

Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee
(September 29, 2016 - BC Parks Office, Miracle Beach)

SPPAC Members: Philip Stone, Hardolph Wasteneys, Jan Hesselring, Sandra Borton.

Regrets: Greg Johnson, Darren Saare, Kevin McPhedran.

BC Parks: Andy Smith, Aaron Miller, Alec Patterson, Erica McClaren.

Recorder: John Milne.

Public: Jennifer Pass, Ken Rodonets, Erich Schellhammer, Catrin Brown, Nicole Pesonen (Nyrstar), Allen Wells, Bill Phipps.

AGENDA

Introductions

Approve Agenda

The agenda was approved. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved earlier by email and posted on BC Parks website.

Nyrstar Update

Nicole presented updates with a PowerPoint presentation. Nicole's printed report is appended to these minutes.

Nyrstar, originally Zinc Smelting Company, is no longer interested in mining and has/is selling all their mining assets worldwide. While several companies have shown interest, there are currently no serious offers being considered at this time. Prospective purchasers are being made aware of the particular expectations for this mine – reclamation bonding, regulations, etc. Two of Nyrstar's South American holdings have already been sold. Dam safety and closure procedures are continuing as they have been for a while. World commodity prices are the key issue for selling the mine, and these prices have been rising a bit lately.

Upper Perimeter Drain:

The ditch above the old TDF has been upgraded to closure standards, and storage for water from large rain events has been created.

Reclamation Activities:

This year's reclamation activity included treatments to both the Alder Reach above the old TDF and the "CRAB" Clean-Fill Pit which is still being worked on.

Philip noted some of the work being done on the higher slopes is visible from areas adjacent to Buttle Lake and concerned about visual impacts, hoping that such scarring can be minimized. In Phil's opinion the visual impacts from the Buttle Lake Corridor is unacceptable. Andy said the need for clean fill is critical for closure and it is important for the mine to develop a complete plan as to how much volume is needed and where the mine will source it. The planning needs to be done prior to approving new clean fill sites. Nicole said efforts are being made to do restoration work quickly. Philip requested SPPAC get a visual impact model in future. Nicole said efforts to minimize impacts are a priority. Re-vegetation of the site is will be ongoing during operations and as part of closure.

Jennifer Pass asked about an old plan calling for closing the old TDF off by 2013. Nicole replied that some of this work has been done, but hasn't been all completed. Nicole is pursuing a design for the old TDF. Jennifer questioned having plans that are not implemented resulting in spending a lot of money which is wasted.

The new ditch above the old TDF has been completed and has both gravel/rock sections, as well concrete covered sections. This should now be fully capable of accommodating floodwater up to 86,000 liters per second. This will handle clean water coming from outside the tailings.

As well there are drains under the TDF which collect water for treatment, removing sediment acid and hard minerals.

The emergency overflow capacity has been increased a lot to withstand a 1000 year event flood event.

A surge pond was developed to handle 24 hours of extreme flow (1000 year event).

Regarding the site wide closure plan, a final response to all submitted questions is due to be submitted by December 2016 (more details were provided in the PowerPoint presentation). While Nyrstar is still assessing and considering all closure options, they will simultaneously be implementing a standard dry cover option of the TDF while the mine is still in operation. This will ensure no time is wasted on reclamation should other options, including the wetland option, is not pursued.

If the wetland scenario is chosen later, this work will not be wasted but will be incorporated into the new plan.

Nicole admitted the mine site is an eyesore and reclamation would help mitigate this. She also stated there are water quality issues which must be addressed, but no details were given.

In the old TDF, ridges will be created to help control water flow. A thick liner will be used to cover portions of the site to keep water from penetrating the tailings. The quality of the liner has yet to be determined. The shape of the site must be considered and planned to discourage blowdown of any re-vegetation. Native vegetation will be used in reclamation.

Seeing reclamation progress on the TDF is a positive development.

Water from the PAG (Potential Acid Generating) waste rock is collected and treated. PAG waste rock is generally covered and protected, often incorporated into perimeter dams/berms.

Some old waste rock contains enough ore to make it feasible to potentially mine.

Goals of Closure Plan:

5 goals were detailed in Nicole's PowerPoint presentation.

Production estimates were given up to 2018 when the TDF will be full. The waste plant, which will be operational by 2019, will extend life of mine (enables more pumping of waste back into pre-mined cavities).

