

Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan Review

RE: Horse Use in Park

Courtenay Public Meeting

28 May 2008

Public Meeting Summary

Attendance: minimum 110 participants* + 6 BC Parks staff & consultant

**exact count not certain – some did not register and others arrived over the course of the meeting*

Participants were primarily from the Courtenay area and other communities on the east side of the park. The same introduction was provided. A larger majority of the participants who spoke were opposed to horse use in the Bedwell Valley and many were also opposed to horse use anywhere in Strathcona Park. Most commonly cited reasons for opposition to the CWR proposal included: potential environmental impacts, commercialization of the area, limits to or impacts on public use of the area. Opposition to any horse use in the park was of a similar nature. Many felt that the existing Master Plan provided adequate guidance for not accepting any horse use, or, not accepting horse use except in the areas identified in the Master Plan or its first Amendment. A small number considered the whole exercise to be part of a conspiracy to force the issue through. The small number of horse supporters who spoke focused on the benefits of horses and the importance of carefully selected areas for horse use.

Public Meeting Notes*

**Please note that we have alternated black and blue coloured font to define new speakers and/or discussions*

Welcome

Facilitator:

We're delighted that this many of you can come to the public meeting tonight.

I am a biologist by training and have worked with park systems, of all levels of government, all over North America for the past thirty years. I am going to be the facilitator for this evening and in the development of the amendment of the master plan.

First I would like to apologize. There has been some confusing material put out that I should clarify what this meeting is not for:

- Not referendum on the CWR for horse use
- Not a referendum on commercial use in park

The CWR proposal is in hiatus, and you are here to help determine that in one way or the other where horse use is appropriate in any place in Strathcona Park. You should know, commercial permits have been in parks since the mid-70s and there are approx 25 in the park now.

We are here to help determine what kind of horse use, if any should be in the park. The challenge has been coming up with defensible and sensible criteria for horse use in the park. The step backwards is to help create this from zero criteria to more. The tools of the Master Plan and the 2001 Amendment and much of the guidance available is not sufficient for making decisions. We are not going to discuss the particular horse proposal tonight.

We are looking for the criteria that must be met for horse use in Strathcona Park. I will be directing the discussion in that way in helping to attain that goal.

Introduction

Andy Smith, BC Parks – Area Supervisor for the Strathcona area. I have one of the best jobs in the world, when I don't have a load of issues to deal with, responsible for what happens on the ground and operations in the park. Ron Quilter is my senior.

Ron Quilter, BC Parks, Section Head for Northern Vancouver Island. Been working in Strathcona Park since 1978 and managing it for over 20 years. I'm here to help clarify questions you may have for us.

Sharon Erickson – MOE, Planning Section Head for Vancouver Island Section. My role is to obtain the info necessary for the Master Plan and horse use for Strathcona Park.

Facilitator:

I would like everyone here who wants to speak to have a chance to speak. If people have already spoken I'll ask you to wait until everyone has had a chance, and then you may speak again.

There will be a three-minute limit to each presentation. I ask you to respect that time.

Public Input

Speaker:

Can you say what you want to say first, then we can respond?

Facilitator:

We want to hear your thoughts on what criteria is to be met if there is to be horse use in the park. The comments that have been presented in the past workshops will also be taken into consideration, plus the results of an EIA and we are consulting with other agencies in North America

Speaker:

What other workshops?

Facilitator:

The three public meetings held by CWR and a stakeholder meeting and a trip with specific stakeholders into the Bedwell

Speaker:

I can't see how you can call this a process to amend a Master Plan with someone waiting on the side for approval of their park use permit

You are framing this all about horse riding – what is really behind this? This is not the process that happened in 2001, this has been kick started by an applicant for the Bedwell Valley and commercial enterprise

Facilitator:

I'm sorry, you are now making a statement, and I ask you to get in line with everyone else who are waiting to speak. I'm not asking anyone to speak before they line up. I would ask you to say who you are and then ask your question or make your statement with regards to horse use in the park

Speaker:

I've been a citizen of this province for over 50 years and have enjoyed wilderness recreation. I don't believe there are any criteria for horses in any parks and I don't believe they have any place in our parks, as they will spread invasive species, destroy natural environments. Where they can be is where the people who are resort minded to have horse resorts and where they can ride without conflict of interest. BC Parks were put in for wilderness reasons and we hike with minimal not trace or impact have every right to hike. I'm a public school teacher would like my actions to mentor the youth I teach. I would like parks to be left in the pristine conditions that they were protected in.

