

Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan Review

RE: Horse Use in Park

Victoria Public Meeting Notes

4 June 2008

Summary

Attendance: 25 participants* + 4 BC Parks staff & consultants

**This number is approximate as a few participants did not sign in and/or arrived late to the meeting without signing in.*

The public meeting had a disappointing turnout in terms of numbers. A group of participants had driven down from the Courtenay and Campbell River area so representation from the Victoria area was probably approximately 10 - 15 people. The introduction was an expanded version of the same introduction provided at the Tofino and Courtenay meetings. The majority of speakers did not approve of the CWR proposal and many also did not want to see horse use in any part of the park. There was also strong disagreement expressed to amending the Master Plan. A handful of those present spoke in favour of horses in the park. The meeting evolved into arguments rather than discussions and, as a result, was closed shortly before the 9:30 pm scheduled finish.

Public Meeting Notes*

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

Welcome

Welcome the third public meeting of this process for amending the Strathcona Park Master Plan with regards to horse use in the park. And I would like to welcome some of you back from the Courtenay meeting.

I'm going to try to clarify of why we're here and what we're looking for from the audience. The easiest way is explain why I'm here. I'm a biologist by training and have spent over 30 years working in park jurisdictions around North America completing a variety of studies that includes wildlife, public communications and management plans.

We've been hired to facilitate the public process of this project, use the input brought forward by the public, summarize it and use it along with the Level 2 Environmental Impact Assessment to build a draft amendment that sets criteria for horse use in the park that will help BC Parks make better management decisions for public and commercial permit applications in the park. When we were brought onto the contract we were not given any mandate for the Bedwell application, which is sitting in limbo for now and nothing will be done until we are finished our work.

BC Parks does not feel that they have the legal means to approve or deny any proposal that comes in for horse use in the park. The issues were the need for an amendment for the Master Plan which skirts the horse issue and does not supply clear criteria or direction for making these decisions. If it was the same as the documentation for mountain bikes, then we wouldn't be here. The direction and criteria for mountain bikes is very clear: they are not allowed and why they are not allowed.

One person who I chatted with this afternoon stated that in past meetings hosted by CWR, they stated that the “people at the meeting were overwhelmingly against horse use and that it should have stopped there.” I have to add that these meetings are not referendums or plebiscites. If that type of decision-making process became policy then it would be a war in the parks for who could get the most of their people at that meeting. That is no way to manage a park or a park system – it is not good management practice.

Some of you have all already made statements at previous meetings and this one that will be taken very seriously as well. It will be stated in our summaries that the audience stated quite clearly how they feel about horse use in the park, but we have to have better criteria and reasoning why. So we are looking at the amendment to clarify horse use in the park. There is no conspiracy for the Bedwell. It is to come up with a better method to assess any horse use. It is true that the CWR proposal made this happen and the system we’re working on and trying to expand to make sure it is comprehensive in order to address criteria for horse use in the park.

I’ve been asked why we don’t ask if horse use should be permitted at all – that question is asked in question number one of the comment form.

The criteria we collect will be used to assess the two current areas for horse use as well as the Bedwell. It is important that the criteria be set so that there is the least amount of chance for confusion. We’re looking for the widest ranges of criteria: scientific and social aspects. So that’s why we’re here tonight. Is there anything that I’ve neglected to add? – No.

Now we’re a smaller group, if you wish to speak would you please put up your hand and turn to face the group. I usually have a three-minute limit, but we’re a small group I would ask you to give others a chance to speak without interruption and limit your time to five minutes.

Discussion/Questions

Facilitator:

Would anyone like to comment on the amendment or the criteria?

Speaker:

I have a love affair with Strathcona that goes back 15 years. A lot of places I’ve been to there look like no one has ever been there before. Hats off to the Strathcona Park people who made the park in the first place. I didn’t understand the issue at first, but after it being explained to me by one of the BC Parks staff, I have a better understanding that this is only for established roadbeds. I hiked that area 3 years ago and it was nice to have clear access done by CWR and as soon as I got past that it was much harder going. If they are going to keep that part up and a trade up that they fix it up, then maybe this is a good deal. If you are talking about the whole park then I do have an issue. I’m still confused whether this is about the whole park or just the Bedwell.