How long can this scenario continue where money is being spent on reclamation and no revenue coming in, before Nyrstar changes their mind and closes the mine? It was acknowledged that this is dependent on economics and the patience and will of the mine. From a government perspective, no decision is required until the company's permits expire.

The Provincial Government has a reclamation bond set aside. The mine's current bond is \$71 million. \$2.6 million is to be spent on reclamation this year and more is planned for next year. The government bond is reviewed every 5 years and adjusted if necessary. Nyrstar's ongoing reclamation during operations feeds into the bond assessments. Nyrstar will continue to pursue reclamation opportunities as they come up.

Myra Falls Mine has various other liabilities such as pensions as well as the environmental ones.

A question was asked about newly found unexploited ores. Nicole said there are some new possibilities available. 50% of Myra Falls' value is in zinc. There are other precious metals to be found in the ore. New ore bodies are being found.

There are some concerns about new potential buyers and what their values may be. Nyrstar's goal is to get the site ready for a new buyer by doing important and appropriate work now. Some existing infrastructure is old and needs upgrading.

Sand for various projects is being trucked into the mine site from Uplands, outside of the park. This gives the mine an idea of what may be required on a much larger scale when the mine is being fully reclaimed.

Depending on the new buyer, they may choose to consider this site as a new mine and start from scratch, investing in upgrades and equipment. Alternatively, another buyer may wish to simply take over as is and operate accordingly. Potential buyers are fully informed about existing liabilities and what needs to be done. These liabilities are considered the cost of doing business.

In summary the main issues include visual impacts, ongoing re-vegetation as a beneficial progression, and hydrology – very important to confirm and understand, especially at the old TDF.

New closure plans will be available at the Campbell River Library after they are submitted in December 2016.

Strathcona Update

Strathcona Update report is appended to the minutes below.

Discussion Highlights:

A bridge is to be updated over Butterwort Creek on the Elk River Trail. Philip pointed out a safety hazard on the trail north of Butterwort Creek and described in detail how to find it. Alec Patterson, Senior Ranger, will inspect as soon as possible.

Ralph River campsite:

A multi-year capital improvement upgrade is proposed over 2017-2018. Based on occupancy records it was decided to do a “soft closure” of the campsites in the middle row (sites are to be left untouched but facilities at these sites will not be upgraded and may be removed, depending on Park Operator’s desire to maintain them or not. These sites would still be available for overflow camping. Occupancy averages about 75%, but there are times when the campground is full so overflow capacity is needed.

Hydro is doing some upgrades to the boat launches ramps at Karst Creek and Buttle Lake campground. They are also creating better access to deep water at the Buttle Lake campsite and depending on costs and logistics will consider the same for the Ralph River campsite.

Baby Bedwell Toilet Issue:

While the new vermin-composting toilet is working well at the Main Bedwell Lake campsite, worms were not added to the waste this season. Staff are waiting for a native worm study to be completed (site assessments were done to confirm if native or any other worms currently exist at the Main Bedwell Lake and Battleship Lake sites). No worms of any kind were discovered at the new toilet sites. What effects would there be from introducing non- native worms to the area? The new toilets operate on a closed system which helps to prevent introduction of non-native worms. This isn’t a question of impacts or benefits, but rather Park Act regulations.

Croteau Group Site Update:

This project has been delayed while negotiations continue with the Park Facility Operator (regarding construction and ongoing maintenance). A business plan has been developed but won’t be finalized until all facilities, pricing and operating information have been confirmed. Money to build group site has been donated primarily by Nyrstar, but BC Parks will supplement with some capital funds if needed and justified. Confirming the type of group shelter is one of the last elements to be decided on and is considered to be a key component of this project.

Circlet Lake:

An assessment of this area is proposed this Fall. Known to be one of the most popular campgrounds on the Plateau, it is being heavily impacted and needs be upgraded, and potentially expanded, within its current footprint. New tent pads and toilets are required. There is always a

possibility of a hut being built there as mentioned in the park Master Plan. There appears to be a consistent overflow problem, where in the past, it was only an issue a couple of times per season. Phil suggested that a new campsite higher up on Albert Edward be considered, but this would require much discussion and assessment.

Century Sam Lake:

This may become a new problem area with increased use. The access road has been upgraded by Timber West for current logging operations right up to the trailhead. When the logging is complete the roads will probably be cross ditched again making access more difficult.