Speaker:

I fell off a horse once, and have never got back on. Horses are as heavy as vehicles and on trails in a park, they will destroy wildlife, flora and fauna and micro organisms with every step they take.

Speaker:

I am a member of the BC Horse Council, but I am representing myself today. I am a pleasure horse trail rider and proud to be one. The environment as most of you know is my cause. I started the agricultural recycling program and don't believe horses are a detriment, or will cause damage. Parks are for everyone; there are areas for people and bikes, walkers and hikers and riders. We need to be considerate of each other and consideration for each other and the environment and teach people how to be careful. Manure is a fertilizer and will not harm the environment. Are any of the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee riders? – Let them have a chance to ride out in the wilderness, and experience how special that can be. Horse droppings and the seed that can be deposited can be regulated by riders and how their horses are fed prior to going into the park. What about the human garbage? I find more of that than animal. The jobs produced by the resorts help people in the community.

Speaker:

I have had the great pleasure to drive in and out of Strathcona Park for many years, and have ridden in parks for many years. These are not insurmountable issues, if teens on quads can share trails with riders, then so can hikers and horse riders. We would be using the roads and follow backcountry guidelines. We would be doing well and can learn to share responsibly. I've lived here for 50 years and raised children. We all have a right to share the parks as equals. Riding in wilderness provides an opportunity for everyone to enjoy these special places.

Speaker:

I won't be using this souvenir [lasso] in here, but you can try it outside later if you want. When it comes to trail rides in parks, I want to relate to you my brother's experience in Wells Gray Park. When he was there 15 years ago as a ranger, they brought horses in with a park use permit. Within one year the hiking trails were so messed up. Horses hooves are really

hard on trails, if dealing with the root of vegetation is an issue they damage it. Cloven foot animals: their hooves splay as they pull out of mud and therefore have more support weight-wise on the soft soils. The thing that happens on the trails with repeated use is rutting, sometimes very deep. If it rains in the Bedwell I would be really concerned in that trail and damage. I'm concerned about tree roots and trees. My preference is to have conservation over recreation use in the park

Speaker:

I've been a horse rider all my life and a member of the backcountry riding club. I would point people to Mt Becher where trails are wide, deep and hard as rock from horse use from when horses were banned from Strathcona Park. Parks not places to have horses. The Bedwell valley is also not that place with incredible washouts. The only access is through the rivers and the idea of building bridges is not great; and a major concern is not horse use and I am very upset about revising the master plan and the permanent installations put in the park build by a private company. My answer is no to that.

Speaker:

I'm a member of the Friends of Strathcona Park. I came up with criteria for horse use in the park.

- Manure management – sterile feed needs to be fed to horses at least 14 days before entering parks (from website)
- Horses should be kept out of water bodies, people have to keep dogs on leash and out of water bodies, so should other animals being brought into the park
- No picking flowers and plants – no grazing or nibbling on way by horses
- The Master Plan allows horses in two areas that are logging roads and stable
- Continue to allow horse use in identified areas for two years test period – no assessments have been done cause no one has been there. Last September some of us walked up the Ursus and documented damage outside of the park that have seen horse use
- The old roadbed in the Bedwell is eroded and will probably continue that way.

I found this criteria on websites and other literature I looked at.

Speaker:

I've worked in the park for the last 20 years. One of the things that really upsets me is that I'm not against horses or BC parks but this is a personal thing with me. There are some hidden issues here. The first person who spoke stated that this wouldn't have happened if not for the proposal by CWR. I've spent hundreds of hours building a trail along the logging road and bridge and this is a slap in a head as I never thought about horses going in here. The only places we thought about were the Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow areas that were in the Master Plan. We gave hundreds of hours to do this. It is in really bad shape, anybody can see that it is not horse country and why are we spending time trying to get horses into the park? Why are we spending time on this when we spent so many hours keeping horses out of the Forbidden Plateau area. As far as I understand, Parks is trying to phase out horses in their parks. Strathcona should be called a wilderness park because that is what it is.