Facilitator:

It is the latter, horses anywhere in Strathcona. We don’t want to focus on that one proposal and have a great deal of feedback. How do we decide? If you were a park manager where horse use might be, or no horse use as a policy? How would you decide on any proposal. A good process works with a great deal of clear statements and criteria to make the decision. This process will hopefully a good base and a good form of decision making criteria. Who knows what will happen with the Bedwell proposal. There could still be another proposal for horses somewhere else and there needs to be a means of judgment and decision-making ideas for both sides, the proponent and the manager to decide appropriately by looking at the criteria in the Master Plan.

Some examples of criteria is slope, steepness of grade, material used for the trail/road. We still are pursuing what other agencies do with regard and monitor and manage horse use in their park systems. That information will be part of deciding what that criteria will be and all of the information and comments made by the public. And the EIA will be used as well and past public comments from the other meetings which helps us discern people who are against it – they have given us criteria. What were' trying to do is build a process that is clear and legitimate and can be used again and again.

Speaker:

Are there no other people from Victoria who want to speak? We really want to hear what people from Victoria have to say.

BC Parks:

A quick comment: the Bedwell is a catalyst. The majority of the park is not going to be appropriate for horse use. There are trails that are too steep, wet, etc. In the Bedwell there is an old road, but there still needs to be criteria developed to evaluate not only that proposal, but also the other identified locations for horse use and any future applications and/or requests that may come in.

Speaker:

I've got a few points here. First I would like to say that Strathcona Park is considered a limited use park and why we have huge conservancy in there. The guidelines for the wilderness recreation area does not cover, does not allow horse use. It is for low impact recreation use. It is to protect and preserve backcountry recreation. Commercial horse use fits into intensive recreation zones. Access for horses is strictly for areas that the public would never use. This area that is being considered would be going through private property and is a tough staging for hikers and horses. The only other access to that area is through a reserve. There is very poor access into the land at all. The thought that we need commercial interests in parks for horse use because they will upgrade trails and build bridges. I would like to point out that bridges for people are lighter and not needing as much structural needs as horses. These trails have been opened and kept opened by hikers and volunteer work parties. In the Bedwell, the Friends of Strathcona Park have asked if they can join a trail party in that area and were turned down. Lots of people are willing to work on these trails. I would like to come to the big point of climate and Strathcona Park. It is in a very wet part of the country that is not suitable for horse riding. Anyone who knows that issue of Forbidden and the deep routed trails that destroyed the area from horse use.

The road for the Bedwell was built for mining and logging. It [the Bedwell] was brought back into the park as the public wanted the area to have an opportunity to go back to what it was, and the Bedwell will be that way in one or two generations The road going into that area of the park is over 20% washed out. The people going in there for hiking or riding know this is not a good place. I have seen and heard reports that there are existing trails on the west side of the park used by commercial horse groups that are 1.5m wide of complete bog that cannot no one can hike on. An area without logging roads – any time we get into this type of terrain we are looking at problems. I was involved in the original Master Plan for the park and was responsible for identifying the areas in the park for horse use. My thoughts at the time that this was newly logged looked ghastly and was useless to me as a hiker. Today the vegetation has grown up and logging roads are still useable for horses. If I was to make the same decision today I would say no to horses as it is becoming lovely again. That goes for the north side as well where we have identified places for horse use.

As for invasive species: the interior of the province has an issue with invasive species in an area where parks specify that parks maintain criteria with a time limit for feeding horses a clean feed prior to going into the park. I say that any part of Strathcona Park, even with clean feed, we will still get those invasives into our parks. This is another reason why should not have horses in the park.

Facilitator:

Would you mind coming back to finish at a later time during this meeting?

Speaker:

Yes, I will do that.

Below is submitted text to the above by Speaker: (as requested)

Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan Review Public Consultation on Horse Use.

