

# STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MEETING AGENDA

FEBRUARY 16, 2007 6 PM – 10 PM

BC PARKS BOARDROOM, RATHREVER BEACH PARK

Present – Ron Quilter (BC Parks), Andy Smith (BC Parks), Anne Fiddick (chair), John Wilson, Paul Erickson, Warrick Whitehead, Gary Schaan, John Milne (recorder), public -Jim Fiddick, Peter Rothermel, Dave Vincent, Max McDonald, later representatives of Marmot Recovery Program and Clayoquot Wilderness Resort.

absent – Barb Baker, Rick Rollins

1. **Opening Remarks** - Anne Fiddick

2. **Confirm Previous Minutes** – Note typo errors in minutes need fixing - item 3 review previous minutes, page 3, fourth paragraph typo, last page – typo item 5 under toilets

2. **Additions/Deletions to Agenda** – Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge reps will speak to their proposal, access to Della Falls trail via Gretchen Creek.

3. **Review Previous Minutes**

a) **Paradise Meadows Trailhead Relocation and Visitor Center** – Andy spoke about the entrance way and new sign. The new trail was finished last November, and will be opened in the spring. A pit toilet was installed at the trail head. There are some touch ups yet to do - 2 new information shelters need to be installed, a split cedar fence on edge of parking lot slope will be erected in spring, the new mini amphitheatre built next to the proposed building site requires the seating finished, and a granite entrance sign is being fabricated. The sign will be solid granite, carved to resemble the mountain vista as seen from this location and will be located at the entrance to the parking lot. It is 70” high, and is being coordinated by a local Merville company. Andy circulated a picture of what it will look like.

Warrick asked about the Vancouver Island Mountain Sports Society (VIMSS) information from the last meeting. Andy clarified the differences between the planned building in park and the VIMSS building outside of park area. There will be links in programming between the two buildings to help generate revenue to pay the operating expenses of the park building. Gary spoke in support of the plan for the visitor/outdoor center.

The next steps being taken are in planning programming, and a business plan is to follow. Andy mentioned that the Act Now money for capital projects which was expected is not coming through at this time, but it is still being pursued as are matching grants from the Coast Sustainability Trust Fund (\$250,000) and Island Coastal Economic Trust (\$300,000).

There is also concern about winter snow storage. The snow storage is going past where it should be and encroaching on the vegetated area downhill from the parking lot. It is now about 15 feet further than should be, and would have crushed any facilities if they had been installed. The gravel associated with the snow removal will need to be recovered from the trailhead area. Mount Washington resort plans to pull back the snow before it melts, hopefully capturing most of the gravel in the parking lot.

A grand opening of the new trail connector will be planned to encourage people to use the new connection and forget the old one.

Anne asked what the relationship between the Strathcona Provincial Park Outdoor Centre and VIMSS will be. Andy will provide more information. (Andy's comments March 23/07 - the VIMSS board will be voting on whether they will pursue a long term permit for the operation and maintenance of the Outdoor Centre. It is envisioned that the Strathcona Wilderness Institute would then be a sub-group directly responsible for programs within the Outdoor Centre. SWI still needs to confirm this as well)

**b) Bedwell Trail/Clayoquot Wilderness Resort** (Jim Dehart from CWR was available to answer questions) The CWR proposal is to be taken to public meeting. Park staff met with John Caton and Jim Dehart to discuss what to do. The Draft Background document was distributed to try to address concerns raised by SPPAC in the past. A questionnaire is included and will be available for the public meeting. Also, a copy of the proposed park use permit is attached. The plan is to have meetings held in late March or early April. The meeting locations are planned for Tofino (May 8<sup>th</sup>) and the Comox Valley (May 9<sup>th</sup>). Park staff and some SPPAC members would be in attendance. It would be an open house format.

Time is needed to digest document as it was just distributed tonight. Ron is hoping to get feedback from SPPAC members within a week.