Speaker:

Now lets look at various zones and where they [horses] may be placed:

- Wilderness conservation zone – no
- Special features zone – no
- Intense recreation and wilderness recreation - possibly could go here

There are other areas that have been used previously identified for horse use. Manure prevention of invasives, trail upgrades, protection of water sources, and so on are all issues. Some of the trails in the wilderness conservation zone were developed years ago and over 15 years these trails were improved by volunteers. If we were starting from scratch today the trails wouldn't be put where they are today. There would be more thought put into the sensitivity of the landscape. I would like to quote from the National Park service re: horse use and trail building: "Avoid wildlife corridors when possible, build trails diagonally to wildlife corridors if possible or detrimental to the occasional interaction with people. ...Avoid putting trails where might have conflict with people ..." The Clayoquot Scientific Panel made some identification with riparian ecosystem, as the major travel corridor for most vertebrates needs more protection from impact than other areas.

Speaker:

Glad to hear submissions are going to be given some evaluation. I am concerned that this is going to be a generality of horses as the invitation we received was different and spoke as focused on certain areas for horse use. The previous speaker took my thunder about Bedwell being a wilderness conservation zone and that they are large natural areas free of human impact or activity; then go on to say that the Bedwell is designated of UN Biosphere, you can find it on page one of the amendment: "...provide long term protection for long term scientific study...". Monitoring should be changed by what horses bring into the park and how they impact it. I am concerned with the exclusivity of what is being proposed and other people will be unable to bring horses in. Its my opinion that the proponents have tied themselves in using private land for own corporate services but the park needs to be respected by Parks staff and the Minister. The results of this meeting should be held up with the honour of the 64 people who were jailed for the mining incident and the Larkin report. And the people who are newer to the parks service than those of us who can go back 50 years – all that history should be valued as well in this current process.

Speaker:

I walked the trail 12 years ago with several friends. On another hike we counted 200 piles of bear scat on the Ursus – if you put horses out there that will add to the scat. If I'm on a trail, I don't want to have to walk through all the piles of horseshit and deal with all the flies that result from it. There is no human garbage on the Bedwell. When we got to the end of the trail there was nothing there. We were serenaded by a pair of cougars on each side of the inlet; that will never happen again due to the resort; the cougars and bears will move from there. There is one spot in the park that has horses, expect to see them there. Buddy helped build that bridge, walking horses across the bridge and river will disturb salmon and salmon will be gone.

Speaker:

I spent my first camping trip in 1938 in Strathcona Park. 70 years later I can show you trails that were gouged out by horseshoes back then. I thought this was over after the last round

of public meetings. We can only take so much abuse about our parks, Parks Branch should be careful as this is the thin edge of the wedge, lets really be careful and protect this park and have a unique place that all people can enjoy and not a bunch of other things in there. The last meeting was in Campbell River about helicopters in Strathcona – I thought we put a stop to that and now I learn there are a couple of float planes in there. If you stop and respect it then we won't have to keep amending the plan every time a new user wants to try a new activity in the park.

Speaker:

My recollection as a child in parks was people who enjoyed and respected the wilderness of the park. Why are we here? We have a Master Plan and an Amendment. There is something here that is like a hidden agenda and that's the only reason why this is being pushed through so quickly. There is permit applicant, then this meeting, then there would be workshops and taken to organizations and take several months to go through. People would have had a chance to grapple with the issues. Now we learn that at the end of this meeting if criteria is set, a change will be made –a quick public meeting will do this? This is an intolerable way to go through this process. And to colour this as horse users against hikers is evil! There is so much in the Master Plan and Amendments that would make it easy to say no to this applicant. This process should take more than 2 weeks for an amendment to take place.