I oppose any horse use in Strathcona Provincial Park. There is no criteria that would make it suitable for horse trails/use.

The following is a copy of my oral presentation at Victoria 3rd June 08.

- 1. Strathcona Park is considered a low use park - the reason it comprises a very large conservancy area.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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).*
- 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 storm events - possibly part of Global Climate Change.*
- 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)*
- 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.*
- 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.

- 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_ metres across"*
- 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.*
- 12. Parks cannot be all things to everybody.*
- 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.*

Speaker 1:

We are from Cobble Hill – We have enjoyed Strathcona Park for 30 years or more hiking backpacking, skiing, snowshoeing and camping. We are members of the Cowichan Outdoor group and the Victoria Outdoor Club who hikes in Strathcona Park. I'm amazed at the paucity turnout here as there are many Victorians that use and enjoy Strathcona Park. Why is that? As far as I'm concerned it is due to poor advertising. I only heard about this a week ago and found out about it on the internet. Was that intentional, or poor planning?

As far as the issue of horses in the park that is causing trouble. I'm not in favour generally or specifically. What concerns me is that this could have been easily solved if there was a better Master Plan or regulations in place. A park is meant to be what it is meant to be. It is not really a place for horses due the terrain and climate conditions, but what I'm concerned with is a commercial group going into the park. They have hundreds of miles of logging roads on crown land outside but near the park. I don't see them needing to go into the Bedwell. I know this government of the day is concerned with private enterprise in the parks and commercial enterprise bringing dollars into the parks, and I believe this is the thin edge of the wedge to that becoming more and more of a reality. I came up against trails with horses in Banff last year in the alpine in the Rockies. The trails were pulverized into clouds of dust and horse urine. In the wet spots it was mud and quagmire. Anything else is going to be worse. My other concern too is the way Parks is managed these days. They are short staffed and they don't have the staff to manage the park as best as they should, and if you add another issue of horses, they won't be able to handle that either. Just be done with the issues and let them play on the outside of the park, not in it.

Facilitator:

I should make a point. You need to know that there have been commercial operators in the parks system for over 40 years. Strathcona has 20-25 commercial permits.

Speaker 2:

We're talking about Strathcona Park. And horses. Not the rest of the Parks system. This

Facilitator:

I would like to clarify with the speaker? Did you mean the broader issue of commercialism in the BC Parks?

Speaker 1:

Yes, I was talking about the broader issue.

Facilitator:

Then I did respond appropriately to what you said about commercial issues?

Speaker 1:

Yes.

Speaker:

They [CWR] are talking about the lower Bedwell. How many kilometers are we talking about? How many kilometers from the sound to You Creek?

BC Parks:

About 18 to 20

Speaker:

So about 18km from the sound to the creek. We're talking about the lower valley – that's about two-thirds of the valley to me. The other thing is that this is going into the heart of Stratchcona Park. The other areas are on the periphery and they stay on the periphery. The wildlife, the park is there for the wildlife, and we use it as well. The Bedwell was logged. From when it was logged 40 years ago to now is growing back. We don't need a trail up there and should leave it alone to become pristine again for the bears and elk that live there. You are still going to get people who are still going to go up there. I know some people did a wilderness trip up there a couple of years ago with a few people. I don't see them as being elitist. I see the CWR are being elitist. Wildlife – I've seen elk and bears down there. If we take horses in there they will move farther up, maybe to Bedwell Lake which is going to be high use. Maybe with higher use in here we'll be pushing bears out to where humans will be frequenting. I say leave the Bedwell for the wildlife.

Facilitator:

I have shorthanded some the comments all of you have been making which can be made into criteria. Is this okay? Do I have what you have said right?

Speaker:

Yes. But I would say possibly moving away from the valley.

