

# Friends of Strathcona Park Newsletter - Spring 2010

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[www.friendsofstrathcona.org](http://www.friendsofstrathcona.org)

## Master Plan Amendment Update

FOSP received a letter from BC Parks dated April 21<sup>st</sup>, along with a copy of the criteria used for evaluating horse use in the Park. To summarize, the Master Plan Amendment has been signed by Minister Penner including the following criteria for horse use in Strathcona Park:

- only allowed where appropriate in the Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment and Wilderness Recreation zones.
- on existing old road beds and associated corridors defined as the linear length where a road was previously developed.
- road corridors with existing vehicle use or significant hiker use are not considered.
- potential horse trails will be assessed for site conditions and may require reconstruction or rerouting, possibly outside of road's area of disturbance.
- will be low likelihood of conflict with existing use, with wildlife populations that are sensitive to horse presence, of impacts to sensitive habitat/ecosystems.
- subject to BC Parks Facility Standards for horse trails and BC Parks Impact Assessment process
- reduce possibility of introducing invasive/non-native species.

(Note – this is a summary, for complete wording check BC Parks website at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpags/strath/#Management>)

The specific areas being considered for horse use are the Elk River Power line corridor (11 km), Oshinow Lake (3.5 km), Divers/Rossitor Lake access (3.5 km), Donner and Kunlin Lake areas ( 22 km), Oshinow Lake (3.8 km), Toy Junior/June Lakes (8 km), and Bedwell Valley (12.5 km). Thankfully, the Della Falls trail has been left out due to potential hiker conflicts and inadequate substrate on the old road bed.

It is interesting to note that some of these areas have been previously available for horse use, but were never used because they are too remote, overgrown, and not long enough to justify hauling such a distance. It is the Friends opinion that including these areas other than the Bedwell is merely a sop to justify Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge's application.

The next step is for Parks to adjudicate the Lodge's permit

## Annual General Meeting

**June 11 - 13**  
**Driftwood Bay Group Campground**  
**Buttle Lake Narrows**  
**Free Camping**  
**Meeting time June 12, 10 a.m.**  
**BBQ dinner 6 p.m.**

## Public Meeting

**Thursday, May20**  
**7 - 9 p.m.**  
**Zocalo Cafe on 5th St.**  
**Courtenay**

**Ric Searle 15 min. video of Strathcona**  
**Park**  
**Action Plans and trail building proposals**  
**Discussion and feedback.**

application, and most likely allow it to proceed. This, in spite of overwhelming public pressure to keep horses out of new areas of the Park. This is a shameful disregard for public opinion, and certainly a black day for public process.

What should we do now? This will be one of several topics for our upcoming Annual General Meeting, June 12. Details appear elsewhere in the newsletter.

## Friends Work to Take Back the Park

It has been a very frustrating time for anyone watching the effects of cutbacks to Parks funding over the last decade. Bridges lie collapsed, boardwalks are rotting, trails are washed out and overgrown. Many trails in Strathcona are now closed to the public, due to safety concerns. These include Upper Myra, the Bedwell

Valley, the Drinkwater trail to Della Falls and Crest Creek. The King's Peak Trail and the Elk River Trail have been terribly eroded by rushing creeks and have not been repaired.

Our organization is not going to wait any longer for government to fulfill its responsibility for funding and for safety. We are going to Take Back the Park. Our program began last year with our successful efforts to rebuild the Gayle McGee Bridge over the Bedwell River.

This spring and summer we hope to begin repairs to some of the Park's battered trails beginning with a project at Crest Creek, and moving on to the Bedwell and perhaps other trails as well. **We need your help!**

We are looking for people who are moderately fit to come with us into the Park for a few days at a time over the summer. People are required to bring everything they need for their own care – tents, sleeping gear, food and cooking equipment, and appropriate clothing. We will provide the trail-building equipment, and for those coming into the Bedwell, will provide water transportation in and out from Tofino. Car pools will be arranged depending on numbers.

The Crest Creek project will take place on June 19th, and the Bedwell project will be August 14th – 18th. If you would like to join us in our trail-building adventures, we would love to hear from you. The more people who sign on, the more work we can accomplish.

If you would like to help out, contact Bob St. John at 250-890-0780 (email [rwstjohn@gmail.com](mailto:rwstjohn@gmail.com)) or Kel Kelly at 250 337 8348 (email [kelkelly55@yahoo.ca](mailto:kelkelly55@yahoo.ca)). We look forward to hearing from you soon!

