

STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FINAL MEETING MINUTES
June 13, 2008 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM
BC PARKS BOARDROOM, RATHREVOR BEACH PARK

SPPAC MEMBERS: Gary Schaan (Chair), Barb Baker, Paul Erickson, Peggy Carswell, Tawney Lem, Dave Campbell, Dave Vincent, Nick Page, Warrick Whitehead

BC Parks: Andy Smith, Sharon Erickson

Absent: Philip Stone, Ron Quilter

Members of the Public: Karl Stevenson, Jennifer Pass

Recorder: John Milne

1. Opening Remarks - Gary Schaan

Gary introduced the various guests.

2. Confirm Previous Minutes - All

Philip emailed a request to make a clarification to his opposition to horses in the park. He added the reasons for his opposition being the introduction of a foreign species to the park environment, and the potential for such an animal to introduce pathogens and invasive plant species in its manure and other secretions that concerns him. John Milne will make the changes to the minutes of the January meeting. Other than this the minutes to the January meeting were accepted as accurate.

3. BC Parks Park Updates - Andy Smith

- New staff has joined parks in this region. Jackie Zinger, Senior Ranger and Randy Mercer, Backcountry Ranger.
- There is a new general manager in NVI mine - **Bob Behrendt**. The access gate to the mine site has had some problems, and is currently being left open. Some thefts occurring at mine site resulted in restricted access to the Bedwell Trail for a short time. This extra security measure has now been discontinued.
- The bridge on the Tennant Lake trail was damaged by snow load. Repairs have been completed on the road to the Bedwell Trail. The Bedwell Trail is temporarily closed because the suspension bridge was damaged by heavy snow. The bridge is crossable, but needs an inspection which Dave Vincent is doing tomorrow (June 14th). Dave Campbell hiked to Bedwell Lake and reported more damage further up to other bridges. The bridge on the Crest Mountain Trail also needs inspection as it is deteriorating.
- The Thelwood hauling plans have been postponed indefinitely. NVI has worked on clearing blow-downs near Upper Myra Falls and Phillips Ridge Trails.
- There will not be a grand opening of the new Paradise Meadows connector trail. The planned event last fall was cancelled due to last minute change of plans by the Minister.

There will be recognition of people/stakeholders involved in the new trail made in local media.

- Mount Washington has donated a 16x20 foot loft building to BC Parks. The basic shell facility, constructed for Mount Washington by Highland Secondary School, will be modified and finished and operated by SWI during summer months as the Strathcona Provincial Park Outdoor Wilderness Centre. It is currently having the finishing touches put on it. Andy listed all the people who have contributed to the project. Andy described what will be done to complete the project. It should be completed within a few months. SWI is the key summer tenant. Parks has accepted the long term maintenance responsibility for the building. There is no need for a business plan, etc. due to its smaller scale compared to what was originally planned. A park use permit will have to be granted to SWI to make this happen. There could be other uses for the building in the winter. Andy passed around some pictures and plans for the building.
 - **Marmots** – On Grieg Ridge 2 have died and 4 survived over the winter. There will be another camp on the ridge this summer and two more releases made.
 - **Capital Funds** – The current budget allows work to be done on boardwalks in the Helen McKenzie area where trails are very mucky. Andy is waiting for further funding to do additional work on the loop. Parks must create a business case for funding requests. There is no money to complete the Paradise Meadows loop at this time (option B in the original plan). The backcountry is being assessed for further damage as the snow melts.
 - The Della Falls trail has damage in the first km – windfall and broken bridges. Gary asked about the campsite situation. Andy reviewed the problem for new members. The campsite had to be moved from a hazardous old growth area. The new location has been flooded out, and hikers can't use it. The old closed campsite is currently being heavily used by large groups. BC Parks cannot upgrade facilities in this location as it is officially closed; therefore a sanitary issue has evolved. Options include; clear cutting the closed campsite to make it safe (not supported internally); re-developing new campsite by falls (area is subject to pre-season flooding and hikers don't tend to use the small site because of short hike to water source); remove all facilities and classify the upper area as wilderness with random camping (will not address sanitation problem). This summer there will be another attempt to count users as the counter was damaged last year and an accurate count could not be done.
 - The Upper Myra Falls trail may be repaired this year. The Elk River trail remains damaged from 2 years ago.
 - A lot of staff time is being spent on new permitting processes. Delays are being experienced. First Nations must be consulted on permit applications and renewals.
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- 4. NVI Mine Presentation - Ben Chalmers/Bob Behrendt (GM)**
- Ben showed a PowerPoint presentation on the topic of power issues. This is a formal notification of opening discussions with SPPAC. NVI wants to know how to structure the discussion, should it include everybody or consist of a smaller committee?

