

## Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan Review RE: Horse Use in the Park

General Comments received at BC Parks Website as of 13 June 2008. *Updated 5 July 2008.*

The following comments have been edited for spelling and privacy only.

	Comments
W1	<p>Dear Madam or Sir.</p> <p>Wish to comment on the subject of changes to the Strathcona Park Master Plan to allow horses in the park as requested by Clayoquot wilderness resort.</p> <p>The Master Plan was written after a lot of thinking, planning and discussions by intelligent people, so why change it every time some commercial operator wants to make a few bucks in the park?????</p> <p>Mount Washington Ski Resort wanted to cut ski trails in the park, they got a permit.</p> <p>Mount Washington Ski Resort wanted to funnel the summer hiking crowd to their Raven Lodge, the parks people co operated with them and relocated the trail.</p> <p>I am sure that the open house and public meeting on “Horses in Strathcona Park” is just window dressing and Clayoquot Wilderness Resort will get what they want.</p> <p>To put it bluntly I DON'T TRUST YOU GUYS.</p> <p>Why don't you listen to the Park advisory Board? They are against horses in the park.</p> <p>I and my friends think that the advisory board is just window dressing.</p> <p>Horses don't belong in Strathcona Park! This was established in the so-called Master Plan. Not only do they turn trails into ditches they stink, piss and shit on the trails. I saw it in the Banff Park, it is ugly.</p> <p>My question is; what is next? All terrain vehicles? Snowmobiles?</p> <p>This is my comment.</p> <p>21 May 2008</p>
W2	<p>I write today to express my concern about the upcoming decision about whether or not to grant a lease to a tourism operator to use horses in the Bedwell Valley. I am strongly opposed to this idea. Strathcona Park was established so many years ago in order to keep that piece of land in its original and unaltered natural state. That was the wish of the people of British Columbia then and continues to be today. The more recent master plan for the park just underlines that renewed intention and does not allow for the use of horses. While I understand that one operator wishes to do so that does not justify altering the public purpose for Strathcona Park.</p> <p>Moreover, it is well understood now that over time granting long-term use permits to public land almost inevitably results in removal of that land from public use and increasingly to the outright privatization of it. This is almost certainly the intent of the proposing operator in this case, but is definitely not in the public interest nor favored by the public.</p> <p>Please do not approve any application to use horses nor any other livestock in provincial Class A parks!</p>

	Sincerely
W3	<p>Please take note that I am very much opposed to the granting of any license or permit to use horses commercially in any part of Strathcona Park.</p> <p>As a park user for over 30 years I have watched the ongoing struggle to keep commercial and industrial activities out of the park and to retain the integrity of its territory. There is very little public interest in allowing such operations in any provincial parks and great opposition to such plans. There are many valid ecological and land-use reasons for turning down such proposals.</p> <p>Watching over the years what has become of Tree Farm Licenses, it becomes very obvious that granting long-term use-permits to commercial or industrial use will result in the alienation of that parkland from the crown. I and most people in BC are very much opposed to that.</p> <p>Please register my opposition to this proposal.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W4	<p>Dear Sir/ Madam,</p> <p>As a long standing member of the Comox District Mountaineering Club, I would just like to let you know my feelings on the idea of allowing horses in The Park. I think it would be a retroactive move. It is a known fact that horses seriously degrade trails of any kind and wilderness trails are particularly vulnerable. I understand the economic opportunity that horse trails in the Park will provide but I fear that once we open the mountain paths to one such group the precedent is set then for further applications of this nature. I believe we should tread a lightly as we can and keep the Park as close to the natural as possible. Thank you for this opportunity for input. Sincerely,</p>
W5	<p>TO: Public Consultation re: Strathcona Master Plan Review</p> <p>RE: Horse use in Strathcona Park and the Bedwell River Corridor, and related issues.</p> <p>In commenting on this matter, I am working from the following knowledge base:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I was a member of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee for a number of years. I am familiar with the principle of “limits of acceptable change” as it applies to park use.</li> <li>2. I lived in the Courtenay area for 10 years. The Forbidden Plateau area of the Park was my recreational backyard, both summer and winter. I know the trails from the Mount Becher area to Mount Albert Edward and beyond intimately. (I used to run some portion of them at least once or twice a week.)</li> <li>3. For several years, I looked after “Sid’s Cabin” at the base of Strata Mountain, and learned the history of uses and abuses of the Forbidden Plateau area.</li> <li>4. I worked for a number years to inspire the creation of a Visitors’ Centre at the Paradise Meadows entrance to Strathcona Park, as a way of educating the public about the sensitivity of the area and the need to respect the park experience.</li> <li>5. I represented Outdoor Recreation in a planning process for Ursus Creek. I am familiar with the topography, weather, and ecology of the Ursus Creek-Lower Bedwell River area.</li> <li>6. As an Outward Bound instructor, I led students in Strathcona Park, and in the Bedwell Valley (as well as elsewhere in the Clayoquot Sound region). I have observed horse use and its effects in the lower Bedwell River area.</li> </ol>

A general comment: The Strathcona Park Master Plan is a very positive tool for good stewardship of the Park. The way it has been developed and maintained over the years, as well as the way it is used to provide a sound policy basis for the Park's Annual Management Plans, should be a model for all parks. I am glad this present review of the Master Plan is being undertaken, and look forward to a good result.

Comments about horse use within Strathcona Park:

1. There are three main problems to be managed if horses are allowed in the Park: a) conflict with other trail users, b) the interplay between the Park's wet weather (specially in the winter) and the soil disturbance caused by use of trails by horses, and c) the impact that horses may have on the Park's ecology.

2. The area of Forbidden Plateau from Paradise Meadows to Circlet, Moat and Amphitheatre Lakes should be off-limits to horses because it is already bearing all the use it can tolerate from hikers. In fact, it is probably over-used considering the budget available to keep it up. Trails in this area were used by horses before it became part of the Park, and the erosion they caused is still evident (and much compounded by hiking traffic). As well as the problem of keeping the trails intact, the sheer volume of foot traffic in this area would create a real safety problem if horses were present.

3. The area of Forbidden Plateau from Johnston Lake to Mount Becher and the old Forbidden Plateau ski area contains the historic horse access routes to Forbidden Plateau. Except for the trail to Mount Becher, it receives far less foot traffic than the Paradise Meadows-Circlet Lake end of the Plateau, and might be acceptable for horse use if the problem of trail erosion can be solved. Much of the old horse trail has survived fairly well, but there are some places where horse use eroded the trail to a depth of at least half a meter. In several places, the trail is literally a new route for a local creek in times of heavy runoff. This issue can be solved by application of sufficient resources, but if it is not solved, then horses should not be allowed. In their present state, the trails would not bear horse use and continue to meet Parks values.

4. I understand that there may be some potential for horse use in the Oshinow Lake area. I have no knowledge of that area, and can't comment.

5. The presence of horses may have impacts on sensitive ecologies. First, horses may graze in ways that alter the ratio of plant species, or that impact rare species. Their effect in this regard could easily be at least as significant as the effect of picking wildflowers, berries or mushrooms, all of which are not allowed in the Park. A strict "no grazing" rule should be enforced. Second, horses could bring invasive weeds into the Park, most likely in mud on their hooves, or in their droppings. This issue needs to be carefully researched. Invasive weeds are becoming major destroyers of biological diversity in the province. It should not be assumed that there is not a problem here.

Comments about horses in the Bedwell River corridor:

1. In general, it seems very peculiar to bring horses into a place with the climate and ecology of the Bedwell River. Horses are animals of dry, open country, and fare poorly in the wet and mud. I suggest it would create a much superior horse experience for visitors to our wilderness if a dedicated horse-access park were created in the Chilcotin region, and the Bedwell valley were left for experiences more appropriate to a coastal rain forest.

2. The old mining/logging road in the lower Bedwell valley is sufficiently hardened to support horse traffic. Other trails are more problematic. Some are on outwash gravels and rocks, and may survive reasonably well (subject to the safety issues created by bad footing for the horses). Others traverse clay or silt deposits, and create obvious problems. These problems can be managed with sufficient resources, but it should not be assumed

	<p>that they will be. A performance-based management plan should be in place before proliferation of horse trails in the lower Bedwell is allowed.</p> <p>3. The lower Bedwell valley (up to approximately the Park boundary) is a very different place from the upper valley. The lower valley has large areas of outwash plain, and is not excessively steep. The upper valley presents serious issues that should preclude horse use. First, the terrain is steep. It creates routing challenges that are difficult to overcome when locating a hiking trail. The needs of horses make the problem very much more serious. The steepness, combined with the problem of finding good footing, raises serious safety issues. It also makes erosion management very expensive. Second, the upper valley has many creeks entering it that intermittently carry huge volumes of runoff. Crossing them safely, and maintaining appropriate horse crossings, would in my opinion require vastly more resources and invasive infrastructure than is appropriate in a park. Third, there are major areas of poorly drained wetlands in the upper valley. Even minimal hiking traffic through them has caused damage. Intact wetlands are at a premium, and should not be further invaded. (They also invite serious incidents with stuck horses.) For these reasons, I would emphasize that horses should not be allowed to access Strathcona Park up the Bedwell valley.</p> <p>Related issues:</p> <p>1. BC Parks has the power to manage recreational corridors outside of park boundaries. I am glad to see that this is being taken seriously in the Bedwell valley. The Bedwell valley offers a unique opportunity for public access to an east-west traverse of Vancouver Island. The huge range of terrain and natural systems that can be seen on this traverse make it a wonderful experience. It should be recognized, protected, and maintained.</p> <p>2. The old road up the lower reaches of the Bedwell valley is a public road, build with public funds. (This was researched in the Ursus Creek planning process.) In the past, the political will to challenge the resort operator on this was lacking. Government should take this up, and declare a public route up the lower Bedwell.</p> <p>3. The old bridge over a major canyon of the Bedwell, within the Park, is unsafe. It consists of two huge logs overgrown with hemlocks. An assessment by an engineer indicated that it could fail catastrophically at any time. I know that BC Parks is aware of this, but don't know if the bridge has been taken out. If not, it should be removed as soon as possible.</p> <p>I hope these comments are useful in your considerations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.</p> <p>Although I live at a distance from Strathcona Park, I continue to feel considerable "ownership" of the Park and its problems, and would appreciate being kept in the loop.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
W6	<p>After I wrote by e-mail to (Friends of Strathcona Park) with my views on whether horses should be allowed in the Park, they suggested in their reply that I should contact you to express my views on this matter.</p> <p>I am now too old (at 92) to go backpacking myself, but I used to know Strathcona Park quite well, and collaborated with Syd Watts in writing the first edition of "Hiking trails 3", and helped a bit with the drafting of the Master Plan for the Park, which should not now be watered down to accommodate commercial development. As you doubtless know, the trails and hiking routes in the Bedwell Valley, and other areas in the Park, are subject to heavy rain, snow, and windfalls, and this does, in my opinion make them unsuitable for horses. I no longer go to Meetings, so shall not be at any of the meetings discussing this issue, but I hope the planners will consider the views here expressed and not allow the</p>

	<p>master plan for the Park to be modified to allow horses in the park or further commercial development.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p>
W7	<p>To Whom it May Concern:</p> <p>I am very concerned with plans to open the Bedwell Valley to horse traffic. It seems evident that the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee has looked carefully at the evidence and has recommended: 1) a Park Use Permit can not be issued to the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort based on the Park Master Plan and, 2) against having public meetings to amend the Park Master Plan to clarify the horse issue. Despite these recommendations, by a very well informed Committee, BC Parks has chosen to issue RFP's contradicting the guidance provided by the Committee.</p> <p>It seems very clear based on information collected over the last few years that the Bedwell Valley is not an appropriate place for horses. The environmental destruction that they can cause is considerable as can be seen in other areas where they have been allowed - notably, Forbidden Plateau.</p> <p>It is not appropriate for a Wilderness Recreation area to become a stomping ground for a private concern that already has horse access in other areas. Nor, is not acceptable to lease out a part of the park for 20 years. The Ministry should reconsider their efforts to commercialize the parks and take responsibility for ensuring that they are utilized and maintained properly by trained Parks staff.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W7	<p>I have become aware of a proposed amendment to the Strathcona Park Master Plan to issue a Parks Use Permit (PUP) to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) to allow it to guide its clients on horseback up the Bedwell River Valley and into Strathcona Park as far as You Creek, to construct facilities at You Creek to accommodate its clients and horses and to repair and maintain the trail to horse use standards.</p> <p>I have reviewed this corridor in the Strathcona Park and do not believe that this would be in the best interest of the maintenance of the integrity of the wilderness presently protected by the boundaries and master plan. Too often private interests override the well-considered plans to preserve our limited wilderness for future generations. Della Falls is the highest waterfall in Canada, presently accessible by hiking trails that serve the mission of the Strathcona Park Master Plan. With constructed facilities at You Creek, the pristine beauty of these wilderness areas will be degraded. Horses have a high impact on any trail system and the construction of horse camps to accommodate private clients in a Provincial Park should be discouraged and, in fact, not permitted. I have been informed that this is also the opinion of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC)</p> <p>I will try to attend the Open House on Wednesday, May 28th, but unfortunately I have a previous engagement from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., so cannot attend the public meeting. I would like to have my opinion on this proposed amendment known, so I am sending you this email message for your consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W8	<p>The situation, as I understand it, is as follows:</p> <p>The Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC) has recommended to BC Parks that a PUP should not be issued to CWR because its proposal is not congruent with the Master Plan, &amp; that BC Parks should not attempt to amend a portion of the Master Plan in response to a single application. However, BC Parks has chosen to disregard the SPPAC recommendation, in the face of enormous public opposition.</p>

	<p>As a long-time user (hiker) of Strathcona Park, I wish to register, in the strongest possible terms, my opposition to the changing of the Master Plan, to permit the use of the park by commercial interests of any kind. Not only is such use contrary to the whole idea of real wilderness, but it also establishes a precedent for other unsuitable usage. Horses are not innocuous creatures---- their manure contains seeds of non-indigenous plants which may cause irreparable harm to the ecology of the Park. Also, horses' hooves swiftly reduce terrain to a churned -up mess, as can be seen on other trails in the Comox Valley. The presence of accommodation for the users of the equestrian facilities is contrary to the whole idea of a simple, natural environment which is sought by existing park users who are happy to camp out in portable tents.</p> <p>For all the above reasons, and the fact that our wilderness parks were established to enable ordinary people to enjoy our unique BC wilderness by their own efforts, and to retain it in the most natural state possible, I would ask you to reject the application of CWR or any other private business seeking to exploit Strathcona Park for their own ends.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p>
<p>W9</p>	<p>Why are we spending so much time and effort on the matter of horse suitability on the Coast? The evidence of past horse use is clear and we should learn from history.</p> <p>Neither horses or the Coast climate and terrain have changed that much in 100 years that we should assume a different outcome today.</p> <p>Example 1.</p> <p>The trail from Bamfield to Keeha Bay is an old coastal packhorse route. It was in use between the two World Wars. It is the muddiest, potholed and generally messed up piece of trail that I have encountered on the Coast. The damage was done by packhorses and the ground has never recovered. A quick visit and hike on the trail would explain the situation better than thousands of words.</p> <p>Example 2.</p> <p>The Mt. Beecher Trail is an excellent example of horse use in the more Alpine Areas of the Coast. The ground was destroyed in the earlier part of the last century. Erosion and uncovering of bedrock cannot be repaired and natural re-growth does not happen after this severe damage.</p> <p>The damage caused by horses is different in each example but the results disastrous in both cases.</p> <p>Let's use the lessons of history and a little common sense in protecting the Coast terrain and Strathcona Park from any more unnecessary damage.</p> <p>Horses are fine in the right conditions but let us stop trying to push the envelope into areas that have proved disastrous in the past.</p>
<p>W10</p>	<p>We need to all support ecologically friendly businesses that encourage enhancement of the natural world instead of destroying it. The Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, adjacent to Strathcona Park, is a positive contribution to not only Clayoquot Sound but to Strathcona Park as a whole. While logging, mining, fish farming and massive sewage to name a few of the problems in this UNESCO Biosphere Reserve are destroying this area, the Friends of Clayoquot seem to have their priorities on backwards in opposing the use of non-motorized, temporary use of previously graveled old logging and mining roads. People need to make a living in conjunction with the natural world rather than extraction of natural resources which adversely affect everything for eons. We will be there and do what we can. Although the FOSP and FOCS challenge me because my daughter works there, I know what goes on there and am familiar with it, having been in the Bedwell and Ursus</p>

	<p>Rivers for over 40 years, long before the Wilderness Resort was conceived. I have watched the Wilderness Resort, to my surprise and delight, create something so beautiful and remarkable and with enhancing the wildlife, salmon, etc. makes the Bedwell River valley truly a hope for the future of us all. Their efforts to create (at their own expense and time) salmon spawning channels, flyways for raptors to be reintroduced to the wild, etc. and to teach people who have influence over many decisions around this planet about how valuable something so powerfully beautiful can be is incredibly important. We know that the only reason that logging and mining, etc. aren't taking place in the Bedwell and Ursus is due to the presence of the Wilderness Resort at this time. If they are gone, one of the last places where human and wilderness experience is so special, we are lost. We all need to make a living and hopefully it is doing something good rather than destroying more of this precious planet. Right now the logging (high grading of old growth cedar for the most part) is taking place in the Bulson River adjacent to the Ursus and in the logging plans for this area (Clayoquot), the Ursus is included as part of the Bulson watershed, not the Bedwell, something underhanded in order to get in and take out the old growth forests of the Ursus River. About one or two giant barge loads of ancient forest are leaving this area of Clayoquot Sound every month, something to be really concerned about but neither of these groups mentions this or speaks out against it. For All Our Relations,</p>
<p>W11</p>	<p>Re: horse use in Strathcona Park</p> <p>I am opposed to private commercial horse use in Strathcona Park. As a volunteer in my community I spend a lot of time trying to protect sensitive habitat and the Bedwell Valley is extremely sensitive. Allowing horse use will have negative impacts on fish in the river, introduce invasive non-native plant species, and cause wash outs and trail degradation.</p> <p>Furthermore, I strongly object to the terms of reference being used in the consultation process, which favor the proponent Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge (CWR) by asking the public not whether we support horse use in the Bedwell Valley but under what conditions we would support horse use in the Bedwell Valley. This is not the way to conduct an open and neutral consultation process.</p> <p>The Bedwell Valley is zoned Wilderness Recreation. The Master Plan for Strathcona Park prohibits horse use in the Bedwell, the Megin Valley, Price Creek Valley, Della Creek Valley, Elk River Valley, Flower Ridge Trail, and Marble Meadows Trail. To allow an amendment of the Master Plan permitting horse use in the Bedwell could open the possibility of applications to use horses in these other Wilderness Recreation areas. I am not in favor of amending the Master Plan for this reason.</p> <p>I attended an open house on this issue in the Comox Valley last year to express these views and I am once again demanding to be heard on this issue. Don't let private enterprise tear the heart out of a precious public resource. Protect and preserve our parks by rejecting the CWR proposal.</p> <p>Sincerely</p>
<p>W12</p>	<p>I would like to add my voice to those who oppose the use of horses and expansion of private uses like this in our wild park areas. I have always subscribed to the idea summarized by the quote: "I love the mountains, that's why I never go there." To truly love and preserve wilderness, we should leave it alone. Some access is needed to bring the story back to those who, like me aren't up to out there backcountry trekking, but we don't have to intrude to enjoy. Bringing widened trails and people and horses into an area that is the home of cougars, black bears and other species is a recipe for trouble.</p> <p>Please add my name to those opposing such changes. If Gordon Campbell's government wants to be the environmental leader they say they are, then wilderness is a part of the picture, not just carbon emissions.</p>

