

# Friends of Strathcona Park Newsletter

## Fall/Winter 2008

Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5 Tel. (250)337-1871

### No Decision on CWR Proposal Yet

There is yet to be a decision on the Amendment to the Park Master Plan regarding expanding the use of horses in Strathcona Park. The Friends were waiting for word of this decision before sending out a newsletter, but we feel we can wait no longer before updating our membership.

Last spring a series of meetings were held to gather input from the public, and the results can be found on BC Parks website at:

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/mgmtplns/strathcona/strath\\_mgmt\\_plan\\_consult\\_information.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/mgmtplns/strathcona/strath_mgmt_plan_consult_information.html)

Approximately 90% of the feedback received was strongly opposed to allowing more horse use in the Park. The only supportive comments came from the Resort, its staff and family members, and the Wilderness Tourism Association.

At the same time as the Master Plan hearings were being held a Level 2 Assessment was conducted to see how the impact of horses could be mitigated in the Bedwell Valley. A consultant walked through the Bedwell Valley having a quick look at conditions there as well as surveying literature on the topic. FOSP felt this was inappropriate at this time as the decision whether or not to allow horses there had not been made. The Assessment was seriously delayed meaning Parks staff had to wait to evaluate it before giving it to the consultant making the recommendation on the Master Plan Amendment. FOSP has always felt that these should be two totally independent processes, and not linked in this way. These should be two processes independent from each other.

The Strathcona Park Advisory Committee (SPPAC) had passed a resolution last year that stated, **“The Committee recommends that, based on the Master Plan and Master Plan Amendment a Park Use Permit cannot be issued for CWR’s proposal. The proposal has limited support from some members, while others are adamantly opposed.”**

FOSP feels the Committee’s advice has been ignored. The next SPPAC meeting is set for Feb 13, 2009 by which time we hope the Level 2 Assessment will have been made public, and that a recommendation is made to clarify the Master Plan to state that horse are not allowed anywhere in the Park other than the Donner Lake and Oshinow Lake areas where they are already permitted.

Related to this issue FOSP filed a Freedom of Information request for copies of relevant documents. FOSP would like to find out what communications have transpired over this issue, and to be sure that proper procedures have been followed and the public’s interests have been protected. The Ministry of Environment estimated we would receive just over 2600 pages of information to be delivered last September. The cost was to be a bit over \$800. We sent the deposit, and are still waiting. There have been a number of delays and now we have been told we will get around 1300 pages of information. This process raises questions of its own.

Again, those interested in this issue will have to wait a while longer.

## **Visitors Center at Paradise Meadows**

After many years of hard work by Steve Smith of the Strathcona Wilderness Institute, Andy Smith of B.C. Parks, Ted Foster from a Rotary Club in Campbell River and others, the Visitors Center is becoming a reality.



The shell of the building was constructed by the Highland Secondary construction class last spring, and transported to the site. Rob Wood designed the completion of the building, Paul Henderson was the contractor who did the work, and as the photo shows, it is something to be proud of.

The building has been completed to lockup and money is continuing to be raised to finish the inside next year. Money is also being raised to finish paying the contractor for this year's work. If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to help with this project, you can do so by completing the form at the end of this newsletter. FOSP contributed \$5,000 last year, of which some went to building a three dimensional map for SWI to use when showing visitors where to go in the Forbidden Plateau Area. SWI is also interested in receiving donations of materials such as rolls of wiring or electrical components suitable for finishing the project. For details of what is required phone Steve Smith at 250-337-8203.

## **The Spine Trail**

Recently a proposal from the Vancouver Island Spine Trail Association, headed by Gil Parker, has come forward to complete a route from Victoria to Cape Scott. Part of this route would use Strathcona Park, and the Friends have been asked for their opinion.