Speaker:

I'm very proud to say I've been involved in Strathcona Park since 1985, involved in many of the processes developing the Master Plan and the 2001 Amendment. I don't want to say I missed it and that your comments are conflicting. I am extremely saddened that we only get three minutes to say something about the oldest park in BC and look at what is here today. The process for the Master Plan took 23 years of various processes, and this is the worst: no ad until last Friday and no information sent out until tonight and one side about CWR and the other about the park and horses. BC parks has handed out misleading information or is misleading what and why process is being put forward. Are we really talking about horses and horse use?

I work with and love horses and have guided horses in the Rockies, I know about horses. While riding on the horses in the Rockies I saw hikers walking in knee-deep mud caused by horses on trails that were not right for them. People do not want to share their wilderness experience with horses.

You mentioned that there had been workshops – if talking about workshops held by CWR, I would call those workshops. One of the things that have been used for us, have to have a good show stopper, I've been told that you want definable and defensible criteria for horses in the park, this is very leading to what this is all about. Use in the Bedwell will only be use by the CWR. The system is a totally wrong process. Most have not been able to inform themselves before these public meetings because of short notice. Only 5 days notice about public meeting. This is disgusting and incredible. You ask us about making comments about horse use in the park. In the act, section 8 it says you have to have an EIA done first. How can we make a comment without this information? I have spent time in jails and out of my life to help BC Parks – did I do this to hand this place over to private people? – No, I did this to protect the park, the wilderness, the animals, the plants and the environment for the people to experience. Horses are not compatible with this place

Horse use – I see horses feet several times a week – all of their weight (1000 – 1200 lbs) is transferred to 8 inches of space that is their hooves. To state that a horse use permit will be treated as hiking then that is despicable. I am looking at Ruth Masters who has been spending years trying to repair horse damage to trails – there is not trail or soil in Forbidden that has not been heavily impacted by horse use. I have spent hours and weeks discussing the Master Plan and we decided on two areas that were chosen for the old logging beds and anyone with a horse trailer could use it, not have to travel 14km into the park by boat. If the horse public have not used them, then they should be closed to horse use. Is the Bedwell useful for horses? No it is not. I hiked it in September. Large sections of that roadbed has been washed away. Disappeared. Did anyone tell you that the horse can go through river in only certain areas? Hardy Road or Buttle Road are available – but they won't want to go there. This is a wet, area horses feet will churn up the gravel and make mud holes.

I thank you for extra time. I spent 25 years defending the park, will stand in blockade to keep horse out of the park if I have to.

Speaker:

I was in Campbell River at one of the meetings way back when the Master Plan was being put together. Horse and bikes came up and everyone said not appropriate in that park. I remember hiking in the park and seeing surveys asking about horses in the mid 80s. Again, the answer was no. What part of no are we not understanding here?

There are lots of reasons for keeping horses out; mine are experience with damage to trails and vegetation, bugs on the horse crap that have to deal with when you walk past. I've been to Mt. Edziza which has deep sink and mud holes, much deeper than would find on any trail in Cape Scott. In Jasper I spent time walking on a trail that was really a rut in the most beautiful spot in the world with my head down as I had to watch my feet from this rut made from horses.

About the Bedwell – it is damaged so what is the difference? Every time there is commercial venture in the park there is damage to the park. Tourism is a form of resource extraction and that includes hiking. So where do we draw the line? That line should be hiking and mountaineering. My last point is that there has been lots of input into the Master Plan and the Amendment and that this is strong enough wording. The last amendment and meeting notes states (advisory committee) that should say no to the permitting horses. The point is that there should not be an attempt to amend the Master Plan every time someone wants to extract a resource out of the park. Leave it alone and leave horses out of this park.

Speaker:

I have been a member of the Comox Mountaineering Club for 70 years. I have put many hundreds of hours building trails, signs, in this park and none of us has ever made a nickel out of it. I have issues with horses not to mention bikes in the park. Going back to Forbidden and Paradise Meadows. I needed a raft to go through the mud as well as other areas where horses had been. Over the years that mountain dispersed itself into the creeks and trails down slope. There is no soil left up there.