Speaker:

Here we go again. I'm going to be quick. There are some people from Campbell River and Courtenay which is nice to see. I'm with the Friends of Stratchcona Park but am speaking for myself. Literature says that this process is not for CWR but for the park as a whole. BC Parks said in the Courtenay newspaper something else. The Level 2 EIA says the same. This is being driven by the CWR proposal. The Master Plan is quite specific about where horse use is in the park and speaks to future possible places. The 2001 Amendment states the same thing. Some say that there was never any thought to put horses in the Bedwell area and is upset about the fact that statements about minimal human impact should mean that it keeps horses out. I don't think the committee even envisioned that there would be horse use in the Bedwell and would have vetoed it in the original Master Plan. It has functioned fine so far. Until the CWR proposal. If that is what is needed – clarity – then it should be done properly. Had they known, they would have mentioned every valley in the park. Horses were not in the park. Past history shows this as the Forbidden area is trashed.

Horses might belong in the Chilcotin area or the Caribou. Stratchcona Park is classified as a wilderness park which means minimal impact and commercial ventures are doubly not allowed. Thanks for listening and I hope we are successful. My criteria is no horses in the park.

Speaker:

I was on Mount Tom Taylor on Saturday. I saw five bears and two elk. They said “protect my valley from these morons.” It is folly. I saw the valley. There isn’t a trail anymore. It is grown over. The reason for that is underestimation. If you don’t keep them up they grow over in a couple of years. You can’t just go and do things in Stratchcona Park. The trails and bridges are expensive. Their estimate for building and their estimate per year for maintenance is ridiculously low. We spend at least twice that on our trails every year. And if they really knew how much going to cost them and had any sense they wouldn’t do it.

It was a class 4 trail to Bedwell and it would cost more than \$3,000 to maintain. The reason there isn’t a trail in the Bedwell is because these guys [BC Parks] can’t maintain it. Volunteers built it as a way to keep the mines out. Since we went through the Parks and Wilderness initiatives the 1990s their budget [BC Parks] has been cut by 80% and an equal amount of staff have been laid off. So here’s a guy trying to work on 20% of his budget with the same amount of parkland to manage. That’s why the CWR can bribe these guys to build this trail. I don’t think their estimated budget is enough. How much do you think it is going to cost to keep the trail open?

BC Parks’ mandate is to put increased revenue and recreation activity into their parks. They are being directed from above to generate dollars.

We can’t even afford as a people to maintain a trail that is already there. I’m going to be watching horses go up Kings Peak because some company paid for the trail to go up there. The reason the government doesn’t understand it is because they stay inside in their offices and buildings and never get out to these places to understand them better. Its too bad that Stratchcona Park doesn’t have anywhere for horses to go. Everyone has underestimated this issue and it is a lot bigger problem than they realize. I think Oshinow is a perfect place. But the riders don’t want to go there. A study should have taken place with an unbiased monitor to assess the applicability of these places for horses. The CWR has to forget about this criteria process. There is no good reason for horses in BC Parks and with Stratchcona Park you will open up a whole bunch of ridiculous recreation activities in the park. The Bedwell is part of the Biosphere Reserve and it is a valley that we need to let recover into the beautiful valley it once was.

Speaker:

I’m a horse rider. I’m here looking at the criteria of where horses are allowed. A lot of what’s been discussed makes sense to me. There’s a huge difference between 15 people going down a trail with inexperienced riders compared to three that know what they are doing. We are all taxpayers and therefore should be allowed to share in our resources. I believe in consistent guidelines for what can happen there. I understand and agree that the rules should be consistent. We don’t say only hikers unless there is a scientific reason to back it up. I would also like to bring up to others that riders also do volunteer work. And someone mentioned that the areas slotted for horse use were because they are so ugly, but now they are beautiful and horses should be out of there because of that. Does this really make sense as criteria? Why do we have to go in ugly areas? Distance is an important thing and season as well. I have not been there. Don’t know what is there. If the criteria says no, then it is not a place for horses.