Social Media Impacts:

There are potential management issues associated with social media promotion of park locations (within all parks) leading to impacts from increased use. Facebook posts are creating a greater interest in some areas. It was suggested that BC Parks may need a greater voice on social media. A discussion ensued about how to do this. Taking part in on-line dialogues can potentially save money in the long term. There is already a structured approach within the Ministry for the distribution and promotion of information in a non-confrontational way. However, improvements would require changes to the current communications strategy and increased dedicated staff to address and implement. This topic needs follow up in the future. BC Parks website could perhaps be modified to address some of the associated social media issues and impacts better. It was noted that the current Strathcona website has some errors, i.e. certain maps. Andy apologized and explained it is difficult to catch all mistakes on top of other work priorities, but appreciated people identifying any mistakes so that they could hopefully be addressed (regarding maps – many website maps are created from sign map files and is therefore difficult to simply amend the website map).

Battleship Lake Dock:

To reach a bit deeper water for better fishing opportunities, it is proposed to extend the new dock another 5 meters next spring with financial support from the Freshwater Fisheries Association.

Yellow Chair program:

This program is being adopted from the successful Parks Canada “Red Chair” program and proposed to help promote the parks. The chairs will only be temporarily located at existing view-scapes along trail corridors. With the recent discussion about impacts caused by social media promotion, there was some concern voiced about increasing impacts in these areas. Care should be taken to include information about the importance of these sites and parks in general when using social media or developing signage to go along with the chairs. Andy will include Sandra as the program and information is developed as well as introduce her to BC Parks social media specialist. Using social media is cheaper than using signs and brochures. The chairs will be placed in areas already impacted and will include interpretive information.

Wood Mountain:

Edwin Grieve, Regional Area Director, has/is championing a community driven clean-up project to remove some of the old infrastructure on site. A couple of contractors were recruited and are willing to donate time and equipment, however raised concerns over their liability. BC Parks and MARR have agreed to cover any additional insurance riders the contractors may need to mitigate

their risk. BC Parks has not yet received any updates about insurance needs from Edwin or the contractors over the summer, but is supportive of the initiative if there is still a desire to pursue this.

Ongoing Topics

Crest Creek Crags - Summer Enforcement and Current Situation:

It has been difficult dealing with non-compliance issues this season. A detailed discussion couldn't take place due to ongoing legal action.

SPPAC Recruitment:

SPPAC member Kevin McPhedran may be resigning from the committee due to time commitments. Current Chairperson Philip Stone is also ready to step down as chair. However, three other people have recently expressed interest in joining. Andy advised that while we have tried to maintain diversity by targeting certain traits, including demographics, that due to the challenge of recruiting members, perhaps it may be equally beneficial to consider all people with a passion for Strathcona Park and the ability to be unbiased when considering issues. There was a question about membership from special interest groups. Andy stated that reps from various groups may be considered, if they can confirm their unbiased involvement (Regional Director's decision). Mostly done by word of mouth. Targeting has been done, but doesn't always work. A request was made for all current members to identify anyone with interest to join and Andy will follow up.

Philip on the role of the chair:

There are two complementary functions of the Chairperson. The first is the organizational part and the second is running the meeting. However, both these functions need not necessarily be done by the same person. There could also be a rotating chair.

SPPAC Recruits, New Chair:

SPPAC is looking for a member to replace Philip as chair of the committee.

SPPAC Format:

Andy advised all members that there is much work for both the Chairperson and himself in getting ready for meetings, editing the minutes afterwards and processing reimbursements and business expenses. As our online digital and communication tools continue to evolve, the time has come again to check in with the committee to assess our current meeting needs and format. Should SPPAC continue to meet 4 times per year or is this requirement still necessary? Would one mandatory meeting per year suffice? Two? There could still be online or conference call communication between meetings. Strathcona updates could still be done and sent out, and should there be any issues at any time that may benefit from a physical meeting, they could still remain possible. This would be less of a burden on people. However, this would also reduce accountability to the public.

It was noted that the mine issues take a lot of committee time, but are extremely important. Other issues can also generate public interest. Parks does maintain the importance of having SPPAC as a sounding board for issues the Regional Director and Operational staff need to assess. Face to

face communication, is of course the most effective way of communicating, but is logistically the hardest. Concerning mine discussions, it was suggested that it should be limited to a smaller part of the meeting or as a meeting of its own as was often done once per year in the past. This would allow more time for other topics to be discussed at meetings. New members should have a tour of the mine to bring them up to speed on mine issues and allow them to understand and comment more effectively. SPPAC is a key target group for Nyrstar talk to.