John Wilson asked about the format. Will it be an open house or meeting format? He thinks there should be a community of people who can discuss the issues and hear what each other has to say. John likes a combination of the two. Anne thinks there should be a common ground so everyone hears what others have to say. There should be a display, informal discussion, and a meeting to elicit comment. This results in a consistent presentation from proponent so different information is not presented to different people. Andy is worried about stacked meetings (representing either far right or left). Anne has chaired these kind of meetings, and said the proponent needs to hear what people have to say. It is a chance for information to be given out, and feedback received. The proponent needs to have an open mind. It's about attitude. They need to hear what people are objecting to, so they can react to their concerns. This format is acceptable to Jim Dehart. Ron Quilter said parks have had some meetings ambushed where the results of meeting didn't match what they thought the general public felt.

Warrick would like a meeting held that would be more accessible to people at the south end of the island, perhaps Nanaimo. Jim Dehart wants Tofino to be a location because that's where they operate. Ron mentioned meeting turnouts in the past have been good in the Comox Valley, and weaker in other communities.

Information will be made available on a website, and the questionnaire can be printed out from there and mailed in. Gary asked if people would be able to access comments on line. The answer is no. A consultant will do a report based on feedback received. This consultant should be independent.

SPPAC is asked to respond to this document within a week and get back to Ron or Andy. The questionnaire will give people a chance to be on Park's mailing list.

Jim Fiddick asked about manure management. He noticed it is not in the document. Jim D responded that horses will eat sterile feed. Jim F said they still shit. What should be done about it. His experience as a wrangler is that they pick up manure after themselves. Ron Q will research into this. Jim F asked about keeping trails clear of excrement. This is a source of conflict with other users.

**c) Marmot Reintroduction** – Don Doyle, Malcolm McAdey and Andrew Bryant addressed SPPAC. A handout had been distributed to SPPAC members earlier.

A detailed work plan on the Greig Ridge reintroduction plan was done.

Gary asked about the impact on other species such as the white-tailed ptarmigan. What are the protocols? The Marmot is not the only species at risk. Don answered that there are no impact of marmots on ptarmigan. Gary meant what is the impact of people and helicopters on ptarmigan? Gary would like an impact analysis done on the impact of people being there for long periods of time. Ron Q mentioned that an impact assessment is done on any new activity in park, and will be done in this case. ( It will be a level one impact assessment – which would indicate whether or not a level 2 or 3 assessment should be done). Marmot recovery staff will be trained so as not to do any damage.

Andrew mentioned they have lots of experience working in sensitive alpine areas. Gary said training and protocols need to be put in the plan. Andrew and Dom committed to carry out research on the ecological impact of reintroduction activities in advance, and to put in place protocols and training for staff, for example contacting UBC Professor Kathy Martin on potential impact on white-tailed ptarmigan.

Dave asked about the need to be on site all the time. Can we do with less? This proposal is to work 10 days on and 4 off. Don replied this is first time they will be working in the park, and they want to do research to find out how best to do this. Dave said more of this needs to be in the document, and the plan needs to be justified. Andrew said they have learned a lot over the years, and have more knowledge than they used to, and are becoming much more effective. Because this is a new site, they need to study it

intensively for two years, then costs would necessitate less activity in this area. They need to find out the level of predation on marmots.

Dave said the use of helicopters have the most impact. Don replied it is not practical to hike in and out. Don is looking for guidance as to flight paths, landing sites, elevations etc. He noted the impact of people is greater than helicopters. He admits this is against the park management plan, but in this case is justified. John Wilson suggested hiring porters to carry supplies in to free up researchers to travel fast and light.

Dave said this plan doesn't have options, there is just one proposal.

Warrick explained various ways of releasing marmots (hard or soft). He thinks locations outside or adjacent to park should be chosen first, then to move into the park after impacts have been determined. This plan is premature. Warrick would support it later when details have been worked out.

Ron queried some of Warrick's points about the level of impact being felt from this. He pointed out that the Ministry of Environment has accepted this in principal. Marmot recovery is also accepted in the management plan. Dick Heath has given the go ahead, and is not taking the previous advice of SPPAC. We are here to determine the details of this plan, not whether or not it goes ahead.

Anne referred to the direction of the Master Plan in 2001, and read the relevant section.

Don pointed out research done elsewhere is not necessarily applicable to Strathcona Park. New research will answer these questions.

Paul asked what would constitute success or failure of this experiment? The answer is the same as elsewhere. They expect some short term results. Failure would be the marmots don't survive.

Dave asked what is the chance that after two years they would need to extend the program? Answer is: slim. Dave would like some of this to be stated in the proposal.