	Thank you,
W13	<p>I am writing in regards to the issue of horses in Strathcona Park and specifically at this time on the Bedwell river trail. I don't think that there are any appropriate areas in the park for horse use. I think that the impact is too high on the trails and would only get worse as time went on. Having hiked in the Lake Louise area and been confronted by a line of horses whose riders are not competent, and being pushed off the trail by a horse and dealing with horse poo everywhere, I just don't want to see that kind of thing in our park here on the island. I will not be able to make one of the public meetings so this is my vote on the subject - no horses please!</p>
W14	<p>To whom it may concern:</p> <p>We are writing to demand that BC Parks follow the recommendations of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee, whose members are appointed by BC Parks, to not permit horses into the Bedwell Valley. We understand that the applicant, Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge, has lots of private land along the margin of the Park and that they already have access to the Ursus Valley. The applicant can take hikers into Strathcona Park. We support this usage, but not horses. Don't mess with the Master Plan. We will not tolerate any changes in the Plan to facilitate private enterprise access to the Bedwell Valley with horses.</p> <p>Yours truly,</p>
W15	<p>Please record the fact that I am strongly opposed to altering the current Master Plan for Strathcona Park to allow horses in the park. It is for sound reasons that the master plan currently does not permit horse use in the park as the environmental implications of horses in a fragile wilderness area are considerable.</p> <p>Please also uphold the recommendations of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee. Wise decisions now, based on knowledgeable input, will mean that this wilderness treasure will continue to exist intact for generations to come.</p> <p>Strathcona Park belongs to the people of BC. Heed our input and do not erode our legacy.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W16	<p>to whom it may concern,</p> <p>I have been made aware of the efforts to bring the business of trail riding into the park. Business has no place in a park. Parks are for man and animals to be undisturbed in nature.</p> <p>Horse traffic demolishes a trail if there is any water / dampness present. Last summer I had the pleasure of hiking at Lake Louise. There was a few sections where trail riding was allowed. Where the trail was damp, the ground was un-walkable for a hiker. The horses hooves sank deeply into the mud. Luckily there was an alternate route for people at that section. The trail tends to get wider and wider as both horse and hiker tries to find firm footing.</p> <p>There is land outside of parks for riding. There is no place in a park for commercial endeavors.</p> <p>AND, I am a horse lover.</p> <p>sincerely,</p>
W17	<p>I have hiked the park. At age 60 my dream of wilderness riding is unlikely but I cannot think of a more spectacular venue or challenging experience. Put me in the pro horse</p>

	<p>column. I have community commitments that prevent me from attending the scheduled meetings. Horse activity in the park is not excessive. I doubt the impact could be negative on the ecology of the park. Please feel free to forward my support to the applicable governing bodies along with my gratitude for their stewardship to date.</p>
<p>W18</p>	<p>Dear Sir or Madam;</p> <p>I am writing to express my concern for the amending of the Strathcona Park Master Plan. My biggest concern is that this could open the door to other private, commercial uses of Strathcona and other parks. In this specific case I am also concerned about the environmental impact on such a wet area by regular horse use.</p> <p>Please let me know how this application proceeds.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and allowing for my public input.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W19</p>	<p>To Whom It May Concern:</p> <p>At this point on the planet which is in serious collapse, we need to all support ecologically friendly businesses that encourage enhancement of the natural world instead of destroying it. The Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, adjacent to Strathcona Park, is a positive contribution to not only Clayoquot Sound but to Strathcona Park as a whole. While logging, mining, fish farming and massive sewage to name a few of the problems in this UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, are destroying this area, the Friends of Clayoquot and the Friends of Strathcona Park seem to have their priorities askew in opposing the use of non-motorized, temporary use of previously graveled old logging and mining roads. People need to make a living in conjunction with the natural world rather than extraction of natural resources which adversely affect everything for eons. I know what goes on in the Strathcona Park areas of Clayoquot Sound, having lived here for over 40 years and spending time every year in both the Bedwell, Ursus and Moyeha Rivers.</p> <p>I have recently completed a 60 year review of the salmon counts from 1947 to 2007 in all the major watersheds of Clayoquot Sound, for the Clayoquot Biosphere Reserve Marine Committee, which includes all salmon species as well as Atlantic salmon which are found quite regularly in the Bedwell and Ursus River, which clearly shows the serious decline of most wild salmon species in this area.</p> <p>I am familiar with these areas and have regularly traveled and camped in these rivers long before the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort was conceived, when Sammy Craig was first logging and mining in the valley and when Walter Guppy's mining cabin was still near the confluence of the Bedwell and Ursus Rivers.</p> <p>I have watched the Wilderness Resort, to my surprise and delight, create something that is beautiful and remarkable, enhancing the wildlife, salmon, etc., making the Bedwell River valley truly a hope and example for the future of us all. Their efforts to create (at their own expense and time) salmon spawning channels, flyways for raptors to be reintroduced to the wild, etc. and to teach people who have influence over many decisions around this planet about the value of wilderness is something that is incredibly important. These people are offering financing to enhance wildlife and wild salmon, something greatly needed at present.</p> <p>We know that the only reason that logging and mining, etc. aren't taking place in the Bedwell and Ursus is due to the presence of the Wilderness Resort at this time. If they are gone, one of the last places where humans can experience wilderness at its best, is so special, we will all lose. We all need to make a living and hopefully it is doing something good rather than destroying more of this precious planet. Right now, logging</p>

(high grading of old growth cedar for the most part) is taking place throughout Clayoquot Sound and especially in the Bulson River adjacent to the Ursus River. In the logging plans for Clayoquot Sound, the Ursus is included as part of the Bulson watershed, not the Bedwell, something underhanded in order to get in and take out the old growth forests of the Ursus River. About one or two giant barge loads of ancient forest are leaving this area of Clayoquot Sound every month, something to be really concerned about but neither of these groups mentions this or speaks out against it.

While islands of integrity like the Bedwell, Ursus and Moyeha watersheds still stand, these areas are increasingly hemmed in by logging, mining, fish farming and pollution. Where are these environmental groups when this irreplaceable resource like old growth forests and wild salmon are being destroyed? Mining trucks and giant fans to provide oxygen to workers deep underground at Westmin Mine continue to rumble through the park, polluting the waters, soil and natural integrity of the park. Logging of thousands of year old forests is taking place nearby, 6 or more fish farms pollute the Bedwell Inlet and are negatively affecting wild salmon and other native fish and seafood in the area.

If people want to talk of "foreign" species in the Park, like horses, what of dogs which accompany many hikers? No one is rabidly saying no to these, yet, as First Nations from Ahousaht pointed out at the Strathcona Park Open House in Tofino in May, even non-native people are "foreigners" to these areas where hundreds of their ancestors are buried and once lived.

A park like Strathcona Park is enhanced by good neighbors like Strathcona Park Lodge, Mount Washington and The Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, all of which help financial and ecological monitoring, enhancement and protection of the natural resources and beauty of what remains of this first and oldest British Columbia Provincial Park. We need to appreciate the good options for the use of our parks and get together to put an end to the resource extraction and permanent destruction of all that remains....For All Our Relations,

Criteria for Horse Use in Strathcona Park:

1. Consider horse use and bicycle use on abandoned gravel logging and mining roads within the park.

-this helps to monitor poaching and destructive human use that would otherwise be difficult to keep an eye on

-this provides an option for people who are unable to hike long distances or experience the wilderness in ways that people who are young and able can and there are many people like this.

-there are so many areas away from gravel roads that this shouldn't be an impediment for those seeking sanctuary from others.

2. Horse use won't be a deterrent regarding feed or excrement any more than people already impact areas and this can be a positive contribution to the environment in the same way human waste can be applied to fertilize the forests and land if only people know how to dispose properly of their human waste.

-composting of horse manure is good for mushrooms, soil, etc. and can be maintained outside of the watersheds if on gravel trails.

-there are elk in the park which create trails with their hooves which are larger than horses hooves and if properly done, are not a detriment to the land.

3. Ahousaht first Nation have stated that they will monitor the use of horses in the park and where it is unacceptable, they have banned them such as on the flats at Cypre River. They have made it a requirement that any use of their territory, even Provincial Parks,

	<p>must have their permission and they must be consulted. This is an obligation by all, including groups who are proponents of being "Friends of ..."</p> <p>The Hereditary Chiefs who were present at the Open House meeting thanked the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort for consulting with them and for helping them find jobs and creating employment and providing accommodation and other amenities for spiritual retreats, etc. for the band.</p> <p>4. Other trail users can share resources and there is a benefit to this as we have experienced when having an accident within the area and the horse trail was a benefit. Humans helping humans is an important aspect of the use of natural areas, and having access to areas where help can be found is a good prospect.</p> <p>5. Use of horses and campsites is an opportunity that can be temporary and monitored for adverse impacts, it is non-threatening in the long term and can be reversed if found to be harmful.</p> <p>6. People need to always be careful of garbage and foodstuff that would attract wildlife as wildlife and human encounters are a natural experience not to be avoided but to be shared respectfully. Human and horse manure can be effectively composted into a benefit but food waste must be cautiously dealt with.</p> <p>7. Non-motorized use of our wilderness areas is a bonus just as motor boats can be replaced by canoes and kayaks that do not threaten the peace of others on our waterways and lakes, so likewise horses and bicycles need to be considered in areas where relatively low impact is beneficial for access to areas. Dogs and people can be a problem as well as any other non-native species and in all of these areas, we must be respectful of everything that is affected.</p> <p>These are my perspectives and I thank you for this opportunity to contribute these....For All Our Relations,</p>
W20	<p>I am writing because I was unable to attend the public meeting in Courtenay, B.C., May 28, 2008, regarding possible amendments to the Strathcona Park Master Plan to allow horse access to the Bedwell Valley.</p> <p>I am a local resident who has hiked in Strathcona Park for almost thirty years and highly value the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of time spent in this wilderness environment. Truly priceless.</p> <p>I have several concerns about extending horse access to the park beyond the two areas already designated for horses, in particular allowing horse traffic in the Bedwell Valley.</p> <p>There will undoubtedly be habitat loss/displacement and environmental destruction. The construction of horse trails and campsites will result in removal of trees and underbrush, and soil disturbance at the very least. Animal habitat will be destroyed and their movement patterns disrupted. This does not fit Strathcona Park's mission of conserving biodiversity and protecting ecosystems.</p> <p>There will be further impacts on the land as well as on animals and people. I have experienced these impacts first hand in other areas that I explore and horses use. The enjoyment of hiking is greatly reduced when shared with horses. In addition to the offensive stench of feces and urine, especially in the heat, trails become pitted and water collects. Horses chew up trails, especially in wet conditions, leaving areas susceptible to erosion and pollution. Run off, fouled with waste products of horses, eventually finds its way into local waterways. In the case of the current horse proposal for Strathcona Park, these waterways will be the local creeks and streams of the Bedwell Valley, a drinking source for animals and people. This degradation cannot be allowed in Strathcona Park</p>

	<p>where protection of the ecosystem has to be first priority.</p> <p>One of the cornerstones of Strathcona Park's Mission Statement is preservation of ecological integrity. To introduce horses with their feces, urine, food, and associated microorganisms will undoubtedly have effects on the many large mammals and smaller wildlife that survive and hopefully thrive in this wilderness area. It is of the utmost importance to protect their pristine ecosystem in its natural state. The biodiversity of Vancouver Island wildlife preserved and protected in Strathcona Park simply cannot be guaranteed with the intrusion of such a large non-traditional species as the horse.</p> <p>Finally I think philosophically it is wrong to allow a private for profit organization into our B.C. Parks. The parks are public and should remain so. Privatization does not fit within the boundaries of our B.C. Parks, no matter how financially attractive it might seem. Keep Strathcona Park, the first provincial park in British Columbia, with an international profile as a part of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, free from any private encroachment.</p> <p>In closing, I encourage you to hold firm to the current Master Plan for the park and not allow horse traffic into the Bedwell Valley or any other parts of Strathcona Park beyond the two areas already so designated.</p> <p>Maintain the integrity and preserve the ecology of Strathcona Park for present and future generations.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W21	<p>This is to let you know that I am opposed to the use of horses and to privatization in Strathcona Park. The area of the park in question is WILDERNESS. The use of horses is NOT PERMITTED. Privatization of public resources sets a dangerous precedent.</p> <p>This park belongs to us as citizens. It is not there for profit-making schemes that will do irreparable harm to the wilderness environment.</p> <p>Yours,</p>
W22	<p>To Whom it May Concern:</p> <p>Please let it be known that I am a person and long time hiker that cannot accept horses/guides in Strathcona Park.</p> <p>I am opposed to the whole idea.</p> <p>First, I hike to escape our towns and cities. I do not want to see guides and tourists. I do not want to step on horse manure, and most of all, I do not want to sprain my ankle and more due to a horse print deep in the trail.</p> <p>Then there is the wild life...</p> <p>Why not keep horses and guides in Alberta?</p> <p>Thank you for my input.</p> <p>Sincerely and sternly,</p>
W23	<p>I strongly endorse the position of the Friends of Strathcona Park regarding Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge's proposal to have horses in the Bedwell Valley. Aside from the real environmental concerns that would result from such use; the concept of commercial exploitation of our provincial parks system is alarming.</p>
W24	<p>Hi all,</p> <p>Referring to what one email stated regarding keeping Strathcona Park 'wild', I ask for whom? All of us hikers are allowed and if one states we want the park to remain 'wild' then no human traffic should be allowed at all. A far more comprehensive and well</p>

	<p>thought out strategy is needed here in my opinion.</p> <p>So much of our parkland is so 'wild' few people can actually get out into to experience it because it's so remote. What has resulted is little to no real political pressure to save more land from development and logging devastation. If the public can't access the wild outdoors no politician is going to listen to a couple of hikers who will be perceived as being in small numbers and only special interests as hikers.</p> <p>Not allowing horses ?? Quiet, eco friendly, getting more people to discover all parks does all of us good in the end to raise awareness of the entire issue of protecting more land.</p> <p>The damage we hikers foot traffic paths do is very little less than what a horse trail looks like.</p> <p>I've read the listed reasons but these do not make a strong argument at all in my opinion.</p> <p>Yes, I agree that commercial business should stay out and if that is the reason then just state that as the strongest opposition, don't get muddled down with the rest of it.</p> <p>Hope to make it down to the June 4 - Victoria - Burnside Gorge Community Center - 471 Cecilia Rd., around 7.</p>
W25	<p>I had planned to attend today's meeting at the Burnside-Gorge Community Centre, but other commitments have made that doubtful. Accordingly I decided to voice my comments by email:</p> <p>I worked for the Parks Branch from 1949 to 1976 and finished my Public Service with the Heritage Conservation Branch from 1976 until retirement in April 1984. Prior to that, my family lived in the Campbell River area from 1937 until 1994 and I had worked with the Forest Service and Logging companies in the Strathcona-Salmon River area for many years, developing a strong attachment and appreciation for the natural resources of Strathcona Park. I visited Buttle Lake first in 1938 when one was able to see rocks on the lake bottom at astounding depths of 40 to 50 feet! No more. Some of the magic has diminished. Since then my wife and I have spent much time hiking and camping throughout a large part of the Park. It became part of our psyche. Indeed, in 1984 my wife was arrested during an environmental protest at the drill-site for the proposed Cream Lake Silver property, when she lay prostrate under the drilling rig.</p> <p>During my long career with Parks I learned that some Parks lend themselves to certain specific uses, others do not. Horses on foot-hiking trails are inimical to acceptable use. I am convinced that horses do not belong on the Bedwell Creek Valley hiking trails. In fact I would recommend that horse-riding concessions not be permitted in any part of Strathcona Park, so I would not be in favour of a review of the Strathcona Park Master Plan seeking an amendment to enable horses in the Park.</p> <p>If CWR is determined to pursue its objective of expanding its horse operations elsewhere it can surely turn its attention to numerous other Crown and Private land along the west coast north of Tofino. Keep horses out of Strathcona, please!</p>
W26	<p>Re: Amendment of the Master Park Plan for Strathcona Park</p> <p>I am writing to oppose amending the Master Park Plan to allow commercial use of horses in Strathcona Park. In my experience the use of trails by humans on foot and by horses on hooves is incompatible. In our wet climate, the horses dig up trails and create mud holes that make hiking by foot unpleasant and dangerous.</p> <p>I believe that allowing commercial horse riding groups through Bedwell and other valleys would also eventually result in demands for the building of more infrastructure (accommodation, restaurants, etc.) which would be inappropriate in a wilderness park.</p>

	<p>I wish the Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge success in their other efforts to help tourists enjoy the wilderness, but I do not think that commercial horse use within the park is an acceptable activity.</p> <p>Please listen to Strathcona Public Advisory Committee and the Friends of Strathcona Park, who together have deep knowledge about the park and have contributed so much labour toward its maintenance for the public good.</p> <p>Thank you very much for protecting what will become an ever more valuable nature preserve in the heart of Vancouver Island.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W27	<p>Dear Sir,</p> <p>I write to register my opposition to the government's current initiative to examine the conditions under which horses should be allowed in Strathcona Park, notably along the Bedwell Trail.</p> <p>There are many places where horse access is appropriate. Strathcona Park's Bedwell area is not one. Nor, I believe, is it in the Park's Master Plan.</p> <p>No to horses in Strathcona.</p>
W28	<p>I agree with the 'no trace' horse theory. At least push the droppings to the side as it may not fit in a doggy bag.</p>
W29	<p>You asked for a copy of my verbal presentation, these are the notes I spoke from and points I made at the meeting in Victoria.</p> <p>Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan Review Public Consultation on Horse Use.</p> <p>I oppose any horse use in Strathcona Provincial Park. There are no criteria that would make it suitable for horse trails/use.</p> <p>The following is a copy of my oral presentation at Victoria 3rd June 08.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Strathcona Park is considered a low use park – the reason it comprises a very large conservancy area.</li> <li>2 The “Wilderness Recreation Zone” does not cover business opportunities of regular trips with large groups of people with horses and wranglers, associated overnight corrals and infrastructures, etc. It is to “Protect remote and undisturbed natural landscape, provide backcountry recreation” and “ very low use to provide solitary experience”. Commercial horse use is Intensive Recreation, and not appropriate in Strathcona Park.</li> <li>3 When access for horses is purely for business use, (where the public would unlikely ever take horses), because of the sea only access, crossing private property, and all for a relatively short trail for a huge expense. Exclusive use like this does not belong in any of BC parks including Strathcona Park.</li> <li>4 The trail through the Bedwell has in the past been kept open by hikers and can be again. Friends of Strathcona Park recently asked for a permit to open up this trail and were denied.</li> <li>5 Parks does not have a budget for monitoring the present regular activities in the park now, horse use would require frequent labour intensive monitoring. How would horse use in the far corners of the park be controlled? (Parks is not able to control illegal Snowmobile use inside the park which is an example of this).</li> <li>6 More than 25% of the road bed of the original mining trail has been washed away and more will be as evidenced by all the major damage on the north island by two 200 yr</li> </ol>

	<p>storm events – possibly part of Global Climate Change.</p> <p>7 Hikers don't require large bridges, engineered for horses. Horses do cause erosion as witnessed in many places. (Hikers do also but much less)</p> <p>8 I have hiked in areas where horses are permitted such as Spruce Lakes Provincial Park in the Chilcotin. (Also Grand Tetons Park, Monkman Park, and more northern parks of BC). There, even with the three day restriction of using sterile horse feed before going into the park, invasive species have been introduced, just another reason to not have horses in an area where invasive plants can be spread very easily.</p> <p>9 I am embarrassed now that I was part of the process in the development of the Strathcona Park Master Plan to have horses use the Oshinow Toy lake area of the park. My reasoning at the time was it was ugly (having just been logged). If I were to make that decision today I would not be recommending horse use there or anywhere else in Strathcona Park as it has now healed over and is returning to a natural state, so this is not what I feel is a good activity in this area of the province.</p> <p>10 On land owned in the Bedwell area by a commercial company that has its own horse trails, I have been told they are totally "unwalkable" and "unusable" because of bog. "Vegetation is non existent for 1 1/2 metres across"</p> <p>11 Pressure on our parks will continue to increase as outside areas are impacted by man. We must protect our parks from use when there are better, and less impacting areas that could be used eg: Crown lands.</p> <p>12 Parks cannot be all things to everybody.</p> <p>13 Businesses can and do have Park Use Permits to take hikers into the park. We have a wheelchair trails at Paradise Meadows as an example that represents a very real opportunity for everyone to visit and use Strathcona Park.</p>
<p>W30</p>	<p>June 6, 2008.</p> <p>Dear Premier Campbell:</p> <p>Subject: Strathcona Park Master Plan: Public Process and Corporate Interests</p> <p>On May 28th I attended a public meeting in Courtenay, held by BC Parks to solicit input on criteria for horse-use in Strathcona Park. Some people spoke with passion about their long love for the oldest park in BC and some spoke with notes that showed an enormous effort in research that would help protect Strathcona Park. The vast majority spoke against allowing commercial horse use in the park but I and many others did not speak. I needed time to listen to people who knew the subject well and to then go home and ruminate on what I had heard. I needed the opportunity to go back to another meeting to enter into dialogue and help formulate a community consensus. That opportunity for meaningful public input into decisions was denied me by your government.</p> <p>And that Mr. Campell is my first concern. I am concerned, that under your government there has been a severe decline in opportunities for meaningful public participation and input into decisions that affect our lives. Your government seems committed to operating in secrecy as much as possible and to limiting public discussion to the bare minimum.</p> <p>The meeting in Courtenay was well attended despite the fact that BC Parks did an abysmal job of providing advance notice. I do not blame field staff for this problem rather I blame the systematic under-funding and under-staffing of BC Parks and other government agencies that is becoming a hall mark of your government. The meeting would have gone virtually unnoticed if it had not been for the dedication of the Friends of Strathcona Park who have supplanted BC Parks as the true stewards of Strathcona Park.</p>

The Strathcona Park Master Plan was developed over a course of years with extensive public dialogue and the establishment of a Public Advisory Committee. Your government has seen fit to ignore the recommendations of your own Advisory Committee and to hold just three meetings in three different communities to hear suggestions for criteria for horse use. This process is unacceptable. In a democracy, there must be time for citizens to deliberate and discuss issues. They need to express ideas and then go home, absorb the discussion, and return for more debate. In the process citizens and agency staff learn from one another and a consensus emerges.