- Ben described current power production situation at the mine. The vision is to operate on 100 % green energy with no diesel power generation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and work within the conditions of the Master Plan for the park.
- The goals are to reduce costs to NVI, reduce CO2 emissions, to improve the air quality in the park, to reduce the risk of fuel spills, and reduce noise pollution.
- NVI is looking to stabilize hydro production based on runoff conditions.
- They have reorganized the mine managers to implement power conservation methods, reduce compressed air use, improve lighting efficiency, resize motors to improve efficiency, make scheduling changes to improve efficiency, and improve the efficiency of underground ventilation.
- Robert said they have to manage well and manage green. They turned off the diesel generators 2 weeks ago, and are working to conserve wherever possible. They want to get more power from the generators using the same amount of water. If they have more water supply, they could run green all year.
- Paul asked if they reduced production, would there be a linear reduction in power use? The answer is no. They are looking at creative solutions. They run out of water in winter and in summer. They can make gains by turning down generators as the level of water gets lower. The turbines date back to the 1980's. Existing weirs are small, and one lake has a siphon on it (McNish). There is no need to siphon any more lakes. They have learned their lesson here, and said they would not consider siphoning any additional lakes.
- Dave Vincent wants to look at life time costs of running with diesel and whether this shortens the life of the mine. The discussion needs to be life time based, not just using annual costs. Reducing production would extend the life of the mine. Ben didn't want to get too technical for this meeting, but he can make data available at some time in the future. Robert said world conditions make life of mine discussions difficult. They prefer maximizing production.
- Dave Campbell asked about some details as to how much increase in hydro generation is needed. Ben said this information is for a future meeting.
- Warrick asked if they want to use more energy in the mine. The answer is no. Future production is not likely to be as high as in the past. So far energy has not limited production in the mine, underground factors have limited production.
- Nick asked about the possibility of tying into the hydro grid after closure. Ben said this is not to be decided until the mine is closed. Society would decide at that time. NVI is not pushing for it at this time, but if the power plant belonged to the park, it might supply money to the park. (Is this true?) There will be power needed to run pumps in perpetuity to treat waste. Long term requirements at closure are for minimal power. (Possibly supplied by a run of the river plant).