I am opposed to commercial exploitation in the park. The Bedwell doesn't thrill me enough to spend \$1500 to go hiking. It will always be unstable; it is a poor investment. It is a mistake and a breach of trust. Every intrusion is a toehold for the next one to come. I sat on the blockade when Cream Lake was going to be mined, and got rid of the mines at Della Falls. Pulled out dozens of stakes, sticks, papers and fencing that was marked out for exploitation. There are still millions of dollars available for exploitation. Lets leave it alone.

Speaker:

Are there any representatives from the resort willing to represent themselves here? I am a horse person and an endurance rider. An expert needs to be talked to about laying horse trails. Two areas that were successfully developed for backcountry horseback riding are Wells Gray and Manning Park and they pulled out.

This resort has had a run in with wolves and had to shoot one. What controls are in place to avoid this happening again? BC Parks has a responsibility to ensure safety. What happens if monthly inspections are in place and if the trails and bridges have not been kept up? Will they be closed? What is the resort financially willing to spend to do this?

Speaker:

I'm with a group of counter-culture people called the Heathens. Did anyone notice or note that the amendment regarding horses is 666?

I have spent 37 years and 100 days a year hiking in the park. And I am the biggest park abuser in this room. I am responsible for the rock climbing artifacts on the rock faces. We scrape moss, drill holes, stomp moss and lichens. What we did when we first wanted to establish a climbing area in the park is we went outside the park first and did things to the rock faces that were similar to the area we wanted to work and watched for years and kept an eye out for what kind of damage (permanent and otherwise) came from it. We prepared areas for climbers to be ready for the level of activity we estimated would happen with Parks staff including camping areas and outhouses.

I think that the Master Plan states clearly horse use is impractical and ridiculous, as clear as the Bedwell River, and I hope it stays that way. I spent a lot of time getting information and preparing the plan for over 20 years. Ruth could tell you with absolute clarity the work that was involved and that horses have no place here. This is a thinly veiled issue from above BC Parks for increased income. If you let them treat you like school children then you deserve what you get.

People should have committed themselves to establishing the viability of horse use. They should have used the places put aside and spent time assessing them for impacts. I suggest that the CWR uses these places first. These poor people have got nothing until CWR's application is addressed. The government is derelict of duty; the CWR should find an area outside of the park that is similar to test what the impact will be.

Speaker:

I am a hiker and rider. I have been researching horses in parks. Traditionally, I have found, that there are no indications that First Nations or explorers used horses in Strathcona Park. Miners never used horses. The Bedwell was logged in the 60s and since then the roads have deteriorated and are becoming wilderness again. Here is one more opportunity to have a valley that could be pristine again, in time, if given the chance. I have spent 100s of days looking down from Big Interior Peak into the valley – it is a beautiful area and we need to keep the horses out.

Speaker:

I belong to the Friends of Strathcona Park and the Trust. I am speaking on my own behalf. I had a speech that I spent a week preparing but now I will have to do my best with the little time I have.

I want to thank everyone for coming and it makes my heart good to see everyone here, I know if we call a blockade people will come. We will be coming down to Victoria for the public meeting there and have a few spaces left in the vehicle.

Noel referred to the blockade of 98. You should have seen the tears on the blockade as it was a horrible hell of hard work and the most terrifying thing I've ever done, but I got tired a walking over mining shit and looking down at a valley damaged from logging. I always thought the Bedwell was good but when I looked down, it was a logging slash. In 1971 the government threw the Bedwell out of the park and put an interior slash through it and then asked what kind of highway we wanted through the park.

The question today is do you want horse use in the park – NO WE DON'T!!!!

If the Bedwell hadn't been put back in the park in 1988 we wouldn't be here. And we created a Master Plan because we were tired of this crap happening over and over again. Just because some goofball wanted to make a few dollars and the government wants those dollars. Now we have another entrepreneur. The government could have said no two years ago, and yet they have kept him hanging on this. I guess we have to keep at it, so have to keep at it and so we're here and we're back at it. Because of the 1988 blockade the government was forced to include public process. Thank you to everyone who participated in the blockade and in the process. Were talking about a wilderness park and have to figure out what it means: keeping human intrusion to a bare minimum while providing public access. Well a bare minimum is foot travel, which is the best we can do, its not the best, but its the best we can do. Horses are not a bare minimum.