I am concerned that your government is deliberately reducing opportunities for citizen input to decisions that affect their communities. I am left wondering how long it will be before you pass a Parks equivalent of Bill 30 which has eliminated the ability of local governments to protect public values by reviewing electricity generation projects. While not as draconian as Bill 30, the Parks meetings were a far cry from true democracy. The Parks process used is simply not an acceptable way to amend a Master Plan.

I suggest that your government adopt and be guided by the principles established by the International Association for Public Participation. Their list of core values for the practice of public participation are:

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Source: <http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=4>

I am also concerned that you and BC Parks have put the needs of corporations, in this case, Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, ahead of the needs and wishes of the public. I noticed recently that you wrote praise for James Speth's new book, "The Bridge at the Edge of the World – Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability". Mr. Speth is very clear in his criticisms of the status quo. His statement on page 225 is a good example:

"But the environmental agenda should expand to embrace a profound challenge to consumerism and commercialism and the lifestyles they offer, a healthy skepticism of growth mania and a sharp focus on what society should actually be striving to grow, a challenge to corporate dominance and a redefinition of the corporation and its goals..."

Your lengthy praise (the longest in the list) is quoted in the front of the book and your name is listed as "Honourable Gordon Campbell, premier, Province of British Columbia". But your actions, Mr. Campbell, do not match your words. Your actions as premier show that you are committed to following the corporate agenda of growth and you have never challenged corporate dominance but rather sit in elected office as "corporate servant"

	<p>instead of “public servant”.</p> <p>At the Strathcona Park meeting in Courtenay, the general perception of the audience was that government was using as little public consultation as possible in order to grant quick permission to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort to use horses for commercial purposes. A review of the Resort’s website shows that they serve a clientele that can afford \$1600 to \$1800 per day. This is exactly the consumerism and commercialism that Speth says must be challenged and yet your government is facilitating its growth.</p> <p>You can’t have it both ways Mr. Campbell, if you truly praise the revolutionary ideas of James Speth then your actions need to follow suit. A first step would be to adopt AND FOLLOW the core values of the International Association for Public Participation. I look forward to your response.</p> <p>Yours truly,</p> <p>PS. In case you haven’t gathered, I am opposed to the use of horses anywhere in Strathcona Park.</p>
W40	<p>Sir,</p> <p>Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the use of horses in Strathcona Park. There are two reasons why I would prefer not to see horses in the park:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strathcona Park is the only large park on Vancouver Island and the only one extensive enough to sustain populations of large animals. For this reason it should be considered a wilderness reserve and be kept as pristine as possible. The recreational aspect of the park should be secondary and limited to self-propelled/non-mechanical activities. If we allow access by horses, especially on a commercial basis, we open the door for future profit-motivated abuses not compatible with a nature reserve. [there are and were already enough non-conforming uses in the park]</li> <li>2. I have noticed in several parks in Canada and the USA that horses damage the best built trails, especially during the wet season, they mess up creeks at fords, they displace wildlife and they leave behind mounds of manure along the trails and at camps which obviously emit bad smells and attract multitudes of insects for the hikers to fight off. For these reasons many US parks have built separate trails for horse riders and do not allow them on hikers trails. Do we want to build parallel trails in the Bedwell Valley?</li> </ol> <p>I vote for leaving the park as pristine as possible.</p> <p>With best regards,</p>
W41	<p>I attended the meeting in Victoria re: Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan Review Public Consultation on Horse Use.</p> <p>I am opposed to opening the plan to add horse use and to any horse use inside Strathcona Provincial Park.</p> <p>I am a long time park user, not only hiking, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing in Strathcona Park but in many Parks through out the Province and North America. I started hiking in the park in 1971 so I have been a part of the many public consultations, and lack of, in order to keep this park pristine and out of the hands of private industry. I have also hiked in many parts of the world, having just returned from 3 months in Patagonian parks so I think my input should count.</p> <p>These were my comments at the meeting plus I am adding more, I hope you are listening to what the public park users say: not the commercial enterprise who does not personally use the park. I do not mind them guiding very small hiking groups into Parks as long as they do not impact the wilderness values and have no other special treatment, treating</p>

other park users as second class citizens.

Horse use does not fall into this category, I am opposed to any horse use in the park.

Horses create damage, create terrible boggy deep trails full of horse urine and manure (yes, I have been up to my knees in it on wilderness trails elsewhere in BC – Monkman, Spruce Lakes PP, Kakwa, Grand Tetons, etc) they erode trails, they do carry in invasive species such as dandelions, thistles (how this happens we don't know but it is probably impossible to monitor the horse feed), they destroy the tranquility of the parks, dominate the trails (we have been yelled at to get off the trail) and at night (in Monkman and Kakwa Provincial Parks ) each horse wears little bells to keep the wildlife away so very annoying, their urine and manure pollute streams and rivers, our source of drinking water and the dust in the campsites that blows around is full of dried horse manure (experienced in Monkman PP, Spruce Lakes, etc), which creates allergies..

There are vast areas on Vancouver Island that people can and do use horses; why pick on Strathcona Park???

The SPPAC turned the CWR Application down; they are the spokes people for the public. The Strathcona Park Plan was developed with months of input and deliberation over horse use – I had input and also horse riders in our area had input which, because they are also hikers in this park, they were opposed to horse use. They added that it was not practical anyway in this area because of the problem of access with horse trailers etc, so really you are looking at exclusive use if you allow this.

The Friends of Strathcona Park are adamantly opposed and they know the park better than anyone. If you take their membership they have the most years of Strathcona Park experience.

We do not have the right to steal from our children. These are the last areas of wilderness left and we should leave them this as a legacy, as a peaceful place to go and preserve, with little impact from man.

There is not only wheelchair access into the heart of the park but the trails from Mt Washington are in great condition for people who have trouble walking and room for their companions. I have taken students with special needs on these trails.

These hearings were very confusing, first we had no notice of them and as most of us have to travel a distance we need some warning, so we can also inform other interested parties. The one in Victoria was very difficult to find and out of town. Then the object of these meetings was not clear, first the letter and website that clearly mentioned the Bedwell Valley and then the moderator who, with a long introduction told us it was nothing to do with the Bedwell Valley and that it wasn't a referendum (I agree but also public input is important to judge what the public wants) and then he proceeded to put Criteria on his board.

When speakers spoke about not wanting horse use and why not then he would put Criteria that ought to be looked at so horses can be brought in – not what the speaker intended and his translation of that as well. The first speaker had talked to a Parks' staff member at this Open House who had given him positive reasons why horses should use the Bedwell Valley (such as it was just an old road) in spite of us being told this wasn't about the Bedwell, convincing him that there would be no harm (was this lobbying?)

As to having to use the Park, the CWR has use of the Ursus Valley which is wilderness and other Crown Lands so they should keep to that.

In conclusion, this is in violation of the intent of the Master Plan developed by the public, it is opening the door to other commercial operations to develop in the park and most

	<p>importantly it is damaging the wilderness values of Strathcona Park as this area is healing from an industrial use and is a wildlife and natural zone. As a hiker I do not mind not using this part of the park if it is left as a prime wilderness area and if the trail is not repaired.</p> <p>No, to any horse use in Strathcona Park</p> <p>Cc Barry Penner, Minister of Parks</p> <p>Premier Campbell</p> <p>Friends of Strathcona Park</p>
<p>W42</p>	<p><b>HORSE USE IN STRATHCONA PARK</b></p> <p>The writers of the Park Master Plan, after considerable debate and research, excluded horses from the Park except for two trial areas. What has changed other than a resort on the west coast wanting permission to transport their guests through the park on horseback between their campsites?</p> <p>There are so many reasons why horse riding anywhere in the Park should never be allowed. Horses are very hard on the environment – trail degradation, nibbling on bushes, defecating on walking paths, introduction of seed from unwanted plants in fodder, confrontations with animals (bears) native to the Park; likely many more reasons excluded them in the first place.</p> <p>One of the motivations for creating the Park was to preserve a piece of Vancouver Island as untouched as possible as a legacy of what once was. To my knowledge, horses were never Park fauna and therefore their introduction would alter the natural state of the Park. Humans and their dogs do enough damage; why add to that?</p> <p>Over the years special interest groups have persuaded the powers in charge to allow activities at variance with the intent for the Park. We have a mine, several logged off areas, paved roads, hydro lines and dam-flooded lakes to name a few. Presently many other special interest groups want in. Owners of aircraft want permission to land on the lakes; bike and motorcycle riders have already left tracks as far in as McKenzie Meadows and snowmobile tracks crisscrossed every lake and most hillsides I visited in the Plateau this year. When will ATVs show up?</p> <p>If we keep setting precedents by yielding to pressure from special interest groups (such as permitting horse riding, and tacitly allowing illegal activities such as snowmobiling) the Park is at risk of becoming a playground for power-assisted visitors. This may, incidentally, endanger people on foot.</p> <p>Last February on a ski trip to Lake Beautiful, we had a potentially close call with three snowmobiles. Luckily we stopped on the north shore of Croteau Lake for lunch, needing a rest from breaking trail. Shortly after unpacking our sandwiches, three snowmobiles came swooping up the slope from Murray Meadows, continuing literally airborne through the narrow gap leading from the Meadows to Croteau Lake and landing in a flurry of snow on the lake’s frozen surface. Had we not needed a break, we would have been in or near that gap. Snowmobiles on the other side of a hill are not easily heard!</p> <p>Presently we have no rangers regularly patrolling the Park. Who is going to enforce regulations if horse riding is permitted? Will anyone police the other activities that are creeping into the Park?</p> <p>The answer to Horse Use in Strathcona Park must be an emphatic NO.</p>
<p>W43</p>	<p><b>Submission Regarding Amending the Strathcona Park Master Plan</b>  Courtenay, B.C., May 28, 2008</p>

The Friends of Strathcona Park are opposed to amending the Strathcona Park Master Plan to allow the expansion of horse use in the park. There are a number of reasons for this which we would like to explain.

### 1. The Privatization Argument

The Friends have been criticized for bringing up the privatization argument. The way it works is like this. It is impractical for anyone other than CWR to take horses to the mouth of the Bedwell River. John Caton last year told us it costs \$3,000 to barge horses from Tofino. Last fall it cost the Friends \$500 to rent a water taxi to make a round trip from Tofino to the Bedwell. The cost of transporting horses to the Bedwell Valley is prohibitive for the public. Not only that, but Mr. Caton has stated that while he will allow hikers to traverse the Resort's private property to access the park, he will not allow horses across their land. So, by amending the Master Plan to allow horses in the Bedwell, BC Parks would confer an exclusive right to CWR to use the Bedwell for their own horses for the life of the park use permit which we understand could be as long as 20 – 30 years.

By building tent platforms and a horse corral at You Creek, 14 km into the Park at the edge of the Wilderness Conservation Zone, this permit will provide a private "outpost" and jumping off spot for guided tours further into Bedwell Lake, Cream Lake and other beauty spots. This would be an unofficial private right because CWR would have priority over the use of most of the tent platforms. We think future pressure will be brought to bear to make these horse trips, not hiking trips. This destination within the Park would become the exclusive preserve of CWR.

Another possibility we foresee is that of a desire to expand the facilities at You Creek sometime in the future. The wild "wet" coast is a rainy climate, and the exclusive clientele of CWR probably would like a roof over their heads in the rain. We expect a future application for more substantial accommodations, maybe even a cook shelter or dining facility. When we mentioned this to BC Parks's staff some time ago, they admitted it was a possibility that would be entertained if CWR was meeting the conditions of its park use permit.

Locally, our Regional District looks for public benefit when permitting a subdivision or rezoning. Many other governing bodies, both Provincial and Local, use similar criteria. We suggest parks do likewise. In this case there is no benefit to the public from allowing this use, only a private benefit to CWR.

### 2. The Precedent Factor

We have been criticized for stating this represents the thin edge of the wedge, that it will encourage further applications of the same nature. We feel that this is a real danger. The zoning for the Bedwell Valley is Wilderness Recreation. Other trails in the park zoned the same are the Megin Valley, Della Creek Valley, Price Creek Valley, Elk River Valley, Flower Ridge Trail and Marble Meadows Trail. Parks have said they would not allow horses in the alpine areas, but that still leaves 4 valleys with the same zoning as the Bedwell, and virtually the same valley bottom conditions. The argument that the Bedwell has an old road is weak because much of it has eroded away. The river is unstable due to old logging, and is meandering back and forth eating away at its banks. In future more of the road will disappear and be replaced by trail. A trail can not stand up to horse use as well as a road bed.

Again, we have photographs of the horse damage in the area adjacent to the park which we have given to the people conducting the level 2 assessment.

### 3. An Alternative

As stated by Parks' staff the attraction of allowing horses in the Bedwell Valley is that by allowing CWR's proposal, they would see the liability of deteriorating bridges removed and the trail upgraded. However, the trail does not need upgrading to the capacity for horse use. Last fall the Federation of BC Mountain Clubs and the Friends of Strathcona Park offered to partner with CWR to work on upgrading the trail to hiking standards, i.e., for foot traffic, not horse traffic. This would have solved the problems of the bridges and trail, but CWR and BC Parks rejected our offer.

4. Not Necessary

CWR does not need horse access in order to run a successful business. They already have a network of trails outside the park they use including the pristine Ursus Valley which is far more beautiful than the Bedwell. Again, we have photos to show. They have been very successful over the last decade or so, operating outside the park. If they wanted to take hiking groups into the park, FOSP have no objection. This is already a permitted use, and others operate such guiding services now.

One argument put forth by CWR for allowing expanded horse use in the Park is that it would provide employment for the local first nations population. We support employing first nations people, but doing so is not connected to using horses. First nations people could be used on upgrading the trail to hiking standards, and as guides to hiking parties. This would be more in keeping with first nations traditions, than conducting horse trips.

5. The Environmental Impact of Horses in the Park is Unacceptable.

a) Introduction of Foreign Species

The proposal from Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR), which triggered this amendment process, states they will feed sterilized feed to the horses for several days before entering the park. Research done on the internet shows that sterilized feed needs to be used for two weeks prior to a trip. For example, "Studies have shown horses can retain weed seeds in their gut for up to 14 days and these can then germinate in manure in national parks." (from <http://www.australianalps.deh.gov.au/publications/codes/horsecode.html>) Thus the introduction of non native species of plants into the park is a distinct possibility. It is impractical to collect manure from the horses along a 14 km route, so removing it from the park is not a reasonable solution. Similarly, the same problem would be encountered anywhere else horses could be used in the park.

Horse use resulting in manure in areas in other parks result in a very unpleasant experience for hikers. The smell, flies attracted by manure and overall negative aesthetics severely reduce the quality of the experience for park visitors. Manure, even without viable seeds in it, acts as a fertilizer changing the ecology of the area around its deposit.

Wildlife Interaction

The Strathcona Park and the Bedwell Valley is a wilderness area, home to bear, cougar and wolves. The potential for conflict between horses and these animals is real. The killing of a wolf a few years ago, although not the fault of CWR's management, is an example of the possibility of another unfortunate incident happening.

According to CWR, bears and elk are grazing peacefully at the resort, surprising unexpecting clients when they approach them. Is this what we want to see in the wilderness areas of our Park?

c) Trail Damage Due to Horse Impact

Much of the old road bed that used to extend up the valley bottom as far as You Creek has been washed away. The remainder is now covered in dirt and moss. The damaged areas will need to be replaced by a trail. Last fall on our trip up the Bedwell Valley and

	<p>into the Ursus, we observed significant horse damage in areas where horses were riding off the old road. We have photographs of this damage which we have given to the firm doing the Level 2 Assessment of the valley. It is a well established fact that in areas where horses go, even on gravel roadbeds, their feet loosen the gravel and dirt resulting in the washing out of areas, creating potholes and mud channels. Many hikers have experienced these problems in parks where horses are allowed (for example Banff National Park).</p> <p>An ex national park staff member has told us that the National Park service is now working to remove horse use from their parks because of the impacts.</p> <p>Horses on trails results in major mudholes in some places and divots in others. Hikers must keep their eyes on the ground in front of them at all times in order to avoid stumbling over the horse damage.</p> <p>In any area where horses were not confined to a corral, there would be damage to vegetation when horses nibble on it. Along any trail horses travel there would also be impacts on vegetation where horses took a bite on their way by.</p> <p>d) Horses in the River</p> <p>The horses ridden by CWR outside the park often use the river bed and gravel bars as a route. We are concerned about impact on the fish in the Bedwell River, as well as the quality of drinking water with the added horse manure in the river.</p> <p>6. Conclusion</p> <p>By opposing this amendment, the Friends in no way are opposing CWR or the Wilderness Tourism Association. Both are doing good work in other areas, and we support their accomplishments. This is simply opposition to a bad idea. We think we have raised valid concerns here, and hope that BC Parks will agree with our position in this matter.</p> <p>In summary, the Friends of Strathcona Park oppose amending the Master Plan to allow horse use outside of the two areas where they are currently permitted. As a matter of fact, to the best of our knowledge, nobody uses the areas now where horse use is allowed, and a case can be made for cancelling horse access to the Donner and Kunlin Lake areas. This would simplify the issue by not allowing any horse use anywhere in Strathcona Park.</p>
W44	<p>June 12, 2008</p> <p>Honourable Barry Penner          PO Box 9047          STN PROV GOVT          Victoria BC          V8W 9E2  <a href="mailto:env.minister@gov.bc.ca">mailto:env.minister@gov.bc.ca</a></p> <p>Re: Horse Use in Strathcona Park</p> <p>I am writing you today because I am very much concerned that the issue of horse use in Strathcona Park will be decided based on who has the loudest voice and the most emotion and not based on science, facts, environmental impact and recreational values of the park.</p> <p>If the independent environmental assessment indicates that horses can be used in parts of the park with no appreciable impact then horse use should be permitted in those areas.</p> <p>The Park Master Plan contemplates horse use in the park and, in fact, allows horse use in a very limited area. The Plan also contemplates recreational use of the park while</p>

	<p>maintaining environmental and other standards.</p> <p>Current park user groups who appear to have an agenda other than horse use have derailed the current public process around horse use and criteria in the park. Although the current process may have been initiated as a result of a Park Use Permit (PUP) application by Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) that is not what the process is about now. There are groups and individuals speaking out against this PUP by CWR because it is a “high end, exclusive commercial operation” that they will not allow in “their park”.</p> <p>It appears that these people have access to the park for their interests and do not want to allow other users the opportunity to experience what the park has to offer. If horse use is disallowed as a result of this process an injustice will have been committed.</p> <p>My wife and I are members of Back Country Horsemen of BC (BCHBC) and we both wrangle for the Great Cariboo Ride Association. I have also been trained as Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) trail guide instructor. This past week we spent 2 days in the Bedwell Valley investigating current horse use by CWR and their proposal for horse use on the trail to You Creek and what they plan to do to minimize the impact and enhance the recreational value of the trail if the PUP is approved.</p> <p>I have done some fairly in-depth research on the subject of horse use and the environment and have forward much of this information to Parks and the consultants working on the project. I have also expressed an interest and willingness to not only help with this decision process but also to help monitor future horse use in the park to ensure it is done in a sustainable way so future generations can also enjoy the park (and other public lands) on horseback.</p> <p>In summary I would like to emphasize the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The park is for everyone.</li> <li>2) Horse use should be allowed in areas if environmental study indicates.</li> <li>3) PUP’s should be considered on their recreational and environmental merits not on who is applying or how much they earn.</li> <li>4) Opposition to a proposal should be measured on it’s facts and science not on emotion and threats.</li> <li>5) Any use of the park should be monitored to ensure Park values are being maintained and action should be taken to maintain these values.</li> </ol> <p>I would like to thank you for reading this submission and I look forward to a just and equitable conclusion to this process.</p> <p>Yours truly,</p> <p>Cc: Honourable Stan Hagen <a href="mailto:TSA.Minister@gov.bc.ca">TSA.Minister@gov.bc.ca</a></p>
W45	<p>As a resident of British Columbia, I strongly object to allowing any business to build private accommodation in a provincial park. I would also strongly object to allowing a private enterprise to clear trails in a provincial park to accommodate their business. Our provincial parks were not created &amp; protected for the benefit of private businesses they were created to give all people equal use &amp; access. You do not have the right to damage or destroy our parks or change their use to promote private businesses.</p>
W46	<p>Honourable Barry Penner          Minister of Environment          PO Box 9047_STN PROV GOVT          Victoria, B.C._V8W 9E2          Phone: _250 387-1187_ Fax: _250 387-1356_</p>