This proposal is in the early planning stages and would involve using existing trails, logging roads and railbeds focusing on accessibility from communities along the way. Outside of the Park it could be a multi use trail in some areas. Inside the Park it would link existing trails, and would not include horses or mountain bikes as they are prohibited in the Park. There could also be a variety of parallel routes in some areas.

The Friends position on this trail is to support it as long as it follows the Master Plan for Strathcona Park, and the existing zoning around trails and Wilderness Conservation areas. That is, it would use existing trails and

not involve horses, bicycles or any form of motorized transport. Guide outfitting would be permissible as it already is, and there must be no commercial facilities built anywhere in the Park.

There are obvious benefits to constructing such a trail, and as long as it doesn't infringe on park values in Strathcona Park, the Friends can support it.

### **A Generous Donation**

During the last year an anonymous donor has given the Friends \$10,000 to use as we see fit. We are extremely thankful, and are waiting to see how various events unfold before deciding on how to use the money.

### **Park Updates**

**The Marmot Recovery Project** has had a very successful year with the introduction of 59 marmots into the wilderness, mostly in Strathcona Park near Greig Ridge. Next year's plans are to introduce 70 more. Previously released marmots have started to breed.

This project is not without controversy, as some object to the semi-permanent camps created to oversee the marmots. In future these camps will not be used, and scientists will occupy camps for a few days at a time. Helicopter flights into the Park will still be required, and attempts will be made to limit their number.

Future sites for marmot reintroduction include Mount Alexandra, Flower Ridge, the Upper Drinkwater Valley, another site north of Greig Ridge and in the Beaufort Mountains outside of the park.

The **North Vancouver Island Mine** is

closing due to low mineral prices. Around the mine last year there was storm damage to the Tennant Lake trail, a second diversion ditch has been started, and the new gate controlling access to the mine site has not worked properly. Remember the public has access through the mine site to reach to Phillips Ridge and Upper Myra Falls trails.

Some work was done on new boardwalks last summer in the **Battleship Lake/Lake Helen McKenzie** area. There are limited funds for trail work, and much remains to be done, especially on the Bedwell Trail, Elk River and Crest Mountain trails. A First Nations team did clear windfalls on the Della Falls trail, but the washed out bridge still needs replacing. Climate change certainly is having an impact in the Park.

In the **Wood Mountain/Mount Becher** area there has been a problem with ATV's entering the Park and causing significant damage to sensitive areas. Park staff have been patrolling the area with one person caught and fined. Articles in the local papers also attempted to educate the public about this problem. Anyone finding ATV's in the Park is encouraged to take photographs, try to obtain license numbers of the intruder's vehicle and report the incident to Park staff.

Construction in the Mount Washington area outside the Park has been causing water quality problems in the **Paradise Meadows** area. Mount Washington's Local Area Plan lays out the rules and regulations to prevent this, and the problem has been reported to Parks. FOSP hopes this situation can be rectified.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Last June the Friends had their Annual General Meeting at the Driftwood Group Campground in Strathcona Park. It was well attended, and a lively discussion was held over the CWR

proposal.

Future directions were contemplated and plans made for continuing our work.

After the AGM most members hiked to Upper Myra Falls. Everyone had a good time chatting with each other as we walked through the beautiful forest.

Later we had sockeye salmon barbequed by Marlene Smith with a huge selection of other people's contributions. Music and singing around the fire completed the

evening.

The consensus is we should do the same again in 2009 so we have booked the same site for June 19-21. Please put this on your new 2009 calendar, and join us for our 4th annual gathering.

We'll send out more information in the spring.

The Friends of Strathcona Park would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year. Thank you for your continued support, and we hope you will renew your membership by filling out the following form.

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**Membership Renewal Form**  
**Thank you for renewing**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax** \_\_\_\_\_

**e-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership (suggested \$10 per year)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation to FOSP (tax receipts for donations \$20 or more)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation to Strathcona Wilderness Institute for Visitor Center**  
**(tax receipts issued for donations \$20 or more)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments**

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