There was some mixed feelings about the reduction of meetings, however it appeared that those in attendance (there was no Quorum after Phil left early) felt that perhaps the four meetings per year should be continued but possibly dropping one if not needed.

SPPAC Legacy Fund:

Andy would like SPPAC to consider using all or some of the SPPAC legacy funds (surplus from the Centennial Expedition in 2010) to help support the building of the Croteau Lake group site. The account balance is currently \$8,000 and is held within the Park Enhancement Fund on behalf of SPPAC. There are no current criteria in place for allocating these funds and the topic while the topic has been discussed at a previous SPPAC meeting, nothing has been confirmed nor the topic revisited. Most of money for the Croteau Lake group site has come from Nyrstar with a bit more from other donations in the Park Enhancement Fund. BC Parks is also contributing some capital program dollars if available. Andy explained that the history of the Park and especially Croteau Lake (there was an old lodge located there in pioneer days) certainly makes a group site for the general public a worthy consideration for the Legacy Funds. This meeting lost its quorum when Philip left so no decision could be made at this time. This will be discussed on-line and/or at the next SPPAC meeting along with specific criteria.

Snowmobile Use in Park:

Sandra met with Don Cadden last spring and talked about snowmobiles in the Park. Education and outreach was discussed. Don said they need to quantify the problem prior to considering management options/approaches. Although doing flyovers to count snowmobile tracks is a possibility, costs and benefits would have to be considered. More work needs to be done on how to follow up on this topic considering the lack of Park funds. How can SPPAC quantify this use and come up with hard data?

A large hurdle to consider and overcome when pursuing education and awareness, is that snowmobiling is a recognized and allowable activity in many other provincial parks, but not in Strathcona. The opposition and those inclined to contravene the regulations, will need to understand why the inconsistency across Provincial Parks. The cost of doing what parks have done in the past to combat illegal snowmobiling (information blitzes as staging areas, brochures, website, letters to clubs, park boundary patrol and fly-overs) has not been cost effective for the poor results received.

Sandra would like SPPAC to recommend to Parks that they research this issue. It is important to have accurate information so the plan to deal with it is effective.

Avalanche Canada has a relationship with snowmobilers which could be a model or be built on.

This topic will carry over to the next meeting. Sandra will draft a note to SPPAC members suggesting a recommendation letter be prepared and sent to the Regional Director. Online discussion can take place to confirm if this is supported or not prior to next meeting.

Next Meeting

Friday, January 13, 2017

Location: Miracle Beach unless changed due to conflicts.

Nyrstar – Myra Falls, Q3 - 2016 Update

- **Mine status – shut-down, sale, re-opening, etc.** The mine will continue to suspend milling and mining activity until a sale is final. Nyrstar intends to operate our water management facilities to meet environmental obligations and maintain underground infrastructure for safety and access to those works for the duration of the sales process. Continued work on Progressive Reclamation is planned until the sales process is final. Nyrstar has completed sales of two South American assets. Buyers have come for preliminary visits, second round visits and due diligence activities have started with serious potential buyers for other mining assets.

- **Tennant Lake penstock project** The Tennent Lake Penstock project is complete; the old steel penstock was removed and replaced with a HDPE (Plastic) Pipeline. The wash-outs and loose rock hazards were addressed on the trail to Tennent Lake in the process. Some work is ongoing to commission the penstock, but the trail is open and able to be used without restriction by the public. Old concrete, wood, and other items of this nature were removed with the steel pipe, leaving the trail “cleaner” than it was prior to the project start.

- **Jim Mitchel Lake project** This project has been put on hold until such time that the buyer wants to restart the work.

- **Jim Mitchell Access Road maintenance** Nyrstar is committed to doing this work. Staff turnover has resulted in some miscommunication regarding the frequency of inspections. We have communicated the importance of this to our supervisors. We apologize for the inconsistency in the maintenance this year, we commit to more frequent checks in this area going forward.

- **CRAB Restoration** Work on the CRAB to re-establish ditching, re-slope benches and prevent further erosion was completed in July and August. Settling ponds were cleaned up and material that had migrated out of the CRAB was salvaged and hauled back up to the Borrow Pit. Hydro-seeding with native seeds for erosion control and pioneer species (Alder, willow, etc) will be completed this fall. This will not include a fertilizer component, as these species are adapted to the soils in the area and adding fertilizer can encourage invasive species in these areas.