	<p>env.minister@gov.bc.ca</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>Re: clarity regarding the role of horses in Strathcona Provincial Park</p> <p>I am writing to comment on the issue of the current re-visiting of the Strathcona Park Master Plan.</p> <p>I have been an enthusiastic and frequent visitor to Strathcona Park for more than thirty years. I have been involved in the public meetings that led to the first Master Plan and to the Master Plan Amendment. I have also served a seven year term on the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee.</p> <p>With this extensive background of familiarity with the Park and with issues pertaining to it, I wish to express my firm belief that horse use is not appropriate for and should not be permitted in Strathcona Park. In other words, I believe that there is no role for horses in Strathcona Park.</p> <p>My observations of horse use in other areas of BC have convinced me that horses create muddy trails unsuitable for joint use by hikers. Also, horses contaminate water supplies and attract flies. There may be some places in some parks where horse use is appropriate, but Strathcona Park is a rainforest wilderness park in which, in my view, horse use is completely inappropriate.</p> <p>I look forward to new clear wording in the Strathcona Park Master Plan that spells out the inappropriateness of horse use in this park.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p>
<p>W47</p>	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner  Minister of the Environment  Parliament Buildings  Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed. I am among the many British Columbians who have grave concerns with the request that these private commercial resort people have put forward. Please listen and respond to our concerns. Keep the Master Plan for Strathcona Park in tact.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns, to how the government has conducted its recent “consultation process” on the matter.</p> <p>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings, the message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</p> <p>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</p> <p>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</p>

	<p>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense to the user</li> <li>- access to horse riding areas must be by public roads capable of accommodating vehicles pulling horse trailers</li> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, continuous, regularly maintained, solidly-based graveled road surfaces</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses, including streams, rivers, lakes and oceans</li> <li>- all water crossings must be via horse-capable bridges - no horses allowed in water courses at any time</li> <li>- horses can not be permitted in the alpine, in valley bottoms, on hiking trails, or in any sensitive habitat</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W48</p>	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner          Minister of the Environment          Parliament Buildings          Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>As a long-time Comox Valley resident, my family and friends have enjoyed year-round access to many of the amazing wilderness areas of Strathcona Park. Given the burgeoning population growth of the surrounding Vancouver Island communities, the need to preserve and protect this fragile ecosystem will only increase over time.</p> <p>Consequently, when any private commercial interest (acting on behalf of a small group of private investors motivated by an opportunity to make a profit) requests access to a public park - your overriding obligation as an elected representative on behalf of the general public is foremost to protect our provincial park system.</p> <p>Well before any consideration to alter the Master Plan for a park, you should be working in partnership with non-profit societies that share a similar vision of protecting and preserving the wilderness areas of our province for present and future generations.</p> <p>These groups of concerned volunteers in combination with the team of dedicated professional biologists and ecologists employed by your Ministry would gather input from as many individuals as possible. Having widely advertised these consultations well in advance, your role - as an elected official - would be to review carefully the information gathered from the many presentations given at these public hearings.</p> <p>As you well know, the consultation process to amend to the Master Plan for Strathcona Park was minimal at best - with limited advance promotion. There were many Vancouver Island citizens unaware of this CWR proposal and consequently their voices were not heard.</p>

	<p>As a taxpayer and a voter in the Comox Valley I encourage you to pause and reflect on your role as a protector of the environment. Surely there are enough places outside of a provincial park for commercial enterprises. Clayoquot Wilderness Resort in the Bedwell Valley has other locations to consider for locating their horse riding trails.</p> <p>Thank-you for taking the time to review and consider my concerns. They are shared by many others.</p> <p>Remember the importance of preserving wild places as sanctuary. We can benefit on many levels from just knowing that they will always be there.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W49	<p>Dear Sir:</p> <p>I am writing to you about the proposal by Clayoquot Wilderness Resort to bring horses into the Bedwell Valley.</p> <p>I am totally opposed to the CWR application for reasons that include the following points:</p> <p>Horses destroy trail surfaces and make them unsuitable for hikers.</p> <p>Horses introduce alien species via their coats, hooves and feces and destroy the native vegetation through grazing and mechanical destruction. The feces will encourage flies and make the trails unsuitable for hikers.</p> <p>Horses require stabling areas and large quantities of feedstuffs which itself needs to be trucked and packed and will certainly transport alien species.</p> <p>Horses will use and contaminate ponds and streams.</p> <p>Horse maintenance will require a team of workers which itself will require ongoing maintenance and greatly increase the traffic on a wilderness trail.</p> <p>Humans and horses will drive away native animals.</p> <p>Quite apart from the concerns expressed above, the so-called consultation process about the CWR application has been deeply flawed and totally undemocratic. It appears that your government is favoring exploitation of one of our oldest parks by a private outfit to the detriment of the park itself and of the general public. This application must be turned down!</p> <p>Yours truly</p>
W50	<p>June 16, 2008.</p> <p>The Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>RE: CLAOQUOT WILDERNESS RESORT BEDWELL VALLEY APPLICATION</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you TO NOT AMEND THE MASTER PLAN FOR STRATHCONA PARK to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns to privatization of our wilderness areas now “under siege” from Climate Change and needing a free public hand to protect critical ecological processes and features, to how the government has conducted its recent “consultation process” on the matter.</p> <p>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to</p>

	<p>amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings. The message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</p> <p>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</p> <p>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</p> <p>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense</li> <li>- access to horse riding areas must be by public road</li> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, regularly maintained, solidly-based roads</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses,</li> <li>- no horses allowed in water</li> <li>- horses can not be permitted in any sensitive habitat</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter. Sincerely, Anxious Grandmother for the Sustainable Future of our Province</p>
W51	<p>Hello Mr. Penner,</p> <p>I'm writing to express my support for allowing horses into Strathcona Provincial Park. I feel that certain parts of the park should be kept wild, but some parts have to be made available to the public as well.</p> <p>Wild places are important and if people don't have the opportunity to visit wild places then they become less valuable to the population.</p> <p>I think certain parts of Strathcona should be protected from human use as much as possible, but other areas need to be open to people. If parks are open to people then all British Columbian's should have an opportunity to enjoy them. For some the only way to access these wild places is on horseback. Horse use needs to be controlled as it's not compatible everywhere in Strathcona, but areas with old logging roads seem like a good place to allow them.</p>
W52	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p>

	<p>We are writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns, to how the government has conducted its recent “consultation process” on the matter.</p> <p>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings, the message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</p> <p>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</p> <p>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</p> <p>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense to the user</li> <li>- access to horse riding areas must be by public roads capable of accommodating vehicles pulling horse trailers</li> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, continuous, regularly maintained, solidly-based gravelled road surfaces</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses, including streams, rivers, lakes and oceans</li> <li>- all water crossings must be via horse-capable bridges - no horses allowed in water courses at any time</li> <li>- horses can not be permitted in the alpine, in valley bottoms, on hiking trails, or in any sensitive habitat</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W53	<p>I am adamantly opposed to the CWR proposal to allow horses into Strathcona Park - the proposal goes against the Master Plan of the Park... if allowed, this pristine wilderness will suffer.</p>
W54	<p>Dear Minister B. Penner</p> <p>I was unable to attend the Public Meeting in Victoria of June 4,2008 concerning public input re an application for amending the Strathcona Park Master Plan. However I sent an email to strathconahorse of your Ministry registering my objection to permitting Clayoquot Wilderness Resort to operate a private commercial horse-riding operation in the Bedwell Valley. In essence, I am opposed not only to horses within Strathcona Park, but also to an exclusive private use within the Park.</p>

	<p>My understanding is that the deadline for public input to your Ministry is June 20, 2008, so I wish to make further comment.</p> <p>My family has had close involvement with Strathcona Park since 1938, and I consider it as one of the public recreational treasures of Vancouver Island. Presumably you have been briefed on the public outrage in the 1980's when 64 citizens were arrested at the Cream Lake Mine Drill Site at the south end of Buttle Lake. Those protestations led to the creation by your Ministry of the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee and subsequently the Strathcona Park Master Plan. When one thoroughly reviews the written history of the Park from the original 23-person multi-disciplinary exploration party of 1910 which recommended the creation of the Park, one recognizes that horse use was involved in some of the early explorations. However, by 2008 we have discovered that horse use has simply too many adverse effects in areas primarily used by public foot hikers. To say nothing about the exclusive private commercial use proposed by CWR.</p> <p>I am sure that you will receive many observations as to the degradation that accompanied previous use of horses in the Forbidden Plateau are for example. Also, complaints of trail destruction, sensitive ecological site deprecation and contamination by horses in creek, lake and river watersheds. No assurances from horse operators can satisfactorily eliminate such damage presented by animals.</p> <p>In my considered opinion and long-time experience, the Strathcona Park Master Plan was thoroughly developed in the late 1980's and properly made no provision for the commercial use of horses in Strathcona Park.</p> <p>We trust that you will reject the application from the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort for amending the current Strathcona Park Master Plan. Yours sincerely for a Green and Safe Provincial Park System.</p>
<p>W55</p>	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner          Minister of the Environment          Parliament Buildings          Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns, to how the government has conducted its recent "consultation process" on the matter.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings, the message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</li> <li>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</li> <li>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</li> <li>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on</li> </ol>

	<p>amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense to the user</li> <li>- access to horse riding areas must be by public roads capable of accommodating vehicles pulling horse trailers</li> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, continuous, regularly maintained, solidly-based gravelled road surfaces</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses, including streams, rivers, lakes and oceans</li> <li>- all water crossings must be via horse-capable bridges - no horses allowed in water courses at any time</li> <li>- horses can not be permitted in the alpine, in valley bottoms, on hiking trails, or in any sensitive habitat</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W56</p>	<p>I am writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed and here are some reasons why!</p> <p>Horses are not indigenous to Vancouver Island!</p> <p>Traditionally, neither the First Nations People nor the early explorers used horses to travel across the island or in Strathcona Provincial Park. Although guide/outfitters used horses on Mount Becher and Forbidden Plateau in the 1930's and 40's, these areas were outside of the park at the time. When these areas were added to the park, horses were banned because of the destruction they caused to the environment. Evidence of their use is still clearly visible over 60 years later.</p> <p>Apart from the two areas on the outskirts of Strathcona Park (see Master Plan), there are currently no trails within Strathcona park that would measure up to the standard required for horse travel. The Master Plan is firm on its stance in regards to mountain bikes, however, a mountain bike weighs considerably less than a horse. Where is the logic in allowing horses but not mountain bikes? A hiker with a heavy pack moving slowly or a trail runner moving light and fast along a trail will leave little trace of their passage. Which mode is the most desirable with the least amount of impact?</p> <p>Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the Master Plan which was developed through a democratic process over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group.</p> <p>As I am not a biologist, I can't speak on the use of horse feed and the effect that horse manure could have on the fragile environment but I do know that horses can't be controlled from urinating in the river as they cross it or even defecating. Even at a corral the ground would eventually become saturated in urine and the manure would leach into the ground and eventually seep into the river from the high precipitation. The possibility of invasive species becoming introduced is too high and not worth the risk. Control once a species has taken hold is costly and difficult. Successful eradication can't be guaranteed.</p> <p>Horse use in the Bedwell Valley, which is where the real issue lays in-regards to this whole process, is out of the question because it is a Wilderness Conservation zone according to the Strathcona Master Plan. Approximately 75% of Strathcona Park is zoned</p>

Wilderness Conservation. The Master Plans definition of this zone is: “The objective of this zone is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized vehicles will be allowed. Development is nonexistent... In short, areas designated as Wilderness Conservation are large natural areas free of any evidence of modern human activity, with very low use and without facilities.” If Clayoquot Wilderness Resort were to reconstruct the old logging road and upgrade the bridges as far as You Creek, this can’t be done without the use of heavy machinery (bulldozers, excavators, compactors and trucks) over a considerable period of time. Heavy machine and wilderness do not go hand-in-hand! For hikers, meeting such equipment on the trail takes away from the wilderness experience they might be hoping for. For the wildlife, this heavy machinery could possibly drive certain species out of the valley. The sight of elk, along with bears and other wild animals, can be the highlight of a hiking trip.

Regular (annual) maintenance will be required on the trail and the possibility of heavy machinery to complete that maintenance is a certainty because of the topography of the area. The existing Bedwell trail from Buttle Lake up to Bedwell Lake reminds BC Parks every year that nature can’t be tamed and will do its best to damage anything man made. It is a constant headache for parks staff and parks coffers. I believe CWR wouldn’t operate machinery when they know their high-paying guests will be traveling up the trail on horseback as this would detract from their client’s wilderness experience. Will they be as considerate for the hikers seeking a wilderness experience of their own?

This is a single application commercial interest and because of their location they (Clayoquot Wilderness Resort) have the right to restrict access to hikers and any other user who might be allowed on the trail, to the section of the Bedwell Valley that is within the provincial park. BC Parks will have no control because of the rights of the private land owner which means they can’t guarantee access for the general public from the Bedwell Sound to the park boundary and trail.

The Elk River Valley in Strathcona Park was once home to a large herd of Roosevelt Elk (hence its name) and early mountaineers used the elk trails to reach the mountains at the head of the valley. This was before a hiking trail was built up the valley giving access to hundreds of hikers annually. Today elk sightings are very rare in this valley, however, in the neighbouring, pristine Cervus Creek, large herds have been observed by the few parties that have ventured into the valley. The Bedwell valley is also home to a large population of elk and many hikers who have endured the rigors of this valley have observed these majestic animals whose racks tower above the luxuriant foliage beside the river. With the building of a road and possible horse corrals at You Creek, and the introduction of horses to the valley and the increase in hikers, these sightings might become rare as the elk seek an alternative valley to live in.

Horses are known grazers and will do so whenever they have the opportunity. In all BC Parks, flora is protected and it is illegal to remove plants or cut them down. What will be done to ensure horses don’t graze on native fauna and how can we be sure they aren’t munching on some rare species?

The best thing for the Bedwell Valley is to leave it alone and let Mother Nature do her thing. The number of pristine watersheds on the west coast of Canada is decreasing and although the Bedwell has been logged, if left alone for the next several hundred years it will once again be a pristine wilderness, where one can go and see elk, wolves, cougars, bears and wild salmon in their natural state. Experienced hikers and mountaineers don’t need trails to access some of the island’s most beautiful valleys and mountains, but there are mountain guide outfitters for the less confident who can offer trips to those who are willing to use Shanks’s Pony to visit these places. Maybe they have to strap a pack on

	<p>their backs and suffer some hardship but ultimately the experience will be worth it and their photographs will tell a thousand stories. There is an old Bengali proverb that says: "The sight of a horse makes the traveler lame."</p> <p>Maybe we need to ponder whether we would like our children's children's children to be able to experience something of the exhilaration we have felt when we have worked hard to contort our way through dense west coast bush, traverse snowy hills, and climb steep pathless mountainsides to arrive on a clean untouched plane where Nature prevails and the signs of man are only subtle. There is a saying that all the outdoor clubs, wilderness resorts, environmentalists, and anyone who cares about the wild spaces, abide by and that is: "Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints." It is a simple rule but cuts to the point.</p> <p>The Master Plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest. What is to stop them in the future for wanting to use chuck wagons pulled by a team of horses! And we haven't touched on Llamas!</p> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W57</p>	<p>June 16, 2008</p> <p>Barry Penner Minister of Environment. Parliament Bdgs. Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Re: Horse Use in Strathcona Provincial Park</p> <p>Dear Mr. Penner,</p> <p>I have visited, studied and camped in Strathcona Park over the years since 1946 and have seen the terrible damage that was done in the Forbidden Plateau area by the early use of horses. Trails were reduced to bedrock and many non-native plants were introduced as a result of grazing.</p> <p>I am adamantly opposed to the use of horses in the Bedwell River area by Clayoquot Wilderness Resort. The area is unstable with frequent wash-outs during spring run-off. Horses would damage vegetation, degrade trails, pollute wetlands and introduce non-native species. Encounters with bears, cougars and wolves could occur, particularly if a campsite was established.</p> <p>Non-profits groups such as the Federation of BC Mountain Clubs have offered to upgrade the Bedwell hiking trail. This should be pursued instead of involving a commercial enterprise. Money spent on hiring consultants and meeting halls could be better spent on direct action upgrading the trail.</p> <p>Bedwell River is within the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve which deserves protection. Strathcona Park has also been designated an IBA (Important Bird Area) by Bird Studies Canada. The park is a world class wilderness and is visited by people from all over the world. It serves as a bank for ecological diversity. Local people are passionate about protecting it from any further exploitation. For these reasons it should remain as pristine as possible and applications such as this should be denied outright.</p> <p>Sincerely yours,</p> <p>cc. Peggy Burfield, Planning Officer, B.C. Parks</p>

	<p>Nanaimo, B.C.                  Andy Smith                  Supervisor, Strathcona Park                  BC Parks, Black Creek, BC</p>
<p>W58</p>	<p>June 15, 2008</p> <p>The Hon. Barry Penner                  Minister of the Environment                  Parliament Buildings                  Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns, to how the government has conducted its recent “consultation process” on the matter.</p> <p>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings, the message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</p> <p>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</p> <p>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</p> <p>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense to the user access to horse riding areas must be by public roads capable of accommodating vehicles pulling horse trailers</li> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, continuous, regularly maintained, solidly-based gravelled road surfaces</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses, including streams, rivers, lakes and oceans</li> <li>- all water crossings must be via horse-capable bridges - no horses allowed in water courses at any time</li> <li>- horses can not be permitted in the alpine, in valley bottoms, on hiking trails, or in any sensitive habitat</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>

<p>W59</p>	<p>Dear Barry Penner,                  Re: Horses In Bedwell Valley</p> <p>We operate Headquarters Creek Woodlot Ltd, a four-hundred hectare forest tenure at the base of Mount Washington. Throughout the Woodlot we have trails used by hikers, horses, mountain bikers and occasionally but not encouraged, motorbikes and ATV's. The horses hoofs have churned up a couple of wet spots making it difficult to traverse, but these are of short duration and would account for &lt; 1% of the total trails. These hoofs (hooves?) and their riders are also responsible for keeping the trail clear of salal and rampant undergrowth. Having riders in our Woodlot is, for the most part, a positive experience for all involved. On one instance a forest fire was caught small and extinguished after being reported by a horse rider. We encourage equine activity. At the request of our local BackCountry Horsemen of BC chapter, we hosted a one-day course on map and compass reading for riders. Incidentally, I am NOT a horse rider, they scare the heck out of me! Just look at those teeth--they'd kill ya and eat ya if they had the chance.</p> <p>So as far as the proposal for Bedwell goes, I can see the advantage for the province to have this Resort go ahead. From what I have read about the proposal, it involves quite a bit of publicly accessible "equity" such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* the horses will stay on the old roadbed</li> <li>* some of the tent platforms will be available to the public at all times</li> <li>* all the tent platforms will be available to the public in the off-season</li> <li>* several bridges will be reconstructed to accommodate horses and decrease sedimentation</li> <li>* the trail/old road will be opened up and resurfaced</li> </ul> <p>The disadvantage and the trade-off intrinsic to every land use decision is the introduction of a "free lunch" into the deep habitat of predators, i.e. cougar, wolves and bears. Is this being addressed? Is the local First Nations on board for employment opportunities and access to the deep pockets of these up-scale customers for possible sale of native art and crafts? I would presume the environmental impacts of the Resort is also being studied and solved: toilets, garbage, water use and disposal, empty cases of champagne bottles, etc.</p> <p>I am afraid I am not in lockstep with many of my peers on this one. I think anything that allows more people to see our majestic Strathcona Park is commendable, especially if they are the wealthy and powerful. They might be staunch defenders. Thanks and I look forward to a reply.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W60</p>	<p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>This concerns the proposal by CWR to develop horses trails and camps beside the Bedwell River within Strathcona park.</p> <p>I object strongly to the idea that a provincial park can be used by a private concern such that they can develop parts of the park for their own financial advantage at the expense of the public, the environment and the park.. These and other concerns have been raised at previous consultation meetings so I would like to maintain the present master plan and not allow changes unless there is a full, open and public review.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W61</p>	<p>Honourable Barry Penner                  Minister for the Environment</p>

