecosystem Based Management being one of the models here.

There is interest in SPPAC in following up on these ideas. Andy brought up the idea of having a forum on line. It would need a moderator and some work, and would need to be publicized. Topics for discussion, SPPAC minutes, etc. could be distributed this way. Hardolph suggested a central on line map with links identifying the locations of issues/concerns could be a good idea. There should be one central hub for people to go to. It could be an RRS feed for people to sign up for notices. Discussion took place about a website and how many would use it. Who would do the work to set up and maintain a site? Social media such as Twitter or Facebook could be useful as could Google Earth. There could be a subcommittee of SPPAC created to set up and manage an on line presence, or perhaps a non SPPAC person may be willing to do this as a volunteer.

Peggy suggested having periodic meetings in various communities to host the public for discussion and find out about issues. Face to face contact is still really important in order for people to discuss issues one on one.

Note - in the past SPPAC moved meetings around to various other communities, specifically Courtenay and Port Alberni

The Terms of Reference for SPPAC is silent on this topic. Andy advised that while he believes that such enhancements meet the intent of SPPAC, i.e. provide advice by representing and discussing public issues, he would like to get this confirmed by the Regional Director.

Who would respond to what? In setting up any new public input process, care is needed on how responses are made. SPPAC members need to be careful when expressing personal opinion in public when representing SPPAC and members shouldn't debate.

Erik thinks the priority should be to improve existing tools like the BC Parks website.

If SPPAC starts asking for public input, it must be taken seriously, and they, the public, must know it is being considered.

SPPAC could potentially have an independent website, and a Facebook page could also be used to direct people to it.

Peggy will do a mock up of a simple SPPAC website and send it out for review and discussion prior to SPPAC making any recommendation to the Regional Director... It will not be like the BC Parks website. Andy will check with Don Cadden to see if this is acceptable. Andy supports this direction. A website could include minutes, announcements, and a call for agenda items. It can also have a link to B.C. Parks' website. A member of the public requesting an item on the agenda would see the results in the following minutes. This may also facilitate communication within SPPAC.

Peggy asked Michael for information on what other governments do, i.e. Australia.

Hardolph would like to receive future SPPAC agendas sooner, so he can circulate it and get feedback from other people in the community in preparation for the meeting. SPPAC members are able to go to the broader community for feedback.

**Action - SPPAC members will approve minutes in a timely manner, and get feedback from others. SPPAC members are to review BC Parks' website and send suggestions to Andy. Peggy will create a sample website for review.** Andy will discuss issue with the Regional Director to confirm support or any restrictions.

**7. Campfires in the Park**

Phil

There wasn't time to discuss this issue, so it will be carried forward to the next meeting.

**8. Logging viewable from the Park**

Andy

There also wasn't time for this issue either, so it could be carried forward as well.

**9. Public access to the east side of the Park through TimberWest lands**

Phil

Erik said new legislation is coming regarding roads on Crown land. They can be kept open, if someone will take on the liability and do the maintenance. This is still being drafted.

Other roads, while not restricted, are not being maintained, or have been deactivated which makes public access difficult or impossible. Other roads are just being locked even though they are passable. Some outdoor clubs have negotiated access with TimberWest for leading members on scheduled trips as long as they get prior approval and confirm they are covered by adequate and appropriate insurance. Philip thinks the government needs to deal with this issue and maintain access to the park... Philip believes it is the government's responsibility to resolve. This is beyond SPPAC's influence. (Note – since the meeting, Andy has forwarded our issues and confirmed that there will BC Parks representatives taking these issues forward while the new Natural Resource Road Act is being developed).

There was a discussion about TimberWest and Island Timberlands, and their relationship with the public. Andy will talk to TimberWest representatives and invite them to a future SPPAC meeting. Michael mentioned including Western Forest Products. Peggy suggested setting specific details about areas and access issues so the meeting would be focused. Western Forest Products operates on crown land which is different than how TimberWest operates. There is a need to find successful examples of public access on private lands to use to show how things could be done.

**10. Draft letter re: logging revenues into the PEF**

Tawney

Time ran out for this item. It will be carried forward to the next meeting.

**11. Strathcona update**

Andy

Andy's update which was circulated is attached below. Some discussion items can wait for the next meeting.

Snowmobile use is an ongoing problem, and is very difficult for Parks to deal with. Helicopter flights are expensive and making random visits to the popular staging areas is becoming less effective (most if not all people contacted have been contacted before and understand the regulations). Most club members abide by the rules; it is a minority of random independent riders who are choosing to ignore the rules.

Campfires in the Park also is an ongoing problem. Is this rule enforceable? SPPAC believes the rule should be maintained but that an educational program needs to be conducted to help with this.

Donner Lake/Kunlin Lake – Access into these lakes is becoming difficult due to vegetation encroaching the road and erosion along the roadway becoming more severe. It may be possible to use third party volunteers to open up these roads. This could be a center point for a community meeting in Gold River. This will be discussed at the next SPPAC meeting.

Erik asked if it would be possible to have a map of Strathcona Park available for future meetings. Andy will look into providing one.

The Divers Lake cabin – the footprint appears to be slowly expanding... This could become a problem. Erik will ask some people he knows about this and get more information as to who a good spokesperson might be. Andy indicated that he had no problems with the cabin to date and supports leaving it, but wants to establish communication with the users so that the limitations are understood and agreed to.