Speaker:

I want to speak to what will become the exclusive use of Bedwell sound. You have to pick the weather carefully before going up the sound when traveling. It is a very difficult place to get into by horse; I've never seen anyone in a boat with horses. I don't think parks knows about this. Parks should be taking horses in themselves by boat to see the impracticality for unloading horses in the park on this side.

Speaker 1:

I'm representing the Backcountry Horse Association, Vancouver Island Chapter. I have been asked to present the backcountry horse mandate to ride backcountry trails in a responsible way at this meeting.

I have trained people across the province about riding in the backcountry. I don't want to address the Bedwell; the meeting was to discuss the criteria for acceptable horse use in all of Strathcona Park. There are many criteria we have in place for riding: you need durable surfaces, campsites, etc. Go to the website or contact one of your local chapters to get the list.

I would like to point out a couple of things regarding wilderness parks and that is they are there for the public. Any park should be open to all public as long as they can meet the environmental goals within the park. Someone mentioned that we could ride on the paved road through the park and if that's the case then so be it. I've been in the alpine and seen horrible messes left by hikers. I believe that a horse can be used in a responsible manner and leave as little impact as hikers. If dogs are allowed in the park on leashes and if the mandate is not to urinate in water due to issues with wildlife, then we all can do that. The point I'm trying to make, is that it is a wilderness park and there should be no human impact.

If it is not reasonable to allow horses in the park than it is not reasonable for horses. There are areas that have been identified and they should be used if possible.

Speaker 2:

I sympathize with you: can you have any idea why over the past 13 year that not enough advantage was taken to ride horses there? Were they lazy and didn't want to do the work?

Speaker 1:

I can speak to that very knowledgably. I know members went out there. Part of the issue it is a long way to go, and not worth it

I can track all of the hours spent by horse people up-keeping trails and access areas, campgrounds, building trails in the parks and it comes into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. It has nothing to do with not wanting to do the work. Thank You

Speaker 2:

The park has offered to do things with horses – why not take advantage of that?

Speaker:

I am President of the Wilderness Tourism Association. I also live at Strathcona Park Lodge and am familiar with the issues and work old timers put in the area for protecting the park from mining. It is with some degree of trepidation that I say that I had owned the Big Bar Guest Ranch and I understand where horses make a mess and don't have the best interactions with hikers; and I have many people in our organization that run commercial operations that are multi-disciplinary.

I think it is a good idea that parks put on discussion regarding areas in the park and what determined what horse backcountry trail would be appropriate that wouldn't degrade the environment and cause conflict with hikers. My point of view, and I have hiked the Bedwell – hiking is my preference and horseback riding is number 2. I think that the Bedwell has the potential that will not be detrimental to the environment and interactions between horses and hikers. Horse trails have to be in areas where the surfaces will be stable and proper repairs have to be made. And, horse use can be beneficial and not a detriment to helping people enjoy the outdoors. It is only fair for the people of this province to consider horses here. The Bedwell is not getting any use other than by hardcore hikers and is crying out for a proper trail and the CWR is a benefactor in providing this opportunity. It is about a park and it is about your park and making decisions. Use the backcountry riding guidelines as well for criteria. The predominant feeling is great emotions and how hard people have worked to save this park, but keep an open mind as to what is best for here. I will be putting my two words in about what may and may not work regarding horses in the park and so should you.

Speaker:

I have brought with me some criteria from the internet that I will hand in. I want to talk about commercialism. It is a \$3000 barge trip to get a horse up there (Bedwell) and a \$500 water taxi ride. It is not an accessible place for people to get into. It is not a benefit for the public but it is for CWR by allowing this permit to go head. It is also about setting a precedent: regarding wilderness conservation areas and no horses in the alpine. If this application is accepted it will be a thin edge to the wedge for more.