- **Clean Fill assessments** Clean fill assessment has started with some preliminary field investigations (hiking in an area and ground-truthing the terrain features) and a gap analysis on the cover needs. Work will continue next week with test pits and seismic work on areas that are currently disturbed on the mine. Additional targets have been identified and work is underway to determine the best approach to minimize impacts while collecting the required data. An application for exploratory work will be submitted with the plans and areas once this work is completed. NMF is focusing on areas within the current disturbance footprint, or immediately adjacent to the current disturbance foot print to minimize habitat fragmentation and visual disturbance to park users.

- **Closure Plan update** Preliminary drawings and plans have been put together, now approaching key stakeholders on those plans to verify that we are pursuing a reclamation plan that is acceptable to all parties. Any concerns raised by the preliminary work will be addressed as much as practicable prior to completion of the final design submission for permitting in December 2016. Information

that was requested by the 2014 Closure will also be provided to ensure a thorough review process can be completed. Closure Cost estimates and schedule will be revised and submitted for review with the MEM on the Closure Bond Amount.

Strathcona Update for SPPAC
September 29, 2016 (BC Parks, Black Creek Office)

Strathcona Staffing

Seasonal staff – Alec Patterson started as the new Strathcona Senior Ranger at the beginning of May and will end his term in mid-October. We also hired Jesse Bevan, as a shared Ranger (split between Strathcona and Von don Op area) for an 11 week term from June to late August. In an effort to find alternatives to stretch our staffing resources, Area Supervisor, Andy Smith explored the potential of creating a Casual Ranger position. However, while possible, lack of allocated budgeted funds prohibits this from becoming a reality and can only be pursued further if additional funds were procured (internally or externally).

1) Backcountry Maintenance Contract

The new Park Operator – “43K Wilderness Solutions” is nearing completion of their second season (ending in mid-October 2016). The company will begin their third season of a 10 year contract in mid May 2017. As a requirement of the new contractual agreement, the new contractor has made many improvements to the operations, including the development of a Quality Control Plan which identifies all required work, schedules the work and then confirms the work done. The new system helps BC Parks monitor and identify deficiencies efficiently.

2) Nyrstar (information provided by Nicole Pesonen)

New update to be provided/presented by Nicole Pesonen at the September 29, 2016 meeting.

3) Capital Projects

The 2016 Capital Funds allocated to cover financial shortfalls for the Croteau Lake Group camp site have not been used to date. Funds if needed this fiscal may still be used to cover the difference between the donated funds (currently residing in a BC Parks Park Enhancement Fund account specifically for this project) and the final cost of development. Some capital funding was used to cover worm assessment costs associated with the new vermi-composting toilets. No other capital projects were pursued this season in Strathcona Park. A Capital fund allocation is being provided for 2017 and 2018 to upgrade Ralph River Campground. A detailed assessment and work plan will be developed potentially later in the 2016 fiscal year with work starting in 2017 and ending in 2018.

4) Croteau Lake Group Site

No further physical works has been completed in 2016. Delays have been due to the need of a negotiated agreement for the construction and maintenance of the site by the current Park Operator (43K Wilderness Solutions). Currently, most issues have been resolved, however no agreement will be signed until the type and cost of the proposed shelter has been confirmed. Two conceptual options are being considered:

- 1) Seasonal shelter – requiring the structure to be erected and taken down each season. The additional maintenance cost of providing this service would be approximately \$2,000 per year (dependant on structure type). BC Parks is considering accepting this

responsibility to reduce costs but would be dependent on their ability to commit Ranger and/or volunteer time to address this; and

2) Permanent or “Over-winter” shelter – this increases initial development costs, but eliminates the costs and human resources associated with the installation and take-down each year. Various semi-permanent shelter options are being explored to try and find the least expensive type that meets all requirements. As funding is very restrictive beyond the current donated funds (approximately \$85,000), it is imperative that additional costs be kept as low as possible, or, additional funding must be sought prior to any development being approved. Ongoing maintenance of the site would be paid for from revenues. Any profit over and above the maintenance costs, would be shared based on an agreed investment ratio.