12. **Next Meeting:** Regular and NVI – January 16 or 18, 2013 in Courtenay has been postponed as first determined until a new date and location venue is confirmed by SPPAC in January 2013. **Supplement to this will be posted when new information becomes available.**

The following is the text of Andy's Park update circulated before the meeting:

**Strathcona Update for SPPAC  
October 19., 2012 (Rathrevor Meeting)**

**Strathcona Staffing** – We had two Rangers this season. Zsana Tulcsik (Senior Ranger) whose term will end November 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jeff Hoy (Ranger), who completed his term September 7<sup>th</sup>.

**1) NVI/Breakwater**

Presentation provided at October 19, 2012 SPPAC meeting by NVI staff.

- Core Rack Area Borrow site project (CRAB – Clean Fill) – NVI completed logging of site in early September. Merchantable timber has now been scaled and will be posted for sale by BC Timber Sales. Once successful bidder has been chosen, BC Parks will issue permit for sale. Revenue will be split between BC Timber Sales and BC Parks, with the majority of money going into BC Parks "Park Enhancement Fund".
- Tailings Dam Facility Closure Plan – BC Parks has submitted their response to the Ministry of Mines referral. The response contained good input from SPPAC's mine representative – Hardolph Wasteneys
- Jim Mitchell Lake Spillway Project – BC Parks has not given final approval at this time and no ground work has commenced. BC Parks is still waiting for updated information from RESCAN, NVI's environmental consultant. Information requested concerns confirmation regarding the extent of the borrow pit impacts (mandatory raising of the earthen dam due to Dam Safety requirements will require removal of material from existing borrow pit).

**2) Capital Projects**

This fiscal \$65,000 of capital funding was allocated to Strathcona Park for the following:

- Replacement of the Paradise Meadows Loop Trail Bridge – Work started the first week of October and will be completed by end of October.
- Replacement of boardwalk (approximately 50 metres) and toilet facilities at the Battleship Lake Day Use Area – all work was started at end of September and is now complete.
- Condition assessment of the Elk River Trail – Site visit completed October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Report being prepared.

**3) Heber Diversion Penstock Decommissioning**

The Heber dam located outside the park has been completely removed and the site reclaimed. In addition, the wooden pipeline both inside and outside the park has been removed and the creosote impacted ground been stripped and transported to a barge in Campbell River. All pipeline materials along with the stripped dirt will be taken to toxic waste disposal facility in Richmond BC. The reclamation work along the corridor has been well done and is ready for spring 2013 planting.

**4) CWR Park Use Permit** - Only some preliminary trail planning took place this season. A management plan prescription has been postponed until after the judicial review has been completed in February. BC Parks has submitted a response to the Friends of Strathcona Park's court petition.

**5) Backcountry**

**Della Falls** – New steel cable railing installed on steel, box-beam bridge; new signage (no fires; toilet, food cache) installed at main upper camp and at falls camp; z-best toilet installed on new aluminum base at upper camp; ½ km of trail brushing through avalanche corridors completed; garbage/wooden debris flown out.

**Plateau Ranger Cabin** – all security shutters repaired/replaced with small protective awnings installed to shed snow. Work done by Courtenay Glass.

**Wolf River Fire** – Started approximately August 19, 2012. Total size at this time is approximately 315ha. Although not officially declared extinguished any growth will be minimal if it hasn't already gone completely out with the rains over the

last week. There are no immediate plans to fly it again. The next flight will likely be some time in the future when combined with some other operational flight. Generally FLNR will check on a modified response fire in the Spring to ensure they're out.

**Bedwell Lakes Trail Upgrades** – long section of boardwalk that skirts the lakeshore of Baby Bedwell Lake, is being replaced. The new design will replace piles with full width foundations to eliminate the annual breaking of the piles over winter. Should funds permit, bent or broken metal handrails will be replaced with removal posts and sheath brackets which will be easy to remove in the fall and prevent winter damage.

**6) Mount Washington Local Area Plan** – A draft Local Plan was expected for review in Spring 2012 but we have not received anything to date. Our Ecosystems branch has been asked to follow up.

**7) Facility Condition Assessments** – Facility condition assessments were completed this season on all facilities within bundled parks. In Strathcona this includes all facilities in the Buttle Lake/Gold River corridors, including the Buttle Lake Campground, Ralph River Campground and Driftwood Bay group site. These assessments are being rolled up regionally and will be used for baseline data for the tendering of new bundle contracts in the future. Backcountry facility assessments will be done some time in the future (Strathcona's backcountry operations permit does not expire until November 2013).

### **Discussion Issues**

- Snowmobile Use
- Fires in Park
- Crest Creek dredging
- Elk River – bridges/ trail reroutes/upgrades vs nothing
- Gold Lake Access – road is becoming impassable within about 5km of trailhead
- Kunlin/Donner Lake Access – road leading into Kunlin Lake from main logging road is becoming overgrown and rough. Kunlin was once targeted for a vehicle accessible campground, while Donner was identified for recreational canoeing opportunities with a campground at both the north and south end. MP only talks about a trail to Donner and therefore conflicts with canoe potential (a very long way to carry a canoe from Kunlin Lake). Do we want to try an open up the old road to first Kunlin and then beyond to Donner Lake?
- Divers Lake Cabin – inherited with the addition, but currently no formal policy concerning retention and use