	<p>Province of British Columbia</p> <p>Dear Mr. Penner</p> <p>I am strongly opposed to changing the Master Plan for Strathcona Provincial Park to allow commercial horse guiding in the Bedwell or elsewhere in this park.</p> <p>There are several factors behind this position:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Degrading of Park ecology: I have been friends with several Federal Park Wardens in Parks Canada and their experience is that horses transport a variety of invasive plant species in their feces which is then spread along trails and especially in areas where horses are pastured over night. Invasive seeds are also brought into the park as part of feed for the horses. This, of course, leads to expensive efforts to remove invasive weed species (often by hand pulling). This has serious adverse consequences to the ecological integrity of the park. A similar adverse effect can be anticipated in Strathcona Park if horse use were allowed.</li> <li>2. Degrading of park infrastructure: Horse use causes significant erosion and trampling of trails. Horse trails are also commonly built wider than foot trails. In Jasper National Park whole sections of trails up the Tonquin Valley needed to be reconstructed because of the adverse effects of horse. This is not a minor expense. In Strathcona Park the expense of trail upkeep and reconstruction due to horse use, can be anticipated to be considerable.</li> <li>3. Degradation of visitor experience: Horse use on trails used by hikers seriously adversely affects visitor experience. Horse feces and urine is dropped on the trail, forcing hikers to walk around and commonly through it. Horse waste smells and enables the increased reproduction of flies. This is not the kind of wilderness or park experience that most visitors to the park want.</li> </ol> <p>Mr. Penner, I urge you to refuse this proposed use change for Strathcona Provincial Park.</p> <p>Sincerely</p>
W62	<p>Strathcona Provincial Park Horse Use</p> <p>Horse use does not have a role in recreation in Strathcona Provincial Park, except in very restricted areas.</p> <p>The master plan amendment 6.6.6 states in part, "Horse use is allowed ....., but is managed carefully". From experience, and the experience of others, it is suggested that very few things are "managed carefully", or that there is any interest on the part of the political masters to do so. This is applicable to all the provincial parks, but particularly to Strathcona Provincial Park. This is not the fault of the staff, but relates to lack of funding, which is at the root of most of the problems, such as: shortage of staff, lack of time for the staff to do adequate inspections, and inadequate resources to carry out inspections.</p> <p>Existing horse use in the Gold River area would appear to be a reasonable compromise to completely keeping horses out of the park.</p> <p>Allowing a private luxury resort to upgrade a road and build their own campsites inside the park, for the use of their guests, would only hasten the privatization of the provincial parks. Its location in a difficult to access, but beautiful, area of the park would only increase pressure on the politicians to allow other companies to do the same, and would become like a cancer spreading through the system. This would inevitably result in a system completely run by contractors and permit holders, and leave the average person looking at their provincial parks on television or on podcasts, or while they travelled through the parks, without stopping, because to do so would cost too much.</p>

	<p>Inspections of a remote area, such as the Bedwell, would either not be done, or be cursory, or be too infrequent to adequately ensure that the resort was living up to the conditions of their permit.</p> <p>The average people of the province of British Columbia would once again be the losers. But the politicians do tell us that we live in "the best place on earth".</p>
W63	<p>June 15, 2008</p> <p>The Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to let you know that your role as Minister of the Environment is to protect the environment from commercial interests – not encourage commercial interests! A case in point is our Class I Strathcona Park. You cannot allow commercial horse interests to occur. The role of this park is to be that of a wilderness park. To alter the Master plan to allow for other uses is a travesty of the little remaining wilderness on Vancouver Island.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p>
W64	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>June 18, 2008</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am very concerned with plans to open the Bedwell Valley to horse traffic. It seems evident that the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee has looked carefully at the evidence and has recommended: 1) a Park Use Permit can not be issued to the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort based on the Park Master Plan and, 2) against having public meetings to amend the Park Master Plan to clarify the horse issue. Despite these recommendations, by a very well informed Committee, BC Parks has chosen to issue RFP's contradicting the guidance provided by the Committee.</p> <p>It seems very clear based on information collected over the last few years that the Bedwell Valley is not an appropriate place for horses. The environmental destruction that they can cause is considerable as can be seen in other areas where they have been allowed - notably, Forbidden Plateau.</p> <p>It is not appropriate for a Wilderness Recreation area to become a stomping ground for a private concern that already has horse access in other areas. It is also not acceptable to lease out a part of the park for 20 years. The Ministry should reconsider their efforts to commercialize the parks and take responsibility for ensuring that they are utilized and maintained properly by trained Parks staff.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W65	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Wednesday, June 18, 2008</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p>

	<p>I have recently become aware that the government is still considering giving a private commercial operator the right to have horses in the Bedwell Valley. I am also hearing that this consideration goes against collective decisions that have been previously agreed to through a democratic process in which stakeholders and interested parties came to mutual agreeable terms of usage. Finally, from what I can gather, the consultation process employed by the government in consideration of granting private access to the valley has been tokenistically conducted in ways that go against the governments own stated guidelines of conducting such matters.</p> <p>I am writing this letter to ask you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit horse useage beyond that which has already been agreed on.</p> <p>Our wilderness areas, one of British Columbia’s greatest natural resources, are shrinking rapidly. The Master Plan for Strathcona Park being amended to accommodate private enterprises sets a precedent that will undoubtedly open the door for others to follow, leaving our wilderness areas unprotected. I in no way want to see this happen.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing a response from you regarding my request that you say no to amending the plan that has already been thoughtfully established.</p> <p>Regards,</p>
W66	<p>No horses in Strathcona Park; the damage that they do lasts a lifetime.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W67	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns, to how the government has conducted its recent “consultation process” on the matter.</p> <p>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings, the message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</p> <p>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</p> <p>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</p> <p>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense to the user</li> <li>- access to horse riding areas must be by public roads capable of accommodating</li> </ul>

	<p>vehicles pulling horse trailers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, continuous, regularly maintained, solidly-based graveled road surfaces</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses, including streams, rivers, lakes and oceans</li> <li>- all water crossings must be via horse-capable bridges - no horses allowed in water courses at any time</li> <li>- horses can not be permitted in the alpine, in valley bottoms, on hiking trails, or in any sensitive habitat</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W68</p>	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner          Minister of the Environment          Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed.</p> <p>There are a number of concerns raised by the application for Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) in the Bedwell Valley, ranging from significant environmental concerns, to how the government has conducted its recent "consultation process" on the matter.</p> <p>1) The flaws in the consultation process alone are reason enough to call a halt to amending the plan. There has been very little advertising, what there was appeared a few days before the meetings, the message given to the public about the purpose of the meetings was vague, ambiguous and confusing. The meetings were poorly managed. There was a critical lack of involvement by key stakeholders, including various First Nations and a number of communities bordering on Strathcona Park.</p> <p>2) Horse use has already been thoroughly considered and is included in the plan which was developed very democratically over a period of years involving every community and stakeholder group. The plan should not be revised based on a single permit application by a single commercial interest.</p> <p>3) The public that did attend the consultation process spoke overwhelmingly against the CWR proposal and amending the master plan.</p> <p>4) In the event that these arguments do not persuade you and you remain intent on amending the Master Plan for Strathcona Park the following criteria must be included in any changes you make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- horses can only be permitted in locations accessible to all British Columbians on an equal basis and at minimal expense to the user</li> <li>- access to horse riding areas must be by public roads capable of accommodating vehicles pulling horse trailers</li> <li>- horses must be ridden only on accessible, continuous, regularly maintained, solidly-based graveled road surfaces</li> <li>- all horse routes must be significantly removed from fresh water courses, including streams, rivers, lakes and oceans</li> <li>- all water crossings must be via horse-capable bridges – no horses allowed in water</li> </ul>

	<p>courses at any time                  - horses can not be permitted in the alpine, in valley bottoms, on hiking trails, or in any sensitive habitat</p> <p>Please note that the areas presently designated for horse use in the park meet all of these criteria, which is why they were carefully chosen in the first place. There is no need for revision to the plan at this time.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W69</p>	<p>Please find attached BC Nature’s submission to the Strathcona Park Management Plan Consultation regarding the proposal for horse use in the park.</p> <p>Thank you.</p> <p>June 19, 2008</p> <p>This letter is submitted for consideration in the public consultation process regarding the role of horses in Strathcona Provincial Park in general and the proposal for horse use in the Bedwell Creek area in particular.</p> <p>BC Nature (the Federation of B.C. Naturalists) represents 50 clubs with about 5000 members from all corners of the province. Our motto and objective is “to know Nature and to keep it worth knowing”. We are also affiliated with Nature Canada and members of the Canada-wide naturalists’ Canadian Nature Forum. An important way to get to know, and therefore value, natural systems and wild creatures is to spend time in their homes; however as naturalists we are always aware that human presence can have negative effects on these creatures’ lives especially when the habitat and wildlife are particularly sensitive and/or our means of encountering them is not in keeping with that sensitivity. We bring that perspective to bear in our comments here.</p> <p>A significant number of BC Nature members are concerned about some aspects of the proposal and ask that we be kept apprised of how these concerns will be addressed if Clayoquot Lodge is granted the Park Use Permit requested. These concerns centre on our firm belief that protection of the ecological integrity of the park must be paramount before any consideration is given to additional recreation use with possible negative effects on the park.</p> <p>First, we note that horse use is clearly spelled out in the Strathcona Park Master Plan, approved in 1993, and in the Amendment to the Master Plan, approved in 2001; however, neither Plan allows for horse use south of the Ucona River – Kunlin Lake area. We are aware that the history of horse use in Strathcona Provincial Park has been a controversial one, with some significant ecological damage having occurred in the past.</p> <p>The original direction in the Master Plan was to “permit horse use ....west of Gold Lake and on ... the old logging road near Kunlin Lake” and to “study the potential of horse use at Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes”. The revised Master Plan decided to “continue to allow horse use in the Kunlin area north of the Ucona River and allow horse use northwest of Donner Lake and at Oshinow Lake for a two year test period” with monitoring. Apparently, no riders are in fact using these trails and they have probably become overgrown. This suggests that demand for horse trails is not a priority among the general public.</p> <p>Are the reasons for restricting horse use to these specific areas applicable still and to the proposed area? If the circumstances that led to those restrictions have changed, we would appreciate knowing of them.</p> <p>There seems to be conflicting information on where the horses would go. If it were on old</p>

logging roads, this might be of little concern for any damage, depending on how close the trail were to the river and how well maintained it would be. If, however, the trail were close to the river and subject to washouts, which we understand are common in the area, then allowing horses would very likely cause some deterioration of the ecological integrity of this protected area. A shared hiking-horseback riding trail (or campsites) is also problematic as flies follow horses, horse trails in wet areas tend to be difficult to hike on, and manure and urine detract greatly from the wilderness experience. Has the Lodge addressed these concerns in their proposal?

The Lodge's stated plan to feed the horses on pellets for the whole of the travel season appears to be the way to prevent the spread of non-native plants along the trails. Does this mean that the horses would not be allowed to graze while in camp and be confined in a corral or a similar area when not ridden? The number of animals taken on each trip is also a possible concern, not just for the horses' impact, but for the possible, frequent, concentration of people in a few areas.

The proposal to build camps and bridges appears admirable, but many of us are concerned about the matter of public access and use of such privately built facilities in a provincial park. Would hikers be given equal access to campsites, who would monitor the use, and how would the wilderness experience of hikers be maintained in a camp built for groups and horses? This is a remote area where people who cherish a true backcountry experience go. We would hope that some accommodation would be made, perhaps in the form of different campsites, for hikers.

Strathcona Park is part of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and an Important Bird Area (IBA) designated under the world-wide BirdLife International program. It meets clearly defined science-based criteria for areas of global and national importance for birds. Bedwell River is an adjacent valley to the Moyeha, Megin, Watts and Pretty Girl River watersheds, which together form another Important Bird Area (see [www.ibacanada.ca](http://www.ibacanada.ca)). The Important Bird Area designations were assigned for marbled murrelet and for the watershed habitat which supports over 170 other bird species, including grouse, thrushes, warblers, flycatchers and woodpeckers. Mammals such as Roosevelt elk, black bear, cougar, Vancouver Island marmot, Vancouver Island wolves, and coast black-tailed deer also occur in the park.

The Bedwell Creek area of Strathcona is a Wilderness Recreation Zone. The emphasis is "to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment". They are "large, natural areas where natural ecological processes occur largely uninfluenced by human activity, and where low levels of recreation use are permitted but confined to specific primitive facilities and sites and not generally visited on a day-to-day basis." How does Parks see the Lodge's proposal as fitting into these criteria?

BC Nature is not aware of any baseline data collection of vegetation, fungi, birds, amphibians, mammals, etc. having been made within this area of the park. There has not been an environmental assessment of the impact due to horses and increased human use. There has not, to our knowledge, been a risk assessment concerning the impact on local and regional biodiversity. Is such an assessment being contemplated as part of the PUP process?

We understand that the Clayoquot Lodge considers that it operates by high environmental standards and that it believes its clients hold it to these standards. However, even well-intentioned people visiting from elsewhere, without knowledge of the local ecology, are not always well equipped to understand the impact of their behaviours. BC Nature members frequently lead groups into natural areas and know well how unintended intrusions can

	<p>have disastrous effects on wildlife and ecosystems. What means would Parks use to ensure that the necessary high standards are adhered to by the Lodge and its clients?</p> <p>For all these reasons, we would appreciate answers to the concerns given above and trust that they will be taken into account in any Park Use Permit process for the Lodge's proposal.</p> <p>Yours truly</p>
W70	<p>The review process was not a fair process. Reason: insufficient advertising and short notice and Victoria and South Vancouver Island were almost left out of the picture. Poor turnout in Victoria as a result and there are many people in these areas that use and enjoy Strathcona Park that would probably have come to that meeting.</p>
W71	<p>STRATHCONA PROVINCIAL PARK HORSE USE CONSULTATION COMMENTS</p> <p>Your comment form states:          "The Primary goal for this public consultation is to provide clarity around the role of horses in Strathcona Provincial Park".</p> <p>I suggest, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) provide absolute clarity,</li> <li>b) necessitate minimal change to the park Master Plan,</li> <li>c) respond to what I believe is the predominant public opinion, that you adopt the following simple policy:              No horses in Strathcona Provincial Park.</li> </ul> <p>This can be justified by the well-documented destructive effect of horses upon trails in our wet environment, and by the danger of introducing foreign plant species into the park via horse feed and excrement.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>If there are existing logging roads in the park which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- currently being used by private horse riders for day-time use only, - in locations already named for such use in the Master Plan, then I would not personally object to such use continuing.</li> </ul> <p>But that would compromise your objective of clarity, and it would compromise objectives of ecological protection of the park.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I offer this final reasoning for not allowing development of commercial horse use in the park:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in the wet west coast environment, in order to build a trail which can withstand regular horse use, that trail has to be built like a road, with much of the environmental alteration and damage associated with road building.</li> <li>- hence, where road building is not allowed, horse-trail building should not be allowed either.</li> </ul> <p>Thank you.</p>
W72	<p>June 19, 2008</p> <p>Minister of Environment Barry Penner</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am both a horse rider, participating in long distance, and endurance competitions, and one of the 64 people who were arrested, and in my case, went to jail, to protect Strathcona Park in 1988. To many people this action involving many hundreds of people is usually referred to as "the blockade" and was the first large action of civil disobedience in British Columbia.</p>

From my horse activities I can assure you that the wet west coast is NOT suitable terrain for horse riding, unless on fully surfaced gravel roads. The now greatly eroded trail up the Bedwell Valley, which I hiked approximately 10 years ago, is not suitable for horses. Indeed, it is barely passable on foot, with huge washouts along at least 30%. as recorded on video in Sept 2007.

As a long time citizen activist defending Strathcona Park, I certainly don't want horses in the Wilderness Conservancy Area of the Bedwell Valley for reasons of a) introduction of invasive and foreign plant species, b) conflict with predatory wildlife (bears and cougar), c) the intrusive presence of permanent structures of corrals, manure pits, and the associated human dwellings (tent platforms).

I have reviewed the entire 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan, and the 2001 Master Plan Amendment. Within I find many references to the "primary" purpose of the Park -- wilderness protection. .

In the Master Plan (1993)

pg vi) Strathcona Park (SP) "... the only significant area of protected wilderness on Vancouver Island."

pg vi) "...strong public support for a mostly wilderness designation."

pg 1) "In all directions outside the boundary lies the evidence of human industry."

pg 3) "Though SP has much to offer any visitor, its greatest role as a park is to preserve a very significant area of wilderness, some of the last on Vancouver Island" and "...management decisions need to be made which first and foremost protect the park"

pg 4) "As land outside the park is modified, the protected wilderness in the park becomes more valuable for recreation and conservation. This Master Plan sets direction for managing this dual role with an emphasis on the protection of wilderness."

I submit that domesticated horses are not a natural part of wilderness.

The 1988 blockades resulted in both the Larkin Report- 'Restoring the Balance', and the formation of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC). The SPPAC recommended strongly against allowing horse use in the Bedwell Valley, and against the need for a Master Plan amendment.

Strathcona Park is the first and arguably the most loved park in BC. Many thousands of people feel intensely loyal to its protection, and respect the immense amount of work that went into the Master Plan process. Regarding public involvement Master Plan page 3 says "This plan also clearly describes the public's expectations for the park based on an extensive public involvement process, including strong support for the recognition and preservation of SP's wilderness characteristic. "

BC Parks staff have called the recent three meetings in Courtenay, Victoria and Tofino apparently to set criteria for expanded horse use in the park. The lengthy planning process that resulted in the 1993 Master Plan, and the 2001 Amendments involved at least 8 public meetings, and consultations with local governments and First Nations, with over 900 submissions.

I do not consider the three meetings recently held, with less than a week of lead-time, to be adequate public consultation to amend such a significant document. These meetings were under-funded, hastily assembled, poorly managed, poorly advertised, and confusing.