- Gary asked about the time line for a dialogue. The answer is the page is blank. Who should be involved? What groups, individuals, geographical boundaries? Anything is possible. Right now NVI wants to talk about the options.
- Paul would like to be informed when a number of options from NVI are being considered. Robert agrees, and adds new ideas may come from anyone on the committee.
- Warrick would like to see NVI proceed with what they are doing now, and work with what they have.
- Ben recognizes how things went wrong in the past, and wants to do things differently this time. If SPPAC doesn't want to hear from them again until feasibility studies are available then this is acceptable to NVI. Tawney likes the idea of having a dialogue now in order to narrow the options and save money. Maybe a subgroup of whoever is interested could sit on such a committee.
- Gary noted there is professional technical expertise in SPPAC which can be used. SPPAC can be used to anticipate public reaction to proposals. Gary suggests the next SPPAC meeting hears another presentation from NVI. The mine subcommittee of SPPAC could be convened earlier than the regular annual mine/SPPAC meeting. Summer is not a good time to meet. Andy can forward communications to SPPAC members.
- Peggy recalled earlier government programs designed to improve efficiencies. She likes Tawney's idea of being preemptive, to check out what is available to help NVI. There are people out there who could be found to help. She would like to meet informally to discuss the topic. Wouldn't it be nice if government would provide support for this kind of joint venture?
- Nick would like SPPAC to provide some options and directions, to look at lakes that are already affected, but not expand into new areas. Ben appreciates finding out the limits to what is acceptable.
- Warrick would like SPPAC to get together to come up with a position. Nick would like to see a document of scoping at the next SPPAC meeting or the one after. SPPAC members can send information, contacts, etc. through Andy.
- SPPAC recommended the limits of options for consideration are no new lakes should be affected; no new penstocks constructed, no connection made to BC Hydro's grid, to look at what is there already first, and choose the lowest impact options.
- Robert gave some publicly available information. There will be 270 employees after layoffs, down from 400. Zinc was over \$200.00 per ton, and is now \$85.00 per ton. The exchange rates experienced a big change which affects sales. Acquiring carbon credits has not been considered yet. The price of zinc is expected to rise in the future. NVI is now producing about 500,000 tons per year, which used to be over 1 million per year. They are now producing about a third of what they did before. Dave Vincent noted the need to consider the context of the options being considered, there are social factors to consider as well.

5. Wood Mountain Park Developments - Andy

- There was a huge grad party there last week with 400 (?) people creating havoc. Wood Mountain is a class C park, normally managed by a board, but the board has been disbanded. There is no budget for this park and the Minister responsible for all decisions at this time. The options for Wood Mountain being considered are: 1) de-park the area (this didn't go anywhere due to liability issues surrounding spills, broken facilities and damage to the area), 2) sell to private developer (can't because still a park), or leave as a Class C park and ask for RFP, (how would it be developed and managed). The Comox First Nation is interested in the land, but no details of clean up or assessing costs have been determined. Andy is waiting for more information.
- Ditches were dug and berms and a gate were installed to limit illegal access. Blocking the road further down was considered but is not a realistic option.

6. Bedwell Environmental Impact Assessment Update - Aileen Grant, Forsite

- Aileen Grant of Forsite was hired to do a Level 2 Environmental Impact Assessment of horse use in the lower Bedwell River valley. This was precipitated by the CWR proposal. Aileen is giving information to Bufo consultants who are doing the Master Plan Amendment process, and she has attended all public meetings to understand what the concerns are.
- She walked Bedwell over a 2 day period with a horse expert. Water levels were low, so they could look at the river bed and substrates, tributaries, and possible sediment problems. She approached the assessment as if it was a stream rehabilitation project. She looked at each feature individually, and looked at the surrounding eco systems to anticipate wildlife interactions. She also started with a literature review to look for similar situations elsewhere, and she is going to look at some other areas such as Golden Ears Park, Kunlin Lake, and Shawnigan Lake where the Hundred Mile Ride took place a while ago.
- She described the Bedwell as a typical coastal valley that has been altered by logging which is producing much erosion and sediment. Elk are using the road and river bed and create their own impacts.
- As for applying this information to other areas of the park, literature research shows invasive species are brought in by hikers and wild animals, especially along hydro right of ways. She asks what is the incremental effect of hikers and horses. Corrals can cause a problem. There are old wood box culverts along the old road which are failing and causing problems. They would have to be removed and replaced with other crossings. As for timing – what is a good season to use the area? What time of day? Wildlife impacts are minimal as they habituate with hikers or horses. Regular predictable behaviour mitigates impacts. In the Bedwell there are no archaeological impacts because logging has destroyed the riparian ecosystem.
- Questions were asked by SPPAC members. Information will be sent to SPPAC members by the end of June.
- Dave Campbell asked if she looked at air photos. She has, and is still looking for old air photos. She said the Bedwell is typical of logged valleys. Gravel accumulates, the river channel widens, and erodes more. It takes centuries for old growth structure to come back. Dave Campbell asked about protection of banks. Aileen said anywhere horses cross any

stream the river bank would need protection. She suggests building a gabion (square mesh cage of rock) to protect the bank.