Speaker 1:

I'm from Victoria and have been to Stratchcona Park. I see a bit of a problem with emotion and commitment for the park being conflicting with something else. If there is a vision for the park it should be stated used as a guide the process. If the vision of the park is to be a wilderness area then that is what it should be. So what is happening now that has instructed it to be something else and if something is changed, then has the vision changed? I'm personally opposed to horses. What I see not happening is that there is a vision statement in the Master Plan and that vision is not stated and restated to keep that in place and guide this process. There is not a process to get you to the vision, but there is a lot of emotion, but that doesn't get you there either. I guess all I'm suggesting is that the vision statement should guide what is happening in the park.

Speaker 2:

The Master Plan is very clear. There isn't a need to change the vision. I think the CWR is putting the screws to these people. The emotion you see is how these people have fought for this park over and over.

Speaker 1:

What I'm saying is that depending on what that vision is it also enables you to ...

Facilitator:

The vision statement is on page 4 of the amendment.

BC Parks:

I would like to make some points of clarification. There is no clarity in the Master Plan with regards to horse use in the park. Our zoning outlines allow horses in all of the areas. From a policy perspective wilderness conservation and recreation areas could include horses.

Speaker 1:

Policy is policy and vision is vision – if it is a sustainable wilderness area then you have to develop the criteria for it. A vision statement that is a page long is not a vision statement. It has to be crystal clear enough that anyone could get right away after reading it.

BC Parks:

If policy makers could have read this and made a decision clearly then this question would have been answered two years ago. When the committee looked at this years ago and explored it, they still didn't get it to where it should have been in terms of clarity.

Speaker 1:

When people state a vision it helps you set objectives then you get somewhere. But as soon as you have an issue, it should also help you answer those questions. But we started this meeting as a process and it has turned into a discussion.

Speaker 2:

What is not clear about this? The Wilderness Conservation Zone states the following: (actually quoted the wilderness recreation zone)

Speaker 1:

The only piece left out of this that I see is the number of people allowed in an area at a time on horses. Which with day use or overnight will have impacts.

Speaker 2:

I agree that overnight for horses has far more impact than a short day trip.

Speaker 1:

Especially in the mountains.

Speaker 1:

I've got a question – can I apply to start a mountain bike company in this area?

BC Parks:

No you cannot, there is clear guidance in the Master Plan and the Amendment about mountain biking in the park and it is not allowed.

Speaker 2:

I would like to clarify that we are talking about the BC Parks act that allows bikes as well as horses in. Here we are talking about two things: no bikes at this point, but does allow for horses. What this gentleman is asking is about is mountain bikes in the Parks, not Stratchcona Park. We are talking about opening up presidencies about use – public and commercial.

Facilitator:

In the Master Plan it says mountain bikes are prohibited in the park.

Speaker 3:

It talks about the Master Plan and the amendment – what has changed in the vision of the park that has brought this forward? You don't have a whole bunch of factors, but you should have stuff in the vision that is clear. People who don't go to the park and who aren't in this room need to know that they can identify with a vision statement and the stuff read out, and after doing so will understand clearly what can and can't happen in a park. I suggest ...

Speaker 4:

I would like to say that what the man is saying about the vision statement is totally correct. What has happened here and in Courtenay and in Tofino: is it that we're just supposed to stick to the nuts and bolts. We're being allowed to ask deeper questions which I appreciate. I don't care about what the criteria are. I don't think there is any place in the park for horses. After the roadblock for Cream Lake and the over 900 submissions that were made during the Master Plan and amendment processes they still aren't listening to us. The Master Plan works and has worked for fifteen years. It is the philosophy in the plan that is guiding us. The vision statement is pretty obscure, but if you read the original Master Plan then you read reference after reference to minimal use. It is nice to talk about something other than horses and the Bedwell.

Speaker:

I'm president of the Wilderness Tourism Association and live at the Stratchcona Park Lodge that carries out a bunch of activities for the public in and on the periphery of the park. The Wilderness Tourism operators have lots of issues that are about the sensitivity of parks and there are greater issues out there than horses. Our nature-based operators are worried about use and preservation. Without that we have nothing to sell. We are good stewards of the environment and you'll see stories and letters about our operators and their concerns. This particular operator is an example of being easy on the land and what he is charging, a good portion goes back into stewardship. This happens all over the province. Commercial

activity is not bad. Most of our commercial operators are constantly talking lecturing their people and clients; and they learn about nature.