5) Vermi-Composting Toilet Pilot Project

While all 3 vermi-composting toilets were completed (#1 -Bedwell; #2-Croteau Lake; #3-Battleship Lake) in 2015, only the Bedwell and Battleship toilets are in operation (Croteau Lake toilet has remained closed until a maintenance agreement is confirmed with the Park Operator for the entire group camp site. The two operating toilets are working as planned and there have been many favourable comments from the public relating to the design, ethical concept and most importantly the low amount of smell. Worms have not been introduced to any of the toilet waste totes as BC Parks has been waiting for a worm assessment to be completed in each surrounding area (needed to confirm the existence, or not, of any native species). The final report has been submitted recently and confirmed that no worms exist. As a result, it is probable that worms will be added to the waste totes in 2017. It is also probable that we may choose one toilet (probably Croteau Lake) to be “worm free” to provide a comparison in decomposition times. BC Parks is still optimistic that these toilets will only require one fly-out of decomposed waste (essentially soil) every 8 years. Unfortunately, Baby Bedwell Lake is currently still operating with a TAJ type fly-out toilet system. This still requires a fly-out approximately once per season and therefore minimizes the real benefit of building the vermi-composting toilet at Main Bedwell Lake. As a result, BC Parks has unsuccessfully tried developing a conventional Z-Best pit toilet at Baby Bedwell Lake (either too much bedrock, or where test pits have been dug, they have filled through ground water seepage). A Z-Best toilet would have only been a temporary solution anyway and what is really needed is another vermi-composting toilet. However, at an approximate cost of \$22,000 there are no funds available to pursue such a toilet at this time. With the help of Geoff Hill (consultant on the vermi-composting toilet technology), Area Supervisor, Andy Smith is trying to develop a new small scale design, which if successful, may help reduce development costs to approximately \$6,000 (compromise would be a very basic open style design).

6) Battleship Lake Accessibility Project

This project was substantially completed in late October 2015 but the new anticipated dock was installed in the spring of 2016. A new sign shelter was also installed in the spring and a newly developed map sign will be installed in October. Also, a new viewing platform has been constructed on the rock bluff using surplus wood stored on site. This new platform will be used to accommodate the new Adirondack “Yellow Chairs” (new program being implemented in 2017). The new facilities have transformed Battleship Lake into a destination area and received

high praise from the public. It should be noted that the dock (funded by Freshwater Fisheries Association) is going to be expanded by one additional section in 2017, extending out a further 15 ft to deeper water. The additional section is also being funded by the Freshwater Fisheries Association. Unfortunately, several complaints have been received regarding the TrailRider ramps that were installed to get up and down the many boardwalk steps. While there is plenty of space for abled-bodied visitors to walk around the ramps (in fact they help to highlight the steps which people have tripped on and complained about in the past), this issue has been somewhat mitigated with the installation of new signs at the start of each ramp section, alerting visitors to the potential tripping hazard as well as a sign explaining what the ramps are and why they are needed. Anyone, either traveling in a TrailRider, or portering the TrailRider, would instantly appreciate the need for these ramps. It should also be noted, that all the new facilities were funded through a Federal Accessibility Enhancement Grant, of which the ramps were a key component.

7) BACKCOUNTRY

Della Falls – Brushing completed in mid-September 2016 (hadn't been done since 2013).

Bridges all inspected and confirmed OK. Cable Car inspected and adjusted.

Private Water Taxi Service is in the process of being sold due to retirement. The new owner will take over for the 2017 season.

Circlet Lake – This is the most popular backcountry camp ground in Strathcona Park. As a result, it is starting to feel the impacts of over-use and in fact where overflow camping was just a random weekend or two each season, has become a regular occurrence. A capital upgrade is required to address the current and expected needs. An initial site assessment by staff was planned for this week but has been postponed for a few weeks when schedules permit.

Gold Lake Trail – It was recently confirmed that the logging road into the trailhead has now been closed at Grisle Creek where the bridge has been removed. While visitors can still walk the old road (if they can cross creek) it is now about an 8 km hike to the trailhead. BC Parks has no options as the road access is completely out of their control. Visitors who wish to get to the lake will unfortunately have a much longer hike.

Elk River Trail – Park Operator will be upgrading bridges along the trail in October 2016

Bedwell Trail – the metal staircases continue to age resulting in weld failures. This leads to “band-aide” repairs due to the high cost and logistics of flying in welders. This entire trail needs to be assessed for a capital upgrade. Unfortunately, not only are there other projects within Strathcona to compete with, but also many others in parks all over our region. Until other resources are found or this work rises to the top of the capital priority list, the only thing BC Parks can do is monitor the situation and ensure the trail and facilities are adequately safe.