- Warrick asked about the horseman she used as a resource. He is a Hundred Mile Ride participant with 20 years riding experience and experience practicing no impact riding. Warrick asked if a hiker will be taken through. Warrick would like a copy of the contract. Andy said OK.
 - Tawney asked about an archeological study. She mentioned doing Culturally Modified Tree (CMT) assessment and be done after logging because signs may appear on old cedar stumps. Aileen said little remains, with little coarse woody debris.
 - Peggy says there is some value of looking at the impact of horse use and also looking at the impact on hiking from horse use. There is some value in looking at the hiker/horse impact. Aileen said the trail is not good for hikers now. Aileen said wildlife see horses as wildlife, not a person. Andy said Aileen can include information on hiking. Paul said there is lots of information on hiker/horse conflict. A horse trail becomes a horse trail, and hikers go elsewhere. Aileen says there is lots of information on this. There is a lot of elk manure in the Bedwell, so the impact of horse manure on water quality is incremental compared to the quantity of elk manure already there.
 - Dave Campbell asked about the wolf populations in the valley. Aileen is looking for this information. Will wolves become habituated? Also what is the impact of horses in the river stirring up sediment?
 - Warrick visited the north island recently, and is amazed at the damage from storms over the last while. Is climate change being taken into accounts? Note two 200 year flood events have occurred in the last two years. Aileen is doing other work on this. This is happening everywhere. Glaciers are melting, extra sediment is piling up in rivers, and peak flows are impacting fish.
 - Her main point is the Bedwell is already heavily impacted. The additional impact of horses is what? How much extra sediment is going to be created by horses compared to what is already there? The sediment in Bedwell is large, cobble sized, so impacts to fish are minimized.
 - If SPPAC has any questions for Aileen, send them through Andy.
- 7. Mt. Washington Resort & Paradise Meadows Ecology - Nick Page**
- This area has more ecological importance than people realize. This is a high use area, and a large significant wetland area. Nick's concern is with the impact of Mount Washington's building boom. Sediment, changing hydrology, sub alpine urbanization, sewage treatment plant, and snow dumping all have an impact. SPPAC needs to ask for more information from Mount Washington. Can Andy ask the resort for more information on downstream impacts of their activities. Andy said Parks do have specialists from the Nanaimo office working to keep an eye on these impacts.

- Gary asked about the Ecosystem Management Plan already done on this. Andy said meetings to prioritize projects occurred in conjunction with Gary and the MoE Ecosystem Specialist. There have been no funds to complete these projects to date. Nick says parks doesn't need to provide this, the resort does.
- Warrick read a letter regarding cutting trees along the cross country trails. There were 43 trees cut, many of which were healthy. Why is this happening? Andy explained the park use permit has allowed 7 m wide trails and the resort has been operating at less than that since they opened. New wider equipment needs a wider trail. Andy says the trees cut are in the permit area. Warrick thinks this is unnecessary. David Vincent suggested Mount Washington's permit be reviewed in 2010 when it comes up. Warrick asked if there are other permits out there where a similar problem could arise.
- Peggy said permits coming up for review should be looked at to make sure standards from years ago are still acceptable. Maybe some permits needs re-evaluating. Andy noted the backlog in the permitting process he spoke about earlier. SPPAC already deals with all park use permits involving tenure. Nick mentioned previously lists showing all permits were given to SPPAC, and if this happened again, it would be useful. Andy says this is doable, and he will provide such a list. SPPAC members can look at permits with renewal dates.