There was an alternate plan put forward by the Clayoquot Wilderness Association and the Friends of Strathcona to work with CWR on the trails and bridges but it was turned down. Another one will be put forward again. The argument for supplying employment for First Nation is not that good of a reason; this could be done at lodge and other areas near by.

The CWR has done a good job outside the park and are not evil, but I don't feel horses are appropriate in the Bedwell and nor are they needed with such a successful organization.

Speaker:

Old trails built along wildlife corridors in the wilderness recreation zone need to be re-evaluated. We need a statement that we need greater protection in the corridors. What does this mean? (The objective of wilderness recreation zone quoted from Master Plan was stated). Having trails crisscross riparian zones damages ecological processes. Some trails should be replaced by other more appropriate locations. Don't add to these by allowing horses. One of these is the Bedwell

The Clayoquot Science Panel involved lots of people and hours when establishing the Biosphere have had the area extended into Strathcona Park to include the Megin and Bedwell watersheds. Areas outside these areas are being developed to a certain degree. We need to examine areas for integrity and compare with development inside and outside the park to get a baseline to see how outside work is doing with respect to impacts from development. The Strathcona Park Master Plan states that its role is also in providing benchmarks for protecting the park and establishing a comparison outside the park. It also recognizes a threat to wildlife and habitat. The Amendment talks about the Bedwell and the needs to properly protect sensitive habitats. Most of the old road has been eroded away. The best plan for this trail is to let nature take its course. Do not try to reopen or construct new trails, zone objectives do not support the CWR proposal (Vision statement quoted from Master Plan).

Here is an opportunity to allow the Bedwell to restore its own ecological integrity. Do not allow construction on the Bedwell

Speaker:

After the Cream Lake blockade and after the Larkin report was completed I went to get copies (12 copies) for the people in Campbell River and Quadra Island. I kept stopping and peaking at the report which repeated completely what the Friends fought for – there is still the fire here to protect this park. There is one thing I was discussing with BC Parks staff regarding changes in park management and the staff having firearms in the park and how people in the Rockies, horse people, carry firearms with them in case something happens to their horse and they have to destroy it. The park Master Plan requires that no firearms are carried in the park and the Ministry has not included this change in the proposals and this amendment and this is important.

What are we here for? Lady and gentlemen from the BC Parks: the answer is simple. We are here to empower you as Parks managers and final decision makers to say no to this ill-conceived idea. Please take that empowerment and run, no, gallop with it.

Speaker:

I am a rock climber, mountaineer and a horse person until I moved to the island. I agree that a horse has no use in Strathcona Park and say NO, NO, NO. I am very emotional about this as well. I have only been in the province for 8 years. I planned an outhouse for 8 years with Parks staff for our area in the park – that was a lot of work! Anyone who can or will build anything to do with horses in this park is out of their mind. No one has done any research and I ask why? We have done and spent so much money to help the people of the park. Who are the CWR to spend money in the park and for whom? I am glad to have this

opportunity in life to do this! I have cut gates in parks put there to lock us out of parks to keep us out. We vandalize our parks and we also do a lot of time in this park hiking and climbing. I will not let you build anything in my, our park. I sympathize for horses in my park, but I will not let go of the belief that this is not a good place for horses in the park.

Speaker:

I must say no to horses and changes to the Master Plan. Allowance of horses will be the precipice to more commercialism in park.

Speaker 1:

A question for CWR – how much are your trips going to cost?

Speaker 2:

I think that this has nothing to do with what we are talking here

Speaker 1:

If it is a public park then I don't think I will be paying for it. PST is one of the things been paying for – why should anyone else be making a buck from my park? How many parks are there in BC?

BC Parks:

Approximately 900

Speaker 1:

How many rangers?

BC Parks:

80 or 90 full time

Speaker 1:

How come the Bedwell Lake trail is not in good condition? Why do we have to ask corporate partners to build trails? I want better trails and more than 90 park rangers. I think that if BC Parks has to ask corporations to pitch in then that is ridiculous.

Speaker:

I just heard about this park this morning. I would like to state I am a Canadian citizen and a BC resident – if we are using citizen in terms of country. I was born here and lived in the states for many years.