The Comox District Mountaineering Club – This group continues to help BC Parks maintain some of the less popular, less priority areas of the Strathcona. In 2016 they have done more trail upgrades along the Plateau traverse trail (Murray Meadows to Wood Mountain), as well as the Gem Lake and Comox Glacier trails – a BIG THANK YOU goes out to this group!

Comox Glacier – It was a pleasant surprise this season when TimberWest opened access along

their roads to the Comox Glacier to the general public on all weekends. Also, new logging activity in the vicinity of the trailhead resulted in an upgrading of the access road (swales where old culverts had been removed were filled back in) allowing two-wheel drive access.

Yellow Chair Program – Adopted from Parks Canada with their permission, Strathcona Park will be establishing a “Yellow Chair” program (called the “Red Chair” program in Parks Canada) in 2017. While we had hoped to start the program during the 2016 season, new priorities and workloads prevented it. The program will locate two yellow Adirondack Chairs, joined together with a small table in the middle (also used to display an interpretive sign) in various vista sites around the park. These are not intended to be permanent, but rather moved around the park for an undefined amount of time (perhaps one season or less in each location). The idea is for visitors to seek these out and once found, will be encouraged to take their photos and post them on social media. Hopefully this will generate more online and off line talk about Strathcona Park and encourage visitation. The interpretive sign in each table (changeable) will describe known facts about the vista, area or interesting features.

8) Heathens and Crest Creek Climbing Area

Unfortunately, some members of the Heathens Mountaineering Club chose to ignore the Regional Directors decision to discontinue unauthorized activities within the park, which lead to a summer of patrolling this area (Park Rangers, Park Operator staff, RCMP and Conservation Officers), first providing warnings, then issuing multiple eviction notices and ultimately, issuing multiple Violation Tickets. Those ticketed are choosing to dispute the tickets. The disputes will be heard in court when a date has been set. BC Parks has been trying for years to accommodate the Heathens and work with them rather than against them, with the only mandated requirement being that they need to sign an agreement to provide the necessary authorization of what they can and can't do within the park. However, after many meetings and correspondence with the Heathens since 2012, the Regional Director sent a final letter to the spokesperson of the Heathens, as well as other identified individuals who have been involved with this issue, confirming that without a signed agreement authorizing any proposed work, the Heathens, or anyone else, cannot do any work, nor camp in any unauthorized zone within Strathcona Park. BC Parks still supports climbing in the area and the continuation of volunteer work, provided, all volunteers sign an appropriate volunteer agreement which specifies what work can and can't be done in the area. BC Parks had been hopeful that the Heathens members would understand the need for BC Parks to maintain control over what happens in the park as well as ensure the safety of volunteers and the public, however, the 2016 summer season only confirmed that this group only wishes to provoke enforcement action. The legal process will now have to play out. BC Parks and other agency staff are committed to increasing enforcement action in 2017 should it be required. A recent letter sent from the Heathens to BC Parks, confirms a continued misunderstanding of route development and maintenance at Crest Creek Crags climbing area. To clarify again, at this time, BC Parks does allow new climbing route development in the existing impacted area of the Crest Creek Crags, regardless of whether an individual has signed an agreement with BC Parks or not. The maintenance of these developed routes (defined by the use of climbing aids, i.e. bolts, etc. up rock faces, and/or recorded in various applicable climbing community documents) has been and is currently left up to the climbing community as a whole. However, should any safety issue be identified and brought to the attention of BC Parks, they will assess the concern and address it accordingly. This allowance for climbing route

development and their maintenance on the impacted rock faces does not extend to the development and maintenance of trails, and structures, or any other unauthorized activities within the park.

9) Wood Mountain Provincial Park

Treaty negotiations are still progressing with Komox First Nation. This land has been identified as potential Treaty Settlement Lands. BC Parks continues to advise that any agreement must address continued access into Strathcona Park through or around these lands.

A Community clean-up effort was/is being led by Edwwin Greive, Area Director for the Comox-Strathcona Regional District. BC Parks met with Edwin and some other interested community members who wished to develop a volunteer plan to clean up the old ski hill infrastructure. At least two contracting companies agreed to donate time and equipment. However, were concerned about liabilities. BC Parks and the “volunteer” equipment contractors agreed that a potential way to address the liability concern was for the companies to obtain a specific “rider” on their existing insurance policies. The cost of the “riders” would be potentially paid for by the government in support of the project. However, the companies have not pursued this any further since last winter.