8. Vision and Plan for SPP's 100th Anniversary - Gary

- 2011 is BC Parks centenary. The focus of SPPAC has been on protecting the park. This anniversary is an opportunity to do something different. There is a lot of development around the park. It is difficult for volunteers to do work in the park. Somehow parks needs to send out a positive message. SPPAC should come up with a plan to celebrate this occasion. This event needs marketing. Andy said there is no allocated budget for 2011 celebrations yet. Parks have created a committee to look at doing something. Local park staff has already been coming up with some ideas. Nick suggests coming to the next meeting with some ideas. Andy will send out some information to SPPAC members.

9. Master Plan Review Open Houses – reports from members - All

- Tawney attended the Tofino public meeting. There were about 30 people there. John Caton and many of his staff spoke about his proposal. CWR and some horse user groups spoke in favour. Speaking against were Friends of Clayoquot Sound and members of the public. It was quieter than she expected. The Ahousaht Band was also represented there. The local newspaper said they were supportive of the CWR proposal, but Tawney said they were not totally supportive at the meeting. They appreciated the opportunity for employment. Now they want to get information. They had concerns about the lack of consulting them. Andy said they have been consulted from the beginning.
- Dave Campbell attended the Courtenay meeting. The proposal was overwhelmingly opposed. Some horse users were supportive, but most everyone else was not. Gary added the horse community was surprised by the emotion shown by the crowd. Gary felt the process was unwieldy.
- Warrick attended at Victoria. He felt it was a small group. Publicity was poor so few people knew about it. Some had no idea what this was about and there was a lack of information. Some were angry and annoyed, and the meeting had an ugly tone. Only 2 people supported

the proposal. One was Brian Gunn from the Wilderness Tourism Association who attended all 4 meetings. Some participants gave information. It ended up being an argument between someone and Brian Gunn. Some good arguments were brought up. Warrick was confused by whether or not it was about CWR. More good came out of it than bad so Warrick gives it a thumbs up.

- Paul went to both the open house and meeting in Victoria. Some participants were from up island and he was concerned about the process. Paul said an effort was made to separate the discussion from CWR but it was obvious it was not, that it was about the CWR proposal (Paul talked to ½ dozen people and their concern was about the short lead time). It was written up in the Times Colonist later which was good, however, the article was confused as well.
- Dave Vincent reported on the stakeholders meeting. He said fire the facilitator to start, the focus wasn't there. It was a poorly organized attempt to achieve getting criteria. Some good things came out of the meeting but on balance it was poor. The CWR proposal was focused on.
- Gary agrees with Dave Vincent. It was unproductive. The facilitator lost control.
- Peggy shares these opinions. She has concerns about how the criteria list was generated. She felt the meeting was being walked through a process to achieve criteria. It was a manufactured process rather than a creative one. One can come up with criteria to mitigate almost anything.
- Dave Vincent disagrees with what the intent of the meeting was for, that it was unclear.

10. Master Plan Review: Next Steps - BC Parks - Sharon Erickson

- Sharon spoke to Parks' position on the process. She said it has been difficult for her to form a relationship with SPPAC. She doesn't have the same kind of relationship as Andy and Ron do with members. Sharon has acquired the budget to support the Master Plan review. BC Parks is involved in more targeted public processes versus the lengthy ones that were involved in the original Strathcona Master Plan and amendment processes.
- Staff has been given no direction to direct the outcome of this process. Criteria could be to exclude horses from park. All input has been documented. Public meeting notes and comments are now posted on the website. Also, two previous public meetings from May 2007 and the Level 2 Assessment process are included.
- Gary said SPPAC committee position is that Park staff has been both neutral and professional in this matter. The committee does not support some public views that the matter has been pre-determined.
- The Next step – How does SPPAC want to be involved? Should there be another meeting? Sharon has been given direction to bring things to a conclusion sooner than later, not to leave things lingering. Someone suggested a meeting before the regular fall meeting. Andy noted SPPAC already said they didn't support the amendment process in regards to the CWR permit but that the current process is about amending the Master Plan to provide clarity in the

wording, therefore does SPPAC want to be involved in assisting with new wording?. Should SPPAC be kept informed, or be a bigger part of the process?