We don't want to see horses go into the parks in the alpine areas, but at sea level there aren't nearly the issues. There is a 30 metre rise in 18 km. The terrain has been well developed for logging and mining and will be many years before it is pristine. I have hiked that trail. I have to say that that trail is difficult negotiating for many people and I find it difficult. Parks are there for all people. Stratchcona Park, as a recreation and preservation area and not allowing public recreation for all the public isn't right. Keeping this aside for only the fit (Bedwell) is wrong, but I envision that it could be for all people. There are some that can't hike it but are willing to pay to see the inside of the park by another means, even if all that they can see is the top of the Bedwell. Are we going to deny these people the chance to see the inside of the park? How are we going to get support for our parks if people don't go into them? Park use, in terms of numbers, are going down. How do we get the public to rise up in support of BC Parks and the system when/if they are going to take areas out for mining for revenue? Commercial tourism is one way. I have built and designed tunnels for coal. In 1989 gave up that career and became a cowboy in the Caribou and learned how to be a responsible entrepreneur. I know they can be done with minimal damage. I think another example of criteria is minimal impact on the environment. CWR is going to run 12 horses twice a week up the Bedwell. I think it will be 8 horses once a week and it will not be a major impact on the park. In my own experience people can find a way to live with horses and where there could be conflicts, people will find a way around. I don't support huge amounts of horses or people in the park. Don't those people who are crippled or handicapped have a right to be in the parks too? Or should it be only the very fit? We won't get very much support. I think this process is needed for the long term health fro the park and use in the park.

Speaker:

I'm from Victoria – I have a comment about keeping areas pristine. Sooke is trashed now after people were allowed unlimited recreation and camping there. Humans just trash the Earth way too much, lets just keep it wild.

Speaker:

I hiked that trail a couple years ago and I don't think it is compatible with horses. I do want to relate a story in the Chilcotin about horse and mountain biking on the same trails and they don't work with each other and they don't work with hikers. If you do allow horses on the trail they need to be separated. It is too narrow and dangerous for the two. The other issue is with respect to liability. Is there a concern with liability and the deep pockets of BC Parks being sued? I would assume a waiver would have to be signed. I think there needs to be some kind of performance bond where the tax payer of BC is not held responsible for someone being injured in the park.

BC Parks:

All commercial operators have to carry liability insurance.

Speaker:

This is a very unique area where horse use would be very risky. I think there needs to be an additional bond required. It is not feasible for two trails up that valley.

Speaker:

We are trying to protect the park from people these operators. You can't even get your people here to support your side of this. What is that you are writing down? It is criteria for allowing horses. Would you read it to us?

Facilitator:

This list is to help making the decision for yes or no to horses in the park. Just a yes or no is not going to make this problem go away. There have to be logical and defensible reasons why. I think we live in a different world of needing more than can just saying no. It is the requirement for criteria for whether there is or there isn't horses in the park. I will read out the list and explain my notes.

Speaker:

What happens if a society is looking after a trail or a feature with regards to liability?

BC Parks:

The government supplies liability to volunteers.

Speaker:

The bottom line is that what they are here for is if we say okay. We've already said no.

Speaker:

I guess you said that at the beginning this isn't a voting procedure. And the public input is that we don't want horses. If the public input doesn't influence what you are going to say then what's the point? We've put a lot of time and effort. This reminds me of the blockade. We told him two years ago no, SPPAC said no, and the Master Plan said no. All this stuff was supposed to make this go away. It hasn't.

Speaker:

I would like to point out that businesses do have permits to take people into the parks. That company has a permit to take people in. That is not the problem. The problem is horses. I would like to remind people that we have an accessible trail at Paradise Meadows. When I heard that if you didn't have access to a trail, it wasn't fair, I remembered that people can go up here in wheelchairs and walkers and strollers. They can get up into the park there. They don't need other places as well. I think pressure in our parks will continue to increase. We must protect them from use that will damage the park or they should not be part of the park. Keep them pristine and safe from misuse.