BC Parks says it is looking for more clarity on expanded horse use. This is not necessary because this was all thoroughly explored during the writing of the Master Plan, and Amendments I note that on page 10 of the Master Plan, under Section 4 Park Zoning is

	<p>the statement. "Confusion is possible because an activity may be permitted in a provincial Zone description, but not necessarily permitted in a particular park. This applied to a number of possible uses including horse riding, mountain biking, and air access."</p> <p>If there can be demonstrated a broader need for horse access, and subsequent Master Plan amendment, (i.e. more than the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort application for a Park Use Permit) then a much fuller public consultation process must be used.</p> <p>I note also that parts of Strathcona Park in Clayoquot Sound, including the Bedwell Valley, are now part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. "The program attempts to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of natural resources, for the benefit of local people. The parks are the core area of the Reserve, and central to the program of providing long term protection of the ecosystem...."</p> <p>As a horse rider, I can verify that there are many thousands of miles of good riding trails on Vancouver Island. I understand that Clayoquot Wilderness Resort currently takes riders on trails up the Ursus Valley, which is outside the Park. I see no need for them to take riders on overnight trips into Strathcona Park.</p> <p>Please respect the process that lead to the Strathcona Park Master Plan, and deny this short-sited attempt to allow ill-advised horse use, or any expanded commercial activity in the Bedwell Valley portion of Strathcona Park.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W73</p>	<p>Please substitute this letter for the letter that I took into Parks office Nanaimo today Thursday 19th June 2008. Dated June 13th 2008 and Hand delivered to the Ministry of Environment office in Nanaimo. This substitute to be considered the official position of the British Columbia Wildlife Federation.</p> <p>To BC Parks Strathcona District</p> <p>On behalf of the 30.000 members of the British Columbia Wildlife Federation we wish to voice our opposition to the proposal by Clayoquot Wilderness Resorts to build and use horse trails within the boundaries of Strathcona Wilderness Provincial Park.</p> <p>The British Columbia Wildlife Federation and its Vancouver Island region have a long history of advocating to protect the wilderness values of Strathcona, British Columbia's first Wilderness Park established in 1911.</p> <p>Since the early 1950s and even earlier, we have opposed proposals of succeeding governments to allow the wilderness values of this flagship park to be degraded.</p> <p>Strathcona, British Columbia's oldest park is also British Columbia's most abused Park, having since its establishment 97 years ago, been Flooded, Logged, mined, traded and polluted. It was opened up to the staking of mineral claims in 1918. In the 1920s the Elk and Ash Rivers were logged. In the early 1950s the BC Power Commission received a license to dam Upper Campbell Lake and raise the level of Buttle Lake. Public pressure led by the BC Wildlife Federation and the late Roderick Haig Brown forced an adjustment to the proposal and clearing of the reservoir before flooding. This was we believe the first time this was done in British Columbia.</p> <p>There were trades for timber in the Pamela Creek, Burnlan River, and Ranald Creek areas of the park that were very one sided to those who received park timber.</p> <p>Then came Western Mines and the road to Myra Creek and the resulting mine and pollution. It was as a result of public concern, outcry and actions by both provincial conservation organizations and local citizens action groups over the degradation by industry in Strathcona that government finally came out with the decision that no mining or logging would be allowed in our provincial parks.</p>

	<p>The British Columbia Wildlife Federation also has the position that commercial operations have no place within our wilderness parks. We made this clear with our joining with other conservation organizations in opposing the recent government "Lodges in Parks Strategy" and the building of a transmission line through Burke Pinecone Provincial Park to accommodate a "RIID of the River" hydro proposal.</p> <p>Private business always needs to expand to be sustainable and the reported statement by CWR general director that, "for the sustainability of his business that this was very important" is an example of that. These types of proposals lead to a foot in the door of our provincial parks and set a precedent for the future and we must resist them.</p> <p>While we would agree that perhaps we do not have a perfect Park system and that there are changes that could and perhaps should be made, we have to point out that this is all we have, and while the climate we face is geared to considering commercial and commercial recreation intrusion we will resist change. As Rod Haig Brown said as keynote speaker at the BC Wildlife Federation's 1966 Convention in Prince George speaking of Parks,</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"What I mean by this is that present thinking on parks as expressed by government policy is short sighted and wrong headed, based in complete failure to understand park values"</i></p> <p>We are sure that Rod would be repeating the same thing if he were alive today.</p> <p>Our opposition to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's proposal does not preclude discussions on BC residents using horses within the park boundaries, but these discussions must take place before any decision is made. Any use then would be controlled by BC Parks and they would have the authority to stop the activity if there were any unacceptable impacts.</p> <p>On behalf of the BC Wildlife Federation membership we ask that you turn down the proposal by Clayoquot Wilderness Resort.</p>
<p>W74</p>	<p>The Hon. Barry Penner  Minister of the Environment  Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>Please accept my attached letter as an expression of my concern about the proposed expansion of guided horse trail rides into the Bedwell River area of Strathcona Park.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>The Hon. Barry Penner  Minister of the Environment  Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am a forester in the Comox Valley and want to express my desire to limit commercialization in parks. I am particularly concerned about the ongoing attempts to attain more access for horses in Strathcona Park like Clayoquot Wilderness Tour's application to expand trail rides into the Bedwell River area.</p> <p>I attended the open house in Courtenay and used the opportunity to relate the experience of allowing trail riding in Wells Gray Park in the late 1980s. There, horses had destroyed the recreational trails within one season. Horses were seen over belly deep in the churned-up mud of formerly solid trails. Subsequently, guide operators encouraged their riders to fan out where possible, especially on alpine areas, which led to widespread</p>

trampling and damage to moist, sensitive soils and vegetation. After a few years of this, parks management in Wells Gray Park reversed its approach and shut down horse trail riding on almost all recreational trails, but not before widespread and lasting damage had been caused.

Below is my brief look at the public's willingness to pay, as an economic indicator of what the public wants and how strongly they want it, based on the Courtenay meeting which I attended:

1. About 100 individuals attended the Courtenay open house.
2. About 30 individuals spoke.
3. 25 speakers (i.e. about 83%) were opposed to the expansion of horse trails, 5 favoured that development.
4. From my informal mingling in the crowd, this was a conservative estimate of the opinion of the entire gathering.
5. I submit to you that none of those concerned about expansion of horse trails or other commercialization opportunities in parks, attended the meeting for enjoyment, or for the prospect of financial gain. They are also not able to write off the costs of attending such a meeting, whereas some proponents (e.g. speakers from the Strathcona Lodge, or Clayoquot Wilderness Tours) are able to write off travel time, travel costs, lodging and other expenses as costs for maintaining and expanding business.
6. The meeting time in the evenings is prime family time. Expecting people to attend after a full workday is asking for a major sacrifice. For the purposes of a willingness to pay calculation, a conservative suggestion for this value is an overtime remuneration rate of \$20/hour (I hope this does not insult too many attendees).
7. I suggest the average attendee stayed for 2 hours, and had an hour oneway preparation and travel time (some lived in Courtenay, some came from as far as Parksville or Quadra Island, paying for fuel, ferries, baby sitters etc, costs not even considered here).
8. Those who spoke had typically prepared for their presentation. In my case it took well over 2 hours to research my case, read over the Strathcona master plan, call up the previous parks manager of Wells Gray Park, check the park's website and that of local outfits offering trail rides etc. I will conservatively apply 1 extra research hour per speaker.

9. The cost of this meeting to the public concerned about horse trail expansion then was (at a minimum):

58 (83-25) non-speaking attendees @ 3h @\$20/h	\$3360
25 Speakers @ 4h @ \$20/h	\$2000
Total:	\$5360

This is a crude minimum estimate of the value of this evening to the public in the Comox Valley area concerned about their environmental assets. This is value donated by the public in response to an application by a commercial enterprise and represent value given by the public to the democratic process as well as the parks master plan amendment process, and therefore it also represents a subsidy given to the commercialization proponent (Clayoquot Wilderness Tours).

If these numbers were repeated at a remotely similar level in the Tofino and Victoria open houses, then the total estimate is over \$15,000 for these 3 evenings. Please also keep in mind that the meeting happened on short notice and was not advertised widely, many in the Comox Valley were informed by word of mouth, and the evenings most likely under-represented the true numbers of those concerned about expansion of

	<p>trail rides in the park.</p> <p>I therefore suggest that the public made a sizable investment by attending those evening meetings, and forgoing prime hours in lieu of a frustrating meeting makes a strong statement. I'm asking those of you tasked with making decisions on public assets, such as amending Strathcona Park's Master Plan, to consider both the concerns voiced, as well as the sacrifices made to voice them.</p> <p>Sincerely</p>
<p>W75</p>	<p>I am writing in regards to the question posed: Do horses have a role in recreation in Strathcona Park?</p> <p>Horses absolutely do not belong in Strathcona Park. Horses are not appropriate to Strathcona for many reasons, horses are heavy animals that will leave a major impact on trails with their invasive species thru droppings and will destroy our flora and fauna by nibbling their way thru the trails.</p> <p>Horses will have to use our rivers which will become disastrous to our water ways and fish by churning up the gravel and making mudholes. I am a hiker in Strathcona and I have serious problems with horses in the park. If I am on a trail I do not want to have to walk thru horse feces the only way around it would then be to walk off the trail and in doing so over time will ruin our trails. I believe allowing horses will be the precipice into the next step of commercial take over.</p> <p>If horse use were to go thru I worry about guaranteed public access through the CWR lands.</p> <p>Strathcona Park should be kept a wilderness park one that protects the wildlife and plants and just lets people experience the wilderness. There is very little land left these days to do so.</p> <p>I sincerely hope you do not change the master plan and allow horses in Strathcona Park. I believe allowing so will only be a quick cash grab for the government but will be a lifetime of regret for the citizens of British Columbia.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W76</p>	<p>Strathcona Parks comment form.</p> <p>On my first meeting with the group in Courtenay, I was under the impression that the meeting was about constructing a base line for developing multi use trails in the Strathcona Parks.</p> <p>After and during the meeting of May 28, I realize that the real purpose of the meeting was to discuss the business which was applying to operated and set up permanent buildings in the Park.</p> <p>I do not agree with having permanent structures unless they are for the general public and flow with the environment surrounding the area.</p> <p>question 1:</p> <p>I approve of having horseback riding in the park if the trails are safe and such that no further destruction is incurred by horse use.</p> <p>1a) I do not agree with riding on sensitive trail systems. Degradation of the ground occurs when trails are not set up for heavy-duty use. Roadways and non-sensitive areas are wonderful for riding.</p> <p>1 b) Recreation comes in all forms: biking, hiking, riding, climbing, walking.... exercise is our gift to healthy life.</p>

	<p>2a) Footing and the degradation of ground associated with heavy careless use. Untrained riders who are often out in unknown areas do not understand and often do not respect the sensitivity of the environment. Often people who 'pay' for the pleasure believe they 'deserve' the right to go anywhere, riding or hiking.</p> <p>2b) Impact on other users is good. Horses can be used for first aid removal tactics, lost persons, the pleasure of touching a horse when the person has not had the opportunity to do so in their daily life...all good things if each person respects the other on the trail. Some dog walkers are difficult too....</p> <p>I shared many of my comments with the group at the meeting, so I will not continue with my list.</p> <p>I have contacted Mike Murray with Maple Ridge Parks and they have a wonderful system in place. Please refer to Mr. Murray for any future info required. Their parks guide is filled with multi purpose trail usage.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W77	<p>Hon. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment Parliament Buildings, Victoria B.C,</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner:</p> <p>We request that you will consider the overwhelming public outcry against the proposals of Clayoquot Wilderness Resort to amend the Strathcona Park Master Plan to broaden the use of horses in the Park.</p> <p>That plan, including a carefully considered policy on the use of horses, was developed only after extended deliberation involving all the community and stakeholder groups affected by Park Policy.</p> <p>Current proposals threaten to overturn the results of this democratic decision making process in response to the request of one individual commercial applicant who is seeking extensive policy variance.</p> <p>In essence, permission is being requested for use of a public park to provide special privileges for the exclusive guests of a resort which is not accessible to ordinary B.C. citizens. Such permission would override a carefully made decision regarding what has been considered to be sound management. These special privileges would involve conservation standards far below those which have been established as essential for the use of horses in the Park.</p> <p>These new deliberations can hardly be considered to be adequate in the face of the extensive work and co-operation which would be ignored should the Master Plan be changed without revisiting its democratic process.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W78	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am writing to express my opposition to amending the 2001 Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan to allow horse use in the Bedwell Valley. I've copied the content of my letter below and have attached it as a MS Word document.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>June 20, 2008</p> <p>RE: Amending the Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan</p> <p>I attended the BC Parks information session in Courtenay on May 28<sup>th</sup> and am writing to</p>

	<p>encourage you to not amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to permit any horse use beyond that currently allowed. I am also writing to express my strong opposition to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's (CWR) permit application to run horse tours in the Bedwell Valley.</p> <p>Horse use in Strathcona Provincial Park has already been thoroughly considered in the process that developed the current Master Plan for the park. It is based on the input of numerous stakeholders in a comprehensive process that took place over a period of years. There is no need to amend the Master Plan if the only incentive to do so is a single permit application by an exclusive commercial interest.</p> <p>There is a reason why the Master Plan allows horses where it currently does – these areas are designated because they enable horse use on a hardened gravel road surface with minimal impact on both the environment and the wilderness experience that attracts so many visitors to Strathcona Provincial Park. They are not located in sensitive ecosystems like the alpine or valley bottoms. In addition, they are accessible to all British Columbians at minimal expense and via public roads.</p> <p>I believe that horse use should be restricted to the areas designated in the 2001 Amendment to the Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan. Amending the plan to accommodate CWR's permit application sets a precedent for a different kind of horse use in the park and downplays the impact that horses can have on sensitive ecosystems like the Bedwell River Valley. It could also open the door to further commercial horse use in other fragile areas of the park like Paradise Meadows from Mount Washington. Horse use is unacceptable in both of these areas for environmental reasons alone.</p> <p>As a backcountry hiker, meeting a horse on a trail devalues the natural experience that I've willingly paid my backcountry fees for. Part of that connection with nature is traveling slowly and quietly. Part of that connection is also the sense of accomplishment that one gets from hiking from the trailhead to the campsite. Backcountry users gain a true appreciation of the terrain that they have traversed in that they have all "paid the price" in terms of sweat and effort to reach their destination. They come to realize why the land around them is special because they have become part of it.</p> <p>It is my hope that the Master Plan for Strathcona Park will not be amended, and that the proposal for CWR to use horses in the park will be refused.</p> <p>I look forward to your response on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W79</p>	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am writing to express my opposition to amending the 2001 Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan to allow horse use in the Bedwell Valley. I've copied the content of my letter below and have attached it as a MS Word document.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>June 20, 2008</p> <p>RE: Amending the Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan</p> <p>I would like to voice my opposition to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's (CWR) request to use horses in the Bedwell Valley. This is an environmentally sensitive area, and horses are high impact animals that will damage vegetation, disrupt wildlife, and possibly pollute watercourses in the area.</p> <p>Vancouver Island is currently being developed at a rapid rate, at the cost of losing biodiversity. It is ever more clear that we should not compromise our parks and protected</p>

	<p>areas, and that these should be maintained in as pristine a state as possible to protect that biodiversity. Allowing private outfits, such as CWR, to bring horses into the park may open the door for all sorts of other ventures that will degrade our precious wilderness areas.</p> <p>It is my hope that the Master Plan for Strathcona Park will not be amended, and that the proposal for CWR to use horses in the park will be refused.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
W80	<p>Horses do not have a recreational role in Strathcona Provincial Park. Period.</p> <p>Horses and their corrals will interfere with wildlife habitat. Wild animal food foraging grounds will be removed from their range and because of a desire by the animals to avoid human contact, a much larger permanent area of dislocation will occur. The park's wild animals must come first. Horses have no place there. There will always be a potential for conflict between bears and horses in the park and could result in the shooting of park bears.</p> <p>This whole horse trail and corral system is a method of privatizing the park. It must not happen.</p> <p>Cheers,</p>
W81	<p>I don't think that the issue of what areas are suitable for horse use can be divorced from Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's application.</p> <p>In principal, it would seem reasonable to allow horse use on any former roadbed, especially if it can easily be maintained with additional gravel. CWR has said that they will maintain and rebuild the road, and construct new bridges--there should be a carefully worded contract drawn up to set standards for this, and a performance bond posted to ensure that it is carried out. There also should be a designated right of way through CWR's private land to guarantee access for hikers to the trails on Crown and Park land--this has been a verbal understanding but it needs to be a written contract to ensure long term adherence.</p> <p>In addition, the possibility of an extra two-dozen hikers in the Little Bedwell area each week may cause degradation in this alpine area--an environmental impact assessment should be considered for this area also.</p> <p>Regards,</p>
W82	<p>On behalf of the Wilderness Tourism Association, please accept the attached submission regarding horse use in Strathcona Provincial Park.</p> <p>Thank you</p> <p>June 19, 2008</p> <p><b>Re: Strathcona Provincial Park Horse use Consultation</b></p> <p>We are writing regarding the recent public consultation process regarding horse use in Strathcona Provincial Park. We first want to commend your ministry for initiating this process to provide clarity around the role of horses in Strathcona Provincial Park. As you know the original Park Master Plan and more recent amendment were both written in a way where different stakeholders could interpret the role of horses and their use in the park differently.</p> <p>Park master plans or management plans are living documents and should, at reasonable intervals, be reviewed, and if warranted updated, over their lifetimes. Commonly accepted theory, frameworks and methods change over time. Consumer demands and preferences</p>

change too. The Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) application to take horses into the park via the Bedwell Trail presented a new situation, which could not be specifically addressed by the current Park Master Plan. This of course triggered a public reaction and a debate about whether the Master Plan allows for horses in the park and parks have done the right thing in initiating this process.

Though not intended to be the reason for the public consultation process, the proposal to use the Bedwell Trail on the west side of Strathcona Provincial Park for horse use, is recognized by all stakeholder groups involved to be the impetus and main point of discussion/conflict. This being so we first want to address general issues presented by this proposal and application for a park use permit.

**Issues raised by the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort Application for a Park Use Permit**

The trail in question is an old mining/logging road used to access resources in the Bedwell Valley before it was incorporated into the park boundary. Currently CWR is using 8 km of this trail that runs along their private property and adjoining crown land, and would like to continue along 10km of the trail that reaches into Strathcona Park and goes east up to You Creek. In exchange for permission to use this part of the trail, the hikers.

This proposal and ensuing consultation process has raised the ire of local environmental groups and some park advocates who are opposed to the perceived “commercialism” in parks and impacts from horse use. There is a public fear that tourism operators in general are out to destroy our Parks in exchange for a “quick buck”. Such opponents don’t understand the role of commercial operators in our parks. Commercial operators can be stewards of our parks and facilitators for public use of parks. They help to enhance ecosystem integrity and health, improve trails and access, educate visitors and manage visitor activities, and generally help people experience parks that otherwise can’t or choose not to on their own.

The establishment of parks and special protected areas by society has been a cultural phenomenon for centuries. Typically such sites are created or designated by government authorities because of their special historic, cultural or ecological features and their need for protection through special management that governs site use by people. In many cases, travel to the sites by people has created the initial impetus for site designation and protection. Travel to experience protected areas has been an integral part of park operations for a very long time. As visitor numbers grow or their uses change so do the management challenges. Two changes in recent years are an increased recognition of the importance of ecological protection, and the need for specialized management of the impacts caused by visitors. There are many driving forces behind tourism flows and volumes in parks. These include factors such as increasing wealth, changes in lifestyle and leisure time, changing attitudes toward the environment and wilderness conservation, and technological evolution.

Our parks offer ecological, educational, recreational, scientific, economic and cultural benefits to domestic and international visitors, surrounding communities and society in general. Stakeholders use and benefit from parks in different ways and each group views tourism from its own unique perspective. But most all value and promote the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in the parks they use. Conservation should take top priority in protected areas, but this does not mean that tourism cannot bring benefits to a park or contribute to conservation. There is a two-way interaction between sustainable nature tourism and the environment upon which it depends. The goals of tourism and contribution to conservation are both attainable. The key is that tourism occurring in parks be subject to an adequate and appropriate management regime. In fact management is a crucial element for the long-term survival of the environmental and cultural resources upon which

tourism depends. Tourism development can be a threat to protected areas, especially when development occurs rapidly, uncontrolled, and without proper planning. If activities are properly designed and managed, it is possible for tourism to be consistent with protected area objectives. WTA members like CWR actually hope to turn tourism into an opportunity for parks to gain support of conservation objectives where they may have been overlooked or for various reasons non-attainable.

There are four main links between tourism and the environment:

1. Components of the natural environment are the basis for a marketable tourism attraction or product
2. Management of tourism operations should minimize or reduce their negative environmental impacts
3. Direct and indirect economic contributions should be made by funds generated through tourism to conservation of the environment being visited
4. Attitudes of tourists towards the environment are impacted by the environmental and cultural interactions provided by tourism operators and park staff.

There are environmental aspects to every major component of tourism business (e.g., products and markets, management, money and people). These environmental aspects are heightened when the locations in which tourism is occurring are protected areas (EUROPARC Federation).

Often, a high quality natural or cultural environment is the main attraction that draws the visitors to the area and to select tourism products. Thus the tourism industry is intimately connected to the protection of natural and cultural areas as depicted in BC Parks. Tourism companies like CWR fully understand the importance of maintaining a high quality environment to their success, and are developing environmental policies to reduce impacts on the environment. They also make a connection between tourism's economic contribution and the importance of redirecting some of that benefit directly to conservation so that both can be sustained. Your Ministry will be familiar with some of this work as portrayed in the WTA/MOE Environmental Stewardship MOU and subsequent environmental stewardship projects (see <http://www.wildernesstourism.bc.ca/stewardship/clayoquotWildRes.html>).

BC Parks are challenged to obtain sufficient funds for the ongoing maintenance, scientific study, operation and protection of parks and Strathcona is no exception. Current park agency funds and resources are insufficient for effective management. The Bedwell Trail is at present poorly maintained and used by very few people. In exchange for being able to take horses along the old roadbed CWR have promised to upgrade the trails so all can have access to this beautiful area. CWR is willing to put up the necessary funds to repair the trails from Bedwell Sound to the alpine at Bedwell Lake including repairing and/or rebuilding essential bridges. This will involve a lot of time and money to be spent on a continuing basis. CWR have already worked long and hard to restore the lower valley. For example they have spent thousands of dollars restoring the salmon habitat in the lower Bedwell River. With the high tariffs paid by guests to stay at CWR (and guest donations), the company is able to afford these investments. CWR guests are pleased that a large part of their tariff is put toward restoration.