Warrick asked why not try this outside the park? Andrew said this site looks good, and marmots historically lived there. It is a large area, and affords good habitat. Other sites outside the park are not as good.

Ron summed up by pointing out that Don has addressed previous concerns brought up by SPPAC. This is still a DRAFT plan, but much improved. Some of today's concerns will be added. Ron invites further comments within a week to be sent to him.

SPPAC would like to be kept up to date on how things are going. Don will send out weekly updates when research begins. Information will be on their website ([www.marmots.org](http://www.marmots.org)), and linked to the Strathcona Park website. Also information will be available at the new Visitors' Center at the Paradise Meadows trailhead. Also, a sign will

be erected at the trailhead to Greig Ridge asking the public not to disturb the experiment. It will be located away from areas usually frequented by the public to reduce potential conflicts.

**d) Unfettered Access** – This will be referred to the next meeting. BC Federation of Mountain Club legal research is still being done. Land removed from TFL is being treated like private land. How will Western Forest Product's removal of private land from its TFL affect access to the park, especially in the Gold Lake area? Anne suggested this issue should be dealt with at the ministry level as it probably affects other parks as well. It was decided to ask Dick Heath about this. SPPAC is asking for clarification of points brought up in the Ministry of Forests press release Gary gave to Ron, specifically guarantees of continued recreational access.

The need to guarantee access at the mouth of the Bedwell River around CWR was mentioned. (see document given earlier by CWR).

**e) Membership** – This is Anne's last meeting, Frank Hovenden is not longer on the committee, John and Sandy are getting close to their 7 years term. Rick Rollins will probably drop out due to other commitments. About 4 new members will be needed by the fall. There is a possibility that Andy may replace Ron as Park staff person on SPPAC. Other user groups around the region want similar input as SPPAC's to parks resulting in more demands of Park staff time. Can we get by with smaller group? Do the SPPAC Terms of Reference need updating? SPPAC now consists 10 members of the public. Does the structure need changing? Ron thinks committee has been very successful over the years.

Anne thinks SPPAC should continue, perhaps with 6 people. It has been difficult to have 10 members. The number on committee has little impact on staff time, but some impact on cost.

Having the committee helps support park staff, but takes a significant amount of time. SPPAC acts as a failsafe for government as it heads off controversial crises. (e.g. drilling in park, power line in park) It's a sounding board. Also, it is mandated by the Master Plan.

John likes the interdisciplinary makeup of the terms of reference. Warrick likes the Friday evening format, as it makes it easier to attend the meetings.. Warrick wants a minimum of 6 members, but prefers 9. Sandy likes 9 – 10 for the range of expertise and geographical representation it provides. The suggestion is to keep going if members are willing to serve.

The feeling was that 3 SPPAC meetings and 1 mine meeting per year was about right. Advertising for new members is already done to fill vacancies. It is difficult for First Nation people to serve on the committee.

**f) Strathcona Center for Fisheries Excellence** (no update)

**g) NVI Drill Program** – John Wilson gave an update on the Dec 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Cold weather caused a pipe to pull apart and some effluent was lost to the tailings pond. An alarm was sounded, but not heeded. A new protocol has been created on alarms going off to prevent a recurrence. The alarm will keep going until the problem is dealt with. Also, the pipe was relocated to a better place.

A November rainfall event exceeded the planned for 200 year event. As a result, criteria for such an event needs upgrading. Excessive rainfall caused a ditch to overflow, causing water to flow across some tailings. Luckily some equipment was available to fix the problem, and the tailings were hard packed enough so as not to be impacted very much. The site will be redesigned, and suitable equipment kept on site for such an emergency. Also, there were slides on mine roads.

Price Mine is to be reactivated. Highway trucks will be used to move ore. The road will have to be widened. There will be little surface impact other than the road upgrade. 400,000 tons of ore and 200,000 tons of waste will be moved. Repairing the slide on the road has delayed this operation. A light system will be instituted on Jim Mitchell Lake Road to control traffic. More details are to be decided on in the future.

A new proposal for generating electricity will be coming.

Dave mentioned the new management more open than the old body.

Warrick mentioned trees will be planted on berms as part of reclamation.