Speaker:

Parks cannot be all things to everybody. What I'm saying is there is horse use in the Chilcotin and in other areas. This is a good place for horse use. Stratchcona Park is not. Lets try not to make all our parks cater to everybody's whims. Lets leave horse use to the Chilcotin.

Speaker:

I use the parks heavily. It sounds like to me that it is a rugged place. For a long time I was looking at the wilderness we have and how it is deteriorating. There is not room in the park for horses. No dam way. Right now everyone is asking questions about the motive for this meeting for horses in the park. You have changed this meeting from the last one we had.

I'm not going to back down. What is the underlying reason for the changes to this meeting? Is it just the CWR? There's no way they are going to run horses up to You Creek. There are trees that are huge. If they think they can maintain that trail for \$3,000 per year they're crazy. I spend that myself a year and more for the work I do in the park. Where is the motivation? What's the difference between this meeting and the last meeting? You've obviously dropped the CWR. Why do you want more expansion. Isn't it time that we just start writing their superiors [Parks] to ask where the money is? I read the CWR's plans and background document which sounds pretty cheesy. From the last meeting to this meeting there should be one answer, no horses. Eight years I've been in Stratchcona Park looking for pristine areas. What is the motivation for the change for the horse use in the park? You tried to defer the issue from the amendment to the Master Plan. If doesn't have anything to do with the CWR then why do you need to do this.

Speaker:

Why aren't they paying attention after all that we have already done, do we have to go through this again?

Speaker:

I am in agreement that we don't want horses. I'm amazed that you are even thinking about this because there is nowhere for them to come in other than Mt Washington.

Speaker 1:

I have a contrary view to what you are saying. It is true we are here because a developer wants to have access into the park and the exchange is building and upgrading trails, etc. The Master Plan is not clear. Many people have read it. They parks people have a duty to respond to people who want a permit. We're here because Parks wants to clear up the criteria about horse use in the park. I could go into a debate with you, but not here, there's no time. You are here to express your views? You are not the only ones. There are over 22,000 people who have an interest in this place. Not everyone can come to these public meetings. Everyone does not have the same freedom you have. I've been to two of them. I agree that the Courtenay was overwhelmingly against horse use in the park. It is possible that there are people who have a right to see the park in some way that is not damaging to the park. Lets try to take the emotion out of this thing and answer these questions.

Speaker 2:

How many people don't understand what we have said or understand the Master Plan and amendment with regards to horse use? I think you ...

Facilitator:

I think we've reached the point where everyone is arguing with the other and we are no longer having meaningful input into this meeting. We will have one more speaker then close it down for the evening.

Speaker:

The way we see this and would encourage you to see it is a private sector group, due to geography, who has a lot of money and own part of the valley outside of the park and have their own current permit for horse use in the Ursus wants more access into the park. The issue we have as well and believe in that this is a wilderness park and as wilderness we

don't see that how introducing invasive species, plant and animal, is beneficial with the park mandates. The CWR has already experienced issues with wildlife conflicts on their property. This is about destination trail rides that require a lot more infrastructure that a number of horse people have already mentioned. The whole thing stinks of privatization and exclusive use and speaks to elite access to the park. They control the mouth of the bay and the access to the park. None of these criteria go with what is best for the park. Horses are not capable of low impact. They don't fit that picture. I have horses and they are wonderful things. To take away more wilderness is not correct. We want more public access, not more private. The paradox is black and white here. The only way we can cut this thing off is to write to the Minister who makes the final decision. The information goes to these people and we don't know what they will pass on, but the Minister makes the final decision. Not to be rude to the staff here, but parks does not have money, not even for rangers in the parks. Go after the Minister and demand that this stops and that BC Parks gets back the funding it needs to better manage our park system.

Facilitator:

Thank you all for coming and your input this evening. The notes from the meeting will be put up onto the BC Parks website next week.

BC Parks:

I would also like to thank you all for coming down here tonight and your views on this subject.