Some park advocates and conservationists may not embrace tourism, since they may have some past experience in avoiding or repairing the damage caused by visitor impact on protected landscapes (e.g., controlling visitors or restoring damaged areas). Clearly some recreational activities are acceptable in protected areas, whereas others are not. It is critical that management policies are developed, which outline the criteria used to

<p>evaluate the acceptability of activities. Horse use in select areas of the park can be acceptable, and any impacts from horse use can be mitigated. Specific management interventions and restrictions may be necessary to prevent potential impacts, such as erosion of the trail/road route and camp area. Such interventions/restrictions are anticipated by CWR. If the management criteria are met then ultimately the proposal by CWR is deemed as viable and should be allowed to proceed.</p> <p>The international nature tourism market is already large, and the demand for travel to scenic areas of natural beauty is increasing. The public's awareness and understanding of global environmental issues and concerns is growing at a rapid rate. Today's traveler is more educated about these issues than in the past, and they are more willing to take action to act responsibly. The pressure to adopt an environmentally friendly attitude, expressed through selection of environmentally friendly products, has increased.</p> <p>Travelers only want to pay for authentic wilderness experiences and well-managed, responsible activities. Ultimately they may be the judges of whether a company or activity is sustainable or not. It is important that all stakeholders work at developing an understanding of each other's goals, and at building partnerships aimed at attaining those goals. One overall goal should be protection of the high quality natural or cultural environment that attracts tourists and enriches the quality of life of the local people.</p> <p><b>Criteria For Horse Use in Strathcona Provincial Park.</b></p> <p>In general, acceptable activities should be low impact, non-consumptive, promote education and awareness building, and fit with the goals and objectives of the protected area. Appropriate activities often occur in small groups rather than large tours (the exception to this may be school groups arriving for an environmental education program). Pursuits that require, significant infrastructure development, or involve motorized vehicles or large, organized groups are examples of activities that are generally not appropriate or acceptable, except in intensive recreation zones.</p> <p>Specific criteria for horse use needs to consider the following guidelines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The trails for horse use should be in the valleys and not in the alpine or on ridges.</li> <li>2. Preferable vegetation cover would include second growth forests and disturbed areas, and not old growth forests.</li> <li>3. Trails should be located in areas where roads (and associated forms of development) have already been established.</li> <li>4. Roads and trails should have proper surfacing, design and alignment to allow for proper drainage, control erosion and to avoid tree roots. Trails should have low to medium elevation gains and drops. Trail mats are available to minimize erosion from horse foot placement in muddy or boggy areas.</li> <li>5. There should be a means of separating pedestrian and horse traffic where trails are narrow and unsafe.</li> <li>6. Horse use should avoid key vulnerable wildlife refuges and areas with species at risk.</li> <li>7. For overnight horse use there will need to be adequate physical requirements to accommodate horses and guests (e.g. space and ground surface/cover to accommodate shelters and corrals where they are not disruptive).</li> <li>8. When evaluating horse infrastructure, the following should be considered:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct the minimum necessary</li> <li>• Construct to aid visitor/horse management and safety</li> <li>• Structures should interfere as little as possible with the natural ecosystem</li> <li>• Structures should not dominate their natural surroundings and should, where possible,</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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	<p>reflect local traditions and local materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmentally friendly design should be applied to construction and functioning of improvements. Consider waste minimization and collection systems.</li> <li>• Public use of infrastructure</li> </ul> <p>Park zoning presently determines the location of appropriate tourism development, including the construction of buildings and other facilities related to visitor management and park operations. <i>Note: CWR guests presently stay in tents on wooden platforms, and use composting toilets.</i></p> <p>9. Feed and grazing - feed will need to be sterilized so that there are no foreign bodies propagating in the park. Manure will need to be managed. Grazing will generally be discouraged.</p> <p>10. Group/Horse Management - Horse activity and behavior will need careful planning and managed for the safety of riders and horses, and minimum impact to the environment. Issues such as group size, trail etiquette and safety, horse control, camp management and trip planning will need to be carefully considered. For example horses should be high-lined (or corralled) at night to reduce damage to tree roots and vegetation. For guidelines and standards we recommend referring to the <i>Trail Etiquette and Safety Best Practices</i> developed by the Back Country Horsemen Society of B.C. We would note that the Back Country Horsemen Society of B.C. do recommend that wilderness horse trips should be undertaken with an experienced guide.</p> <p><b>General Goals of Tourism in Parks</b></p> <p>Effective tourism management will enable protected areas and surrounding communities to attain positive impacts and reduce negative impacts of tourism. The goals of sustainable tourism in protected areas are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide people with the ability to learn, experience and appreciate the natural and cultural heritage of the site</li> <li>2. To ensure that the natural and cultural heritage of the site is managed appropriately and effectively over the long term</li> <li>3. To manage tourism in parks for minimum negative social, cultural, economic and ecological impact</li> <li>4. To manage tourism in parks for maximum positive social, cultural, economic and ecological impact.</li> </ol> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>W83</p>	<p>June 20 2008.</p> <p>Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>I am writing to you to express my opposition to a proposal to expand horse use in Strathcona Park. And I ask you to read the references taken from the Master Plan, that reinforce my position and the opinion of the Friends of Strathcona Park on this matter.</p> <p>In my opinion the master plan for Strathcona Park very clearly sets criteria for all users, including horses.</p> <p>The Master Plan may be faulted if each manner of use is not exhaustively detailed.</p> <p>I believe this to be the source of the confusion for BC Parks in their review of expanding horse use in Strathcona Park.</p> <p>And this failure of the Master Plan, to speak at length to every variable of horse use in the Park, is the catalyst for the current discussions.</p>

And it is clear to me that the driving force for this review is the Park Use Permit application, submitted by Clayoquat Wilderness Resort, for commercial, guided, multi-day pack horse tours in the Bedwell River Valley of the Park.

The Master Plan for Strathcona Park explains that the Park is divided into logical units to apply uniform and consistent management objectives. In this BC Parks relies on "zoning" for planning and managing parks.

Quoting the Master Plan 4. Park Zoning (p 10): " Definitions of each zone type are general for the province, and for policy decisions specific to Strathcona Park it is necessary to refer to the recommendations in the appropriate sections of this Master Plan". (IE: Not in the Plan Highlights section!). "Confusion is possible because an activity may be permitted in a provincial zone description but not necessarily permitted in a particular park - this applies to a number of possible uses including horse riding, mountain biking, air access."

The Master Plan for Strathcona Park clearly details the vision for areas including the Bedwell River Valley under 4.2 Wilderness Recreation Zone (p 12): "The objective of this zone is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and provide back country opportunities dependent on a pristine environment. This zone is characterized by low use and the provision of solitary experiences. Facility development is minimal and designed to protect the overall environment of the park while maintaining a wilderness atmosphere. Approved facilities include trails, trail signs, designated camping areas, and sanitary facilities."

The Master Plan for Strathcona Park underscores the allowed use in Wilderness Recreation Zone (WRZ) (p 12): "In summary, areas designated WRZ are large natural areas where natural ecological processes occur largely uninfluenced by human activity, and where low levels of recreation use are permitted but confined to specific primitive facilities and sites and not generally visited on a day use basis."

The Bedwell River Valley is located in an UNESCO Biosphere (Master Plan amendment 2001 p 1): "The program attempts to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of local people. The parks are the core area of the reserve and central to the program of providing long term protection of the ecosystem and opportunities for education, training, research, and monitoring."

Horse use does not suit the criteria established for Wilderness Recreation Zones. Expansion of horse use, especially to suit Clayoquat Wilderness Resort (CWR), should not be considered in the Park Wilderness Recreation Zones for many reasons, including though not limited to: no public access, the need for trails/bridges to be of substantial load bearing capacity, (and horses to be kept well away from any water courses or water bodies), the commercial nature of destination guided pack horse tours, and the length of the proposed Park Use Permit (30 years!).

And please note: The amendment process that requires the public's input, to alter the uses for Strathcona Park requires much greater input of time, money and resources than has been employed over the past few weeks during the 4 meetings that were held in Tofino, Courtenay and Victoria.

All questions relating to expanded horse use in general and CWR commercialization for their private advantage are sufficiently covered by the Master Plan for Strathcona Park. And the Master Plan states NO to both questions.

The real issue here is that BC Parks are under-funded and are forced to entertain commercial operators to support basic items like clearing hiking trails and building bridges; this is the case in the Bedwell River Valley.

Sincerely,

REFERENCES

Direct references taken from the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to support my comments, summarized here as: "No expansion of horse use and No amendment to the Master Plan; ...Full Stop ! "

Other concerns with horse use in the Bedwell River Valley and other areas of Strathcona Park are addressed by the intention of the wording, the Vision in the Master Plan:

- 1. Plan Highlights (vi ) "The Bedwell Lake/Bedwell River.....and management will focus on maintaining the wilderness experience and protecting the environment".
- 2. Introduction ( 1 ) "Within this backcountry, self reliant and skilled hikers may travel for up to 10 days.... Only if these hikers leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but photographs, and if there are not too many each year, will this rugged and beautiful wilderness experience be sustained."
- 2. Introduction (3) "Though Strathcona Park has much to offer any visitor, its greatest role as a park is to preserve a very significant area of wilderness; some of the last on Vancouver Island."
- 2.2.d. Management and Development of Recreational Opportunities (4) ...."The Master Plan establishes various recreation opportunities for the park, suitable locations and acceptable levels of use; particularly for horse riding, hiking, camping, and winter recreation activities."
- 5.3 Vegetation / Objectives (25) " To eliminate, and discourage the establishment of, non-native species."
- 5.3 Vegetation/ Actions (26) " Promote no-trace camping and preservation of the environment, ..."
- 5.4 Wildlife / Actions (28) "Minimizing negative encounters between people and animals;.." and "Ensure any future recreational development in the ...and Wilderness Recreation Zones do not negatively affect wildlife." and "Protect wildlife habitats by minimizing the impacts of park development and recreation use."
- 5.8 Outdoor Recreation Features / Actions (32) "Ensure that recreation developments do not negatively affect the resource or the outdoor recreation experience."
- 6.1.4 Local Recreation (35) "Strathcona park offers a number of day-use activities .... swimming, boating, hiking, rockclimbing, horse riding, on-road mountain biking, ...."
- Backcountry Hiking / Objectives (43) "To develop a range of hiking opportunities and related facilities within the Natural Environment and Wilderness Recreation Zones which minimize impact on the environment and conflicts between users."
- 6.6.6 Horse Use (45) "...and a legacy of very strong feeling (especially from hikers) against any reconsideration of horse use in the park."
- 6.6.9 Recreational Guiding (48) "Guided services include hiking, camping, fishing, canoeing, and helicopter and float plane trips. To maintain the integrity of the park... there must be limits on commercial guiding activities."
- Issue: Options / Public Comment (57) "Responses received from the general public favoured the park being maintaining principally as a wilderness area, using a limited number of clearly defined zones adjacent to existing development .." and "A considerable number of park users, including horse and mountain bike riders,.....requested development

	<p>of facilities to meet their needs. However, the majority of respondents expressed concern about the impact of zoning large areas of Strathcona's backcountry presented in Option Y." ( note: "Option Y portrayed a concept that would see the wilderness made more accessible by designated trails, backcountry facilities and aircraft." )</p> <p>- Issues: Zoning - Huts in Wilderness Recreation Zones / Analysis (63) "Like horse trails and mountain bikes, huts are a recognized development in the park system."</p> <p>- Year 2000 Amendment (3) "In summary, the master plan and this Amendment will continue to guide park management now and into the future. Review of the plan may occur in response to specific issues that were not foreseen by the plan and require greater public review."</p> <p>(In my opinion, the public involvement during the last month does not satisfy an adequate public review process.)</p> <p>** Questions relating to expanded horse use and CWR commercialization for their private advantage are covered by the Master Plan for Strathcona Park.</p> <p>And the answer is NO to both of these questions!</p>
<p>W84</p>	<p>June 20, 2008</p> <p>Honorable Barry Penner Minister of Environment PO Box 9047, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC, V8W 9E2 Dear Minister Penner,</p> <p>Please accept this letter as the Wilderness Committee's opposition to the proposed amendment of the Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan: a proposal which would allow a private horse trail for the <i>exclusive</i> use of guests of a luxury lodge – Clayoquot Wilderness Resort.</p> <p>Amending a Park Master Plan to allow for a private business initiative would set an unwanted precedent for provincial parks in BC. The BC Government is aware that the proposal, complete with a corral, tent platforms and composting facility, contravenes the Master Plan of the park. In fact, the issue has been discussed with the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee, and BC Parks was advised that the proposal was incongruent with the Master Plan and should be rejected.</p> <p>Undermining the ecological integrity of a Park Master Plan at the behest of a luxury resort, which charges \$1500-\$1600 per night for guests, is not in the best interest of Strathcona Park, nor does it reflect the concerns of British Columbians. The people of British Columbia have repeatedly voiced their opposition to the commercialization of our provincial parks, and this proposal flies in the face of that sentiment.</p> <p>We trust that both you, and your Ministry, will listen to the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee and respect the intent of the Park Master Plan and reject this proposal.</p> <p>Yours truly,</p>
<p>W85</p>	<p>June 19, 2008</p> <p>Mr. Barry Penner Minister of the Environment PO Box 9047, Stn Prov Gov't. Rm 112, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC V8W9E2 <a href="mailto:env.minister@gov.bc.ca">env.minister@gov.bc.ca</a></p> <p>Re: Horse Use in Strathcona Park</p>

Dear Minister Penner,

In 1987, I was one of thousands of people from across the province who spoke out in opposition to an Order in Council passed by the British Columbia government that made significant changes to the land base and the uses permitted within Strathcona Park.

At that time, I was an elected representative of the Comox-Strathcona Regional District. In December of the following year, in response to the almost unanimous opposition to the government's plan and criticism of the manner in which the public consultation process had been carried out, three of us were appointed by Parks Minister Terry Hubert as public representatives of the Strathcona Steering Committee. Our role was to work with BC Parks staff from South Coast Region, the Strathcona District and Victoria Headquarters, to collect and review a huge amount of background information and to design and carry out an extensive consultation process.

The seven members of the Steering Committee worked hard and long – for almost five years - to regain the trust of the public, and to develop a plan that would “restore the balance in Strathcona Park.”

I no longer hold political office and have not had any direct involvement with BC Parks for several years, but having reviewed many hundreds of submissions and worked closely with members of the Steering Committee to write the current master plan, I decided to attend a meeting of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee in September 2007 to clarify what appeared to be confusion about how the plan addressed horse use in the Park. I believe my comments helped to clarify questions the committee members had about the rationale that had been used for restricting horse use to some very specific and clearly identified areas within the park boundary.

Since that time, I applied for and was accepted as a member of SPPAC. Today I am writing this letter on my own behalf, not as a member of that committee.

**I am adamantly opposed to amending the Master Plan to permit horse trails in Strathcona Park.**

I remain confident that anyone who reads the plan closely – not simply the Plan Highlights, but the plan itself – would come away with a clear understanding that horse use is NOT an activity that the public or the Steering Committee recommended should take place in other areas of the park. To say that the plan is “vague” or “open to interpretation” is patently untrue.

Having carefully re-read the Master Plan and the Plan Amendment in their entirety (see the attached summaries), the only reference that *may* be construed as unclear about horse use appears in a very brief summary – identified as Plan Highlights – which appears on page 12 of the 1993 Park Master Plan. This point reads:

**“On a trial basis, two areas have been designated for horse riding and other areas will be reviewed. These locations have minimal conflict with other users and can withstand this type of use.”**

A casual reader who read only the Plan Highlights may have interpreted the phrase “**and other areas will be reviewed**” to infer there was support for studying the feasibility of horse use in other parts of the Park.

In fact, the plan recommendations clearly restricted horse use to “**the new logging road to the west of Gold Lake and on the section of old logging road near Kunlin Lake which provides a connection between horse trails outside the park boundary.**” The phrase “other areas” referred *specifically* to Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow Lake areas.

The plan also states that “**.....for policy decisions specific to Strathcona Park, it is**

**necessary to refer to the recommendations in the appropriate sections of this Master Plan.** “ (page 24 of the 1993 Master Plan) – NOT just the Plan Highlights.

I can only surmise that unless there is some other factor at play which has not been publicly disclosed, support for the current frustrating, confusing and poorly conducted public consultation process came about because someone in BC Parks did not take the time to review the detailed recommendations in both the 1993 Master Plan and the 2001 Amendment, and made a decision based solely on what appeared in the plan highlight.

I urge you **NOT** to amend the Master Plan to permit horse trails in other areas of Strathcona Park. I have grave concerns about the process that was used to gather information from which “criteria” is being developed, and the manner in which the consultation process was carried out.

In closing, I am appending comments I presented at the September 2007 meeting of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee. The recommendations and sentiments were supported by the two other public advisory members of the original Steering Committee.

*“The vision that emerged from this lengthy and intensive process supported the recognition and preservation of Strathcona as a wilderness area.*

*At the time the Master Plan was released, there was a legacy of very strong feeling against any reconsideration of horse use in the park because of the extensive damage that had previously been done to hiking trails.*

*Because of these concerns and because abundant opportunities existed outside the park, the vast majority of comments received during the consultation process recommended that mountain bike and horse trails be prohibited in the park. Those who supported bike and horse trails recommended that their use should be restricted to areas in the intensive recreation zone, separated from other park users, and to areas that were not subject to environmental damage.*

*After careful consideration, the Steering Committee recommended that under certain circumstances, horse trails would be permitted in the park, but only in specific, identified areas which had already been alienated and where it was determined the **existing** road bed was stable enough to withstand the impact. These areas included the logging road to the west of Gold Lake and on the section of old logging road near Kunlin Lake which provides a connection between horse trails. It was also agreed that the potential of the Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes areas to support horse use would be studied.*

***The issue of allowing trails in other areas of the park was carefully considered and rejected.***

*[We] also share the concern that by giving consideration to the current application, B.C. Parks is creating a very dangerous precedent that may be used to rationalize and permit developments which bit by bit, will erode the wilderness values that we worked so hard and long to protect.*

*All three of us are willing to participate further in discussions on this topic, and look forward to being kept informed about B.C. Parks plans in this regard.”*

Having attended the open house and public meeting that took place in Courtenay on May 28, 2008, the stakeholder meeting that took place on May 29, 2008, and meetings of the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee that have taken place over the last 8 months, and having listened carefully to public opinion on this matter, I am even more firmly convinced that there should be no further horse use in Strathcona Park.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my input.

Sincerely yours,

EXCERPTS RELATED TO HORSE USE IN STRATHCONA PARK

**1. EXCERPTS FROM THE MASTER PLAN FOR STRATHCONA PARK, APRIL 1993**

This plan was intended to guide management for 5 years

page 3: (The plan) provides direction for a number of key park issues such as ... horse management ...

page 35: Strathcona Park offers a number of day-use activities in a world-class setting . . . These activities include . . . horse riding. . .

page 45: **Horse Use**

Historically, horses were ridden in the Forbidden Plateau area. As no trails were designated or constructed the consequent trail destruction resulted in a ban on horse use, and a legacy of very strong feeling (especially from hikers) against any reconsideration of horse use in the park. Recent public submissions have urged the provision of some horse riding opportunity in Strathcona in areas able to withstand the impact.

**Objective:**

To provide opportunities for horse use which have minimal impact on the environment or conflict with other users.

**Actions:**

- Permit horse use on the new logging road to the west of Gold Lake and on the section of old logging road near Kunlin Lake with provides a connection between horse trails outside the park boundary.
- Study the potential of the Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes areas to support horse use.
- Develop as necessary, and in cooperation with local riders and the B.C. Horse Council, management strategies to protect the environment.

page 53, bullet 6:

Study the potential of the Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes areas to support horse use.

page 57

A considerable number of park users, including horse . . riders . . requested development of facilities to meet their needs. However the majority of respondents expressed concern about the impact of zoning large areas of Strathcona's backcountry presented in Option Y. [This was a concept that would see the wilderness made more accessible by designated trails, backcountry facilities and aircraft]

page 61: Zoning - Horseback Riding/Mountain Biking in Natural Environment Zone

Public Comment:

A majority of comments favoured restricting these two activities in the part because it was felt that abundant opportunities existed outside the park and that the impact of these opportunities would be significant. Those people favouring the activities suggested limiting the use to areas in the intensive recreation zone, separated from other park users, and to areas that were not subject to environmental damage. Several areas were suggested for trail use including Oshinow, Toy, and Junior Lakes area, old industrial use roads and the Westmin area.

Analysis:

Horseback riding and mountain biking are recognized as legitimate uses within the provincial parks system. As with other uses such as parkways and hiking trails, locations for these activities must be carefully chosen to ensure that the environmental impact will not negatively affect the park. Similarly, the facilities to enhance this use must be properly designed and constructed.