Drill program – Andy spoke. 3 of 5 drill holes have been completed. Drilling will be completed by the end of May. There is a plan being talked about for gating the main mine site. Tennant Lake trail – The bottom half of the Tennant Lake trail has been fixed. The top half has yet to be done. Hopefully, it will be completed this year.

Andy is wondering about upgrading Price Creek trail to Cream Lake while hauling is taking place on the Jim Mitchell road. This would provide a round trip route in return for temporarily losing Jim Mitchell road access. Current high metal prices mean more money is available from the mine to pay for projects like this. If the mine was sold and prices were to drop, the climate for projects like this would change. Is this a good idea? Are there problems with it? This would be a completely new trail contouring up the other side of valley from old trail. Dave thought there might be a stability problem with that side of valley. What about going up the nose of Sugar Mountain? There would be a need for a campsite in Cream Lake area. Reaction of SPPAC seems positive. Paul is familiar with the route, it has opportunities for campsites in the area, and it is a nice route.

**4. New Business**

**a) Parking at Mount Washington** - Some recent issues have come up. Ron pointed out that winter parking is outside the park on Mount Washington Resort's property. There are procedures in place for parking overnight. Mount Washington Resort is accommodating overnight parking, but still need to clear snow from the lot. Visitors need to talk to Mount Washington because it is their lot. Winter overnight parking for park visitors (the only people allowed to park overnight) has mostly been located close to Raven Lodge. There have been some problems this winter. There is a problem with staff not knowing the system that is in place. A discussion ensued about the situation. There is no perfect solution. Signs need to be visible to public users.

**b) Gretchen Creek Access** – (Barb Baker put this on the agenda) – It was decided to carry this forward to the next meeting where she Barb speak to the issue. The issue deals with access in the Great Central Lake area, and in providing an alternate to taking a boat down the lake. In the Master Plan this kind of access is suggested.

**c) Recognition** – Anne was recognized for her longtime involvement with SPPAC and the Master Plan. Ron mentioned Anne was one of authors of the original Master Plan. A lovely framed photograph taken in the park was presented to Anne in appreciation of all her work

Andy presented a framed certificate to Warrick in recognition of his ecological reserve work.

**d) Election of Chair** - Gary Schaan was elected to replace Anne.

## **5. Park Update** –

- The Alexandra Creek culvert was completed, and a temporary bridge was being removed and reclaimed. Also, a borrow pit is being reclaimed.
- Crest Creek was breached in the November storms, and there were some washouts. The Highways Department or B.C. Hydro will fix the problem. Gravels had built up in creek, so it couldn't handle flows. This is being rectified with fish habitat being created.
- NVI permit fees are in the process of being reviewed. New permit fee criteria may result in a fee increase. Fee criteria will recognize the actual footprint of the mine. NVI is currently collecting all the information for BC Parks to assess. It should be noted that regardless of what the fee may be calculated out as, due to the complexity of the 3 permits held by NVI and the economic base the mine contributes to, any increases could be over-ruled by government as it was in the past.
- The damage to Strathcona Park from storms is not as bad as expected. Bridges and campgrounds seem to be intact. Impacts at the south end of the island were bigger than in Strathcona Park.

**6. Public Question Period** – Jim Fiddick noted Nanaimo Fish and Game clubs were concerned about public access to parks.

John Milne asked for details about the power generation proposal at the mine

NVI wants to meet with SPPAC to discuss a review of new power options, possibly before the next annual SPPAC-mine meeting. Anne expressed concern that it may be the same issue as a few years ago – transmission lines to hook the mine site to the BC Hydro power grid so they can sell surplus power, siphoning water from Greenview and Cariwithen Lakes to increase generating capacity. Producing more power to generate revenue to pay for the closure of the mine has been added as an additional rationale. BC Hydro is looking at green sources of energy, and this is being used as an additional incentive to look at this proposal again. The current closure plan for the mine is from when Boliden owned it, and is to be updated.

Peter Rothermel – With respect to marmots and helicopter flights into the park, Peter suggested that equipment and people could be flown in, and they could hike out cutting the number of flights required. Peter also asked for better signage to help tourists find the park. The response was this was already being looked into for the Strathcona Parkway (upper and lower signs have been removed at some point and need replacing – potential damage during winter is an issue with Highways is an issue to be resolved).

**7. Next Meeting:** - June 1 at Rath Trevor Park -6 – 10 p.m.