I would like to address this from a different angle. Today's date is May 28 2008 and I'm speaking before a meeting that does not have a name. I want to start by reading out of the newspaper, continued from page one – I sometimes think I should write a book – “controversial horse issue and Ron Quilter, BC Parks section head” the park name has not been stated. Should be B. C. it makes a difference ...miss is a good as a mile. Issue with the English used in the newspaper – and that park is not named, plan, etc. interpretations – it is all about law and what is stated. Are we talking about the permit? – no name given of permit or applicant. Nothing stated or defined in the article in paper re: wording

Speaker:

I've been sitting and listening in and reflecting on the accusations that the Friends of Strathcona are providing misleading info. Today it was stated that not talking about CWR, talking about what is appropriate for horses in the park. I'm happy that the previous lady

brought out the legality of the announcement and the misrepresentation of what is being talked about here tonight. The whole question is wrong. Before asking for criteria, have to ask whether we want horses in the park or not. No one but a few are prepared for this meeting or to deal with this. We have been stalled and ignored by the SPPAC for bringing the public's preferences forward. Would like to see if BC parks would like to acknowledge this as well.

Facilitator:

I'm sorry, but we do ask about whether you feel horse use in the park is appropriate or not in the comment form.

Speaker:

Under no criteria do I support horses in Strathcona Park. I am allergic to horses. My understanding is that there is too much impact on the trail. I walk along the Trent River Canyon trail and see all the horseshit and see all the grasses growing from it. There are lots of people working in the community to get rid of invasive species – I work with youth groups and others regularly to remove invasives from our public areas. We have to stand up and respect the past work done for saving places where there is no impacts and where the natural habitat and ecosystem have a chance. The Claquoat Environmental notes need to be looked at in this process as well. I say no to any resource use and that includes horses

Speaker:

I don't want horses in the park and don't think there's any place for them in the park now.

What has come to me during this meeting is that we were here for the original plan made in 1993 and the revision in 2001 and we are here again being asked for our opinion about the plan. It seems to me that BC Parks is between a rock and a hard place and they need more than our help at this meeting than writing down we don't want horses in the park. We have to let the headquarters, Premier and MLAs know by phone, by email in the next couple of days. Don't talk to your friends, talk to your government because they are the ones saying to BC Parks that we don't like what you are doing here, go back to the public and get some more feedback. Write directly to the MLA, the Premier and let them know that we mean it.

Speaker:

I am the chair of Backcountry Horseman and I want to clarify some comments made here. RE: Interrupting the wildlife corridor – I worked up north with horses and they don't interrupt elk herds. We used horses to get up close with photographers so that they could shoot pictures. You can't get in close on foot, only on horse. The One Spot Trail is experimenting with three different surfaces to decide what is best for horse trails to minimize impact and be best for all users. About invasive species: up north I saw lots of grassy weeds along trails that were not invasives, they eat the same stuff down here as what's up there.

Speaker:

All that nitrogen that gets put onto the trail encourages more green to grow, not flowers, so we won't see the flowers for all the green. So while you may not be putting invasives, in, you will be changing the mixture of the soils.

Speaker:

Can you tell us what happens next? Are you actually going to listen and take forward what we've had to say?

Facilitator:

We will be putting up a summary of the open house and public meeting notes up by next week. The full list of comments will be up on the web in a week or so.

We will use this and the EIA and past information that has been collected and we will send a report in to BC parks and a draft resolution will be put forward for review.

Speaker:

Regarding the EIA – will it be available for public scrutiny

Facilitator:

Yes, it will also be available on the Parks Website

Speaker:

I hope this meeting will reflect the actual feeling at the meeting.

Speaker:

Will your summary include the pros and cons and will it be influential in the decision making process

Facilitator:

Yes, to a certain extent.

Speaker:

I want to apologize to any one I offended. I was led to believe that this was what was my wish list for trail riding without anyone being killed. Need places to ride like one-spot trail.

Facilitator:

Again I would like to thank everyone for coming here tonight and sharing your thoughts with us. Please fill in the comment forms and either leave them with us or take them with you and send them in before June 20th, 2008.