- Tawney asked who is the decision maker on this? Recommendations on the Master Plan Review will go to Minister through the management committee.
- Andy asked for clarification on which issues is SPPAC opposed to, the CWR proposal or the Master Plan review.
- Sharon said the master plan review would inform CWR application.
- Dave Campbell wants to see the Master Plan recommendations information first.
- Paul thinks this is a waste of time since SPPAC recommended against both the Master Plan Review and the CWR proposal. What point is there in being involved in this?
- Andy says the Master Plan is to be amended so does SPPAC want to have input into what the wording is?
- Nick is annoyed that the process has been manipulated into allowing the CWR proposal by choosing wording from a summary that doesn't reflect the content of the document. The two processes (CWR and Master Plan) are linked.
- Barb wants to be kept informed.
- Tawney wants to know how Parks wants to amend the Master Plan since it could go two ways, it could allow or exclude horses from additional areas in the Park.
- Warrick is upset by the whole process and amendments need to be done differently. The whole thing is confrontational. He has objected over and over again, and it keeps coming up again and again. This process won't give the right information. People saying no to horses in park should be listened to.
- Peggy said she thought people on SPPAC would be listened to as would the public. She wants a chance to speak meaningfully. This is hard to do when the next SPPAC meeting is in the fall and the decision will have been made before then. She also noted it's not a personal thing and that staff are doing the best they can. She would like to see the recommendations parks are coming up with. She expressed frustration in the whole process.
- Gary noted the possibility of a summer meeting and how difficult this is. Some SPPAC members want to have more input, some do not.
- Paul said SPPAC is an advisory committee whose advice has not being taken.
- Nick suggested all members be sent information and a meeting set up for those interested.
- Draft documents and information will be sent to members.

- Andy is concerned about a large number of emails being sent out. He would like them kept short and limited in number. Sharon will circulate a proposed Master Plan amendment to SPPAC with the result that the members could review and comment directly to her and/or attend the meeting that Sharon would work with Andy to set up to obtain SPPAC advice.

6. Public Question Period

- Jennifer Pass asked Sharon, “What principles or criteria would you apply to make the recommendations? Will it be by considering the majority of opinion or what? Sharon answered the Master Plan gives direction on making amendments by looking at ecological and biological parameters. It will not be by majority but she will give weight to comments made by the public.
- Jennifer asked, “Will these be subjective?” Sharon said the other thing is to consider is visitor experience based on Parks’ dual mandate of considering both conservation and recreational values. Zoning will also be considered.
- Jennifer asked, “Is the number of people who benefit a factor?”
- Jennifer said she understands the Master Plan Amendment is to be read along with the Master Plan. This plan should be considered over a ten year period but this has not been done. Andy said a lot of things in the Master Plan have not been done and may never get done. Nick noted the Master Plan is to provide guidance.
- Jennifer asked what will be the form of the recommendations?” Sharon answered that they will provide for clarity of wording for the Master Plan.
- When will this be completed? It will be after the Level 2 Assessment is completed by end of June so the Master Plan recommendations will be after that. Public input is still in process until June 20.
- Karl Stevenson said he was impressed by the committee and is heartened. Suspicion is of the process not the people involved. Karl quoted Ron Quilter from the official SPPAC minutes of Oct 26, 2004 which said, “The Lodge (CWR) had applied to take horses in the Park but was turned down. That part of the Park is closed to horses.” Karl asked why it was clear then, but not now? He stated this question was rhetorical.
- Jennifer Pass asked who will actually make decision? Sharon said it may be the Minister and he will have a complete package of public input and summaries related to this matter.
- Karl said he prefers the amendment process happen on a regular basis as planned. Both previous Master Plan processes were better organized and Parks shouldn’t react to situations like this. Could the recommendation be something like, “There is to be no horse use in the park other than in those areas specifically mentioned in the original Strathcona Park Master Plan” without any criteria added?.
- Gary agreed that ideally the Master Plan should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Next Meeting: October 3, 2008