<p>Plan Recommendation:  The plan recognizes these two activities may have a role in Strathcona Park. The plan proposes horse use on specific roads near Kunlin Lake and Gold Lake. Studies of the potential of the Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow Lakes for horse use are also recommended.</p> <p>page 63:  Like horse trails and mountain bikes, huts are a recognized development in the park system.</p> <p><b><u>2. PROVISIONS IN THE B.C. PARKS MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT FOR STRATHCONA PARK, JUNE 2001</u></b></p> <p>With the Master Plan will continue to guide park management now and in the future (p.3)</p> <p>Used in conjunction with the Master Plan (p.3)</p> <p>Implementation of the Amendment to occur over next decade (ie to June 2011)</p> <p>page 31: Outdoor Recreation Opportunities:  Direction in the Master Plan:  The plan outlines a wide variety of activities that are appropriate for Strathcona Park including . . . horse use.</p> <p>page 35: 6.6.6 Horse Use  Horse use is allowed in many parks but is managed carefully to ensure that there is minimal impact on the environment or conflicts with other users. Horse use is inappropriate for most of Strathcona Park because of the steep terrain, wet soils, and sensitive plant communities.</p> <p>Direction in the Master Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permit horse use of the logging road to the west of Gold Lake, and on the section of the old logging road near Kunlin Lake (p.45)</li> <li>• Study the potential of horse use at Kunlin, Donner and Oshinaow lakes (p.45)</li> </ul> <p>Revised Direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to allow horse use in the Kunlin area north of the Ucona River.</li> <li>• Allow horse use northwest of Donner Lake and at Oshinow Lake for a two-year test period, while implementing a monitoring system in conjunction with horse users to assess impacts.</li> </ul> <p>Public Feedback  People were looking for opportunities to allow horse use in the park and others were concerned about the impact on the environment. Some frustration was expressed at the lack of progress on the study of potential horse use.</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This use is consistent with intent of master plan.</li> <li>• Keeping horses on the north side of the Ucona River will limit conflicts with elk herds.</li> <li>• This direction increases the recreational opportunities at the periphery of park, which is in keeping with the vision statement.</li> </ul> <p>Excerpts from B.C. Parks Publications/Plans related to Horse Use in Strathcona Park  (from the Draft Master Plan – May 1992)</p> <p>PLAN HIGHLIGHTS (p. vi)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On a trial basis, opportunities for horse riding have been approved for locations which will minimize conflict with other users and will withstand this type of use.</li> </ul> <p>2. INTRODUCTION</p>
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<p>2.1 <u>Purpose of the Plan (p. 3)</u>  .....It also provides direction for a number of key park issues such as proposed park additions, and includes recommendations on air access, wildlife management, mountain bike and horse management and outdoor recreation.....</p> <p>2.2 <u>Planning Issues</u>  d. <u>Management and Development of Recreational Opportunities (p. 4)</u>  .... The Master Plan establishes various recreation opportunities for the park, suitable locations and acceptable levels of use; particularly for horse riding, hiking, camping and winter recreation.</p> <p>4. <u>PARK ZONING (p. 9)</u>  ..... Definitions of each zone type are general for the province, and for policy decisions specific to Strathcona Park it is necessary to refer to the recommendations in the appropriate sections of this Master Plan. Confusion is possible because an activity may be permitted in a provincial Zone description but not necessarily permitted in a particular park. This applies to a number of possible uses including horse riding, mountain biking and air access.</p> <p>5. <u>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT</u>  5.1.2. <u>Inholdings and Other Tenures</u>  Actions: (p.23)  .....  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop powerline corridors for recreation opportunities such as mountain bike trails, horse riding trails and cross-country ski routes.</li> </ul> <p>5.3 <u>Vegetation (p.25)</u>  Objectives:  .....  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To eliminate, and discourage the establishment of, non-native species</li> </ul> <p>5.4 <u>Wildlife (p.28)</u>  .....  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure any future recreational development in the Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment and Wilderness Recreation Zones do not negatively affect wildlife.</li> </ul> <p>6. <u>VISITORS SERVICES</u>  6.1.4. <u>Local Recreation (p. 35)</u>  ..... Strathcona Park offers a number of day-use activities in a world-class setting that attract people from the neighbouring communities of Gold River, Campbell River, Courtenay, Port Alberni and Tofino. These activities including swimming, boating, hiking, rock climbing, horse riding, on-road mountain biking, nature appreciation, picnicking and fishing.</p> <p>6.6.6. <u>Horse Use (p. 45)</u>  Historically, horses were ridden in the Forbidden Plateau area. As no trails were designated or constructed the consequent trail destruction resulted in a ban on horse use, and a legacy of very strong feeling (especially from hikers) against any reconsideration of horse use in the park. Recent public submissions have urged the provision of some horse riding opportunity in Strathcona in areas able to withstand the impact.</p> <p>Objective:  To provide opportunities for horse use which have minimal impact on the environment or conflict with other users.</p> <p>Actions:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permit horse use on old logging roads giving access to Kunlin, Gold and Donner Lakes. Assess the ability of the trails to support horse use as part of a recreation management strategy.</li> </ul> </p></p></p></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the potential to establish a horse trail on the powerline corridor which follows the Strathcona Parkway (Highway 28).</li> <li>• Develop management strategies as necessary to protect environment and in cooperation with local riders and the B.C. Horse Council.</li> <li>• Study the potential of the Oshinow Lake area to support horse use.</li> </ul> <p>7. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>Phase 1 (Year 1 and 2)</p> <p>Visitor Services (p. 52)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study the potential of the Oshinow Lake area to support horse use</li> </ul> <p>Phase 2 (Year 3-5)</p> <p>Resource Management (p. 53)</p> <p>Rehabilitate disturbed areas to a natural state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop powerline corridors for recreation opportunities such as mountain bike trails, horse riding trails and cross-country ski routes.</li> </ul> <p>Visitor Services (p. 54)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the potential to establish a horse trail on the powerline corridor which follows the Strathcona Parkway (Highway 28).</li> </ul> <p>SUMMARY/ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT MASTER PLAN ISSUE: OPTIONS</p> <p>PUBLIC COMMENTS (p. 57)</p> <p>.....The majority of responses received from the general public favoured Option X: maintaining the park principally as a wilderness area, using a limited number of clearly defined zones adjacent to existing development to encourage wider public use of trails, camping areas and other park facilities.</p> <p>.....A considerable number of park users, including horse and mountain bike riders, aircraft operators, Nordic skiers and hikers requested development of facilities to meet their needs. However, the majority of respondents expressed concern about the impact of zoning large areas of Strathcona's backcountry presented in Option Y.</p> <p>ISSUE: ZONING – HORSEBACK RIDING/MOUNTAIN BIKING IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE</p> <p>PUBLIC COMMENTS (p. 61)</p> <p>A majority of the comments favoured restricting these two activities in the park because it was felt that abundant opportunities existed outside the park and that the impact of these opportunities would be significant. Those people favouring the activities suggested limiting the use to areas in the intensive recreation zone, separated from other park users, and to areas that were not subject to environmental damage. Several areas were suggested for trail use including Oshinow, Toy, and Junior Lakes area, old industrial use roads and the Westmin area.</p> <p>ANALYSIS</p> <p>Horseback riding and mountain biking are recognized as legitimate use in the park system. As with other uses such as parkways and hiking trails, locations for these activities must be carefully chosen to ensure that the environmental impact will not negatively affect the park. Similarly, the facilities to enhance this use must be properly designed and constructed.</p> <p>PLAN RECOMMENDATION</p> <p>The plan recognizes these two activities have a role in Strathcona Park. The plan proposes horse trails for existing roads to Kunlin, Donner and Gold Lake. Studies of the potential of the Oshinow Lake area and the Strathcona Parkway (Highway 28) power line corridor for horse use are also recommended)</p>
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	<p>ISSUE: RESOURCES – ENHANCEMENT OF VEGETATION PUBLIC COMMENT (p. 67)                  A majority of the comments supported reforestation or reclaiming sites that had been previously disturbed by resource or recreation use. The areas proposed for rehabilitation included eroded trails, gravel pits, previously harvested areas, and the abandoned mineral claims area.                  .....</p>
<p>W86</p>	<p>On behalf of [name] Strathcona Park Lodge , please accept the attached submission regarding CWR PUP.                  Thank you                  HORSES IN STRATHCONA PARK 2008.06.19                  (Do you really understand the issue?)                  Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) based in Tofino, British Columbia has a proposal to use the Bedwell Trail on the west side of Strathcona Provincial Park for horse use. The trail in question is actually an old mining/logging road used to access resources in the Bedwell Valley during the years when this area was taken out of Strathcona Park. It was later put back into the Park (thoroughly messed up). Currently CWR is using the eight km of this old road bed that runs along their private property and adjoining crown land. They would like to continue riding along past the present Park boundary for another ten km of the old roadbed in an easterly direction as far as You Creek.                  This is an unusual situation, and should not be considered a dangerous precedent. [The owners have] worked long and hard to restore this area. They have spent (?) restoring the salmon in the river. The resort is very “green”. It is a quiet place. Guests stay in tents on wooden platforms, and use composting toilets. Yes, there are horses. Many guests are too young or too old to hike very far into the wilderness. The cost of keeping horses in such an unlikely place is high. The guests pay about \$5,000 per person for three nights. The guest numbers are small but most are pleased that a large part of their tariff is put toward restoration.                  The Bedwell Trail is at present poorly maintained and used by very few people. In exchange for being able to take horses along the old road bed they have promised to make it possible for more than just the super fit to access this beautiful area. This will involve a lot of time and money to be spent on a continuing basis. With these high tariffs (and guest donations), they will be able to afford this. They will, of course, work under a ‘park use permit’. Any compliance problems would cause them to lose their permit.                  These days most tourism operators like CWR fully understand the importance of maintaining a high quality environment for their success. Things are very different than they were when horses and riders could go pretty well anywhere in the backcountry. Many older people in the Comox Valley remember the mess made on Forbidden Plateau by horses. To-day most wilderness visitors are only willing to pay for authentic experiences and well-managed responsible activities. The wilderness industry in B.C. is working hard to be sustainable.                  The concepts that drive [name] to offer what they do in such a remote and sometimes harsh environment are an inspiration to many other wilderness tourism operators, like myself. Remote tourism businesses all over B.C. are working hard to bring in foreign dollars and to make their industry the greenest in the world.</p>
<p>W87</p>	<p>Subject: Amending Master Plan                  Following are some thoughts and points that I have, regarding amending the Master Plan, as far as allowing horses into the Bedwell River Valley and other areas of Strathcona Park</p>

in mind:

In my opinion, the Master Plan needs to be amended and rewritten regarding horse use, whether it includes horse traffic in some areas, or excludes horses from the park entirely. As the Master plan presently reads, regarding horses, the passage is too vague and requires definition.

Regarding present horse use areas in Strathcona Park, the areas of Gold Lake and Kunlin Lake that were to be used as test sites for horse use, these have been a total failure as a test plot, since there has been little or no horse traffic in those areas. This was likely due to the distance a horse would have to be trucked, for just a day ride and not from lack of interest in the study.

While there has been much speculation and distant information about horse impact, no one has cited any research studies, either in favour or against horse use in an area similar to the lower Bedwell Valley or Oshinow Lake areas. I have yet to see any solid evidence either way, that horses will or will not be detrimental to the Bedwell River Valley. If possible, I would like to see a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment as soon as it is available.

One point that was brought up at the Courtenay meeting, was that the Bedwell River Valley is a wildlife corridor. Wildlife values trump recreational values in the park and if there is even a remote chance that wildlife values could be compromised, we need to tread very lightly. That said, we can easily cite areas where even an abundance of hikers can displace wildlife. Point in case, the Elk River Valley Trail, which was originally elk trails, yet elk are seldom or never seen there, at least below the Landslide Lake outfall. Recreational activities alter wildlife patterns and this is a given.

Since we won't really know if horse impact would be detrimental, until horses are actually in the park, I would suggest that we try a two-year test site period, starting this season.

One site could be the Bedwell Valley from the Gail Magee Bridge to the Living Bridge, as this is as far as horses can safely be taken at this time. This would allow CWR to show how they would use & maintain the area and further, they would need to show how they would make a trail through a heavily washed out area (just before the Living Bridge). While not the full deal, that they are looking for, it would give them a chance to physically show what they profess to do in the rest of the lower Bedwell Valley.

A second site could be the Oshinow, Toy, Junior & June Lakes area in the park, through to Elsie Lake. This could be a multi-day trip on deactivated logging roads, with overnight camps. It would give the BC Horse Council and the Backcountry Horse Association a chance to show their "Leave no trace" methods. It would also be attractive in that it would be a several day destination and may well attract equestrians from further a-field.

We should encourage these groups to use these areas, as a test case for results of horse impact and we should then require them to keep accurate records of numbers of horses & riders, numbers of days on trail, length of travel, weather conditions, wildlife spotted and any other pertinent observations to the test. We could provide forms that would be a checklist, with witness signature requirements and these survey forms could become the basis of gauging horse impact and mitigation, if horses will be allowed into parts of Strathcona Park.

At the end of the test period, we could then revisit the possibility of extending the route areas and a longer tenure in the park.

Finally, I feel that I need to make the point that the issue of horses in the park or the CWR tenure application is not necessarily a "thin edge of a wedge" as some feel. We

	<p>already have a large commercial enterprise sitting adjacent to the park and they have developed trails into the park, charge people fees to use them, guide paying clients on these trails, restrict free public use of these trails, use machines to make these trails and patrol these trails with motorized vehicles. This is the cross-country trail system that Mt Washington has created in Strathcona Park, yet I have never heard of anyone referring to this operation as a "thin edge of a wedge". How many people that oppose horses in the park, use these commercial trails in the park? Is this a contradiction of principals? Can we deny one commercial proposal that we might not use or agree with and then turn around and support and use another commercial enterprise, just because it suits us?</p> <p>Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the difficult place that BC Parks and Planning staff are in, trying to satisfy everybody, when emotions are running high. As one person stated at a public meeting, "You are between a rock and a hard place". Thank you for doing your jobs to the best of your abilities.</p>
<p>W88</p>	<p>Hon. Barry Penner, Minister of Environment Parliaments Buildings Victoria BC.</p> <p>Dear Hon. Minister,</p> <p>It is with great concern I write to you regarding the proposed amendment of the Masterplan of Strathcona Park.</p> <p>As was clear at the various public meetings in Tofino, Courtenay and Victoria that the people of BC greatly value their Parks and so do I.</p> <p>The wilderness and unsurpassed beauty of our BC Parks give us a world-wide reputation to come and visit our Beautiful BC!</p> <p>I would like to bring to your attention that the process your staff engaged in was seriously flawed and very confusing for the public. It was flawed for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of time for preparation.</li> </ol> <p>In each community, Tofino, Courtenay and Victoria there was only 1 advertisement placed in one paper 3-5 days prior to the meeting. A few "selected people" who were on the BC Parks mailing list received a letter from BC Parks regarding the meeting 4 days prior to the meeting in Courtenay. No background information was provided. This left the general public guessing what the meeting is all about and what its purpose is and why. Previous meetings on Strathcona Park were well announced and well in advance.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Confusion on the purpose of consultation meeting.</li> </ol> <p>Leading up to these meetings were open houses conducted by CWR regarding their proposed park use permit application to guide their clients on horseback along the Bedwell River to You creek where they were planning to built a corral, tent platforms, outhouse and composting facility. The public was told these meetings had nothing to do with the CWR application.</p> <p>At the open house meetings however information on CWR was posted amongst excerpts of the Masterplan on horse use in the Park.</p> <p>Information on the level 2 assessment of the Bedwell Valley for horse use was deemed critical in this process.</p> <p>Even the facilitator was not sure how to deal with this!</p> <p>Because there was no clarity or any background information provided for the public prior to these meetings, there was great confusion!</p>

3. Clarity about horse use in the Bedwell Valley.

It appears that BC Parks staff was confused about the wording in the Masterplan and excerpts from the summary of the plan were used to illustrate this confusion. The Friends of Strathcona Park obtained a legal opinion answering whether or not the application of CWR was congruent with the Masterplan and its intention around horse use in the Park. This opinion came back saying the proposal did indeed contradict the Masterplan. Authors involved in the creation of the Masterplan testified at the Stakeholders meeting in Courtenay how the interpretation provided on the information boards for the public was taken out of context and when reading the entire document, the document is very clear about horse use in Strathcona Park.

4. Incongruence and inaccuracy in recording of what was said at the meetings.

Accurate recording what was said at the meetings is extremely important as these comments are used to provide you with a report. I spoke at the Courtenay meeting and I checked what was published on the website of the consultant and found many inaccuracies. Sentences and words were changed, which totally changed the intent of what was said. Why did the consultant use a typist and not a recorder or electronic recording? I verified my words with a filmed recording from CRTV and my memory has not failed me; the recording is inaccurate. Therefore the advice provided to you from this consultant is based on inaccurate information. How can you make a fair decision if the information provided to you is not accurate? If my statements were modified how many others were too?

An independent observer and note taker was refused entry to the “Stakeholders meeting” on May 29. No more accurate recording was provided than the same typist who could not possibly keep up with all the discussions and issues.

5. BC Parks ignored the advice of SPPAC.

As you are aware the government appointed a public advisory committee to prevent serious public confrontations between BC Parks and the public on issues and park use permits in Strathcona Park. The members of this committee are selected by BC Parks from applicants applying for a position on SPPAC. The minutes of SPPAC clearly show that SPPAC advised BC Parks not to conduct the above described process and that the Masterplan to Strathcona Park does not need to be amended, and that it is clear on horse use in the park. BC Parks went clearly against the advice of SPPAC and conducted a series of poorly advertised and flawed public meetings. What is BC Parks saying with this to the SPPAC members and the public? Why conduct these meetings and then ignore the advice?

6. Accusation of Friends of Strathcona Park spreading misleading information.

The Friends of Strathcona Park came into existence in 1986 after the government had a flawed public process prior to deleting parts of Strathcona Park and other provincial Parks and downgrading the Class A status to accommodate mining and logging in our Provincial parks. In spite of serious public opposition to the governments plans, they decided to go ahead and decimate our provincial parks. Mining companies were allowed to do exploratory drilling in Strathcona and other Parks. This lead to massive public protest and a three months blockade in Strathcona Park. The people of BC spoke out on our parks; there was a great deal of compassion and love for our BC Park system and our parks! Interestingly enough, we saw that same passion at the meeting in Courtenay. People still love their park and are willing yet again to stand on a blockade to defend their park!

The Friends of Strathcona Park have a 22-year history in issues involving Strathcona Park. As no information was coming forward from BC Parks on the purpose of the upcoming public meetings, FOSP tried to provide background information to the public as is common in a democratic country. BC Parks accused the Friends publicly (as did the facilitator) that FOSP provided misinformation. One member of the public wrote to BC Parks how she felt about horse use in the Park and received a reply from one of your staff telling her that she had based her letter on misinformation. Such accusations basically deny a person their freedom of expression and opinion.

7. Level 2 Assessment of the Bedwell.

Simultaneous to the open public meetings on horse use in the Park (and the public and participants of the stakeholders meeting were told explicitly that this had nothing to do with the CWR application in the Bedwell) a Level 2 Assessment was performed on the Bedwell. Such a process is normally reserved for a specific application. So we may presume here that this level 2 assessments was performed specifically for the CWR proposal. Is the public going to see this level 2- assessment and will they be able to comment on this?

Is your decision going to be based strictly on the scientific data presented in this level 2 assessment or are you considering the philosophy behind our wilderness parks and how the public expects the government to take care of our precious parks?

8. How does the CWR application benefit the public?

Even though the public was repeatedly told that these meetings were not about the CWR proposal; it most certainly appeared that the two were closely linked together. This calls into question how would the public benefit from the CWR proposal? After all there is no access for public's horses. Or is it that CRW has promised to pay for trail and bridge upgrade and take on the liability of the trail as is suggested by Brian Gunn, president of the WTA? If that is the motivation behind BC Parks pursuing the CWR proposal, why not share this information openly with the public?

9. Will the government listen and hear what the public has to say on this issue?

In spite of the poor advertising and lack of information many members of the public came out to speak their opinion. In general the public spoke out against amending the Masterplan of Strathcona Park to increase or change the horse use in the Park. This answer does not fit the facilitator's mandate and does not reflect the question BC Park asked regarding criteria for horse use in the park. Will the facilitator, BC Parks and the government hear what the public had to say, i.e, do not amend the Masterplan; we do not want to increase horse use in the park and would like to stick with the criteria used in the original Masterplan, which was based on over 800 submissions.

In closure I would like to ask you to respond to the publics outcry NOT to amend the Masterplan of Strathcona Park to facilitate increase horse use and to turn down the CWR application for private commercial horse use in Strathcona Park.