### **SPPAC Update**

There was a Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup>. It was Gary Schaan and David Vincent's last meeting as both have served for seven years on the committee. The Friends would like to thank them for the hours and hours of time they have devoted to Strathcona Park. Gary served as chair for the last few years, and David has a long history going right back to the building of the Gayle McGee bridge which he designed.

Tawney Lem from Port Alberni is SPPAC's new chair person, and FOSP wishes her a successful term, hopefully devoid of the controversy of the last few years.

SPPAC needs 2 – 3 new members, and the Friends would

like to encourage people to apply. The commitment is about 3 meetings a year, usually held at Rath Trevor Beach Park. These are voluntary positions, but expenses are covered. The terms of reference are available on BC Parks website at [http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/SPPAC/terms\\_of\\_reference.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/SPPAC/terms_of_reference.pdf)

Meetings normally occur on Friday nights from 6 – 10 p.m. so those working can attend.

Specific skills are useful to the committee, but there is room for members without those talents. There is a need for some representation from the southern region of the Island. If you love Strathcona Park, please consider submitting your application to either:

Andy Smith at [Andy.Smith@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Andy.Smith@gov.bc.ca) or  
Tawney Lem at [tlem@tawneylem.com](mailto:tlem@tawneylem.com)

### ***Centennial Expedition***

SPPAC supports Phillip Stone's Centennial Expedition which is celebrating the 100 year anniversary of the Price Ellison Expedition traversing the park to be in 1910. This expedition is tracing the steps of the first one this summer. Details can be found at [www.sce2010.ca/](http://www.sce2010.ca/). One goal of the expedition is to leave a legacy to the park, so donations to the event are requested. Another is to produce a documentary film of the event. Phillip has sent an invitation to Friends members to take part. There is a cost of \$25 per day to cover transportation and food. This is a bargain considering the usual fees applied to expeditions of this type.

### ***North Vancouver Island Mine***

The North Vancouver Island Mine in Strathcona Westmin Park has submitted their new closure plan. Hopefully this will be available for the public to peruse. In addition the three Park Use Permits the mine operates under are up for review in 2012. Power supply issues are still being considered including raising the levels on Jim Mitchell Lake and Thelwood Lake, and connecting to BC Hydro's grid. This was a hot issue a few years ago, and will be so again if this proposal proceeds.

BC Hydro is removing the Heber diversion and restoring the impacted area, hopefully by the end of 2010. Look for activity this spring and summer as work begins.

### ***Vancouver Island Marmots***

Between 75 and 100 marmots will be reintroduced in 13 groups into the park and on the Clayoquot Plateau this summer. This will involve some helicopter trips into the park, but fewer than in previous years.

### ***Della Falls Trail***

It is possible the washed out bridge on the Della Falls trail will be replaced this summer, possibly with a cable crossing. The Upper Myra Falls trail should also be repaired this summer. FOSP is planning on rerouting the Crest Mountain trail to avoid the damaged bridge crossing. (details appear above) In addition grants have been applied for to do work in other areas of the Park since the Ministry has no money to spend. Credit is due to Parks' staff for exploring alternative methods of completing needed work.

The Wolf Lake fire did not destroy the big trees in the valley bottom. Illegal snowmobile use in the Park this winter remains a problem as there are no resources to enforce the regulations. This becomes a bigger problem after Mount Washington Resort closes for the season.

Sadly, Dick Heath, BC Parks Regional Manager recently passed away. Dick was the staff person to which SPPAC reported. He was very well liked by Parks staff, and highly respected. The new Regional Manager is Don Cadden

### **AGM**

By popular request our Annual General Meeting is being held from June 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> at the Driftwood Bay Group Campground at Buttle Narrows in the Park. Past gatherings have proved to be a good combination

of fun and a bit of business. The format will be the same. If you've missed past meetings or gatherings, make sure you catch this one!

Guests are welcome to camp Friday night. The AGM will commence at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning. Following lunch we will go on a hike somewhere in the park. The Friends will supply salmon for a barbeque and people can potluck the rest. The evening will include music around the fire. On Sunday morning we usually leave around noon.

The cost of the campsite is paid for by FOSP as in the past. A special reason for coming this year is it is Marlene Smith's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Obviously, this is a significant milestone for Marlene, and it would be nice for many old "Friends" to come and wish her well in her senior years. We hope to see you at this time. Please indicate whether or not you are coming on the form at the end of the newsletter, so we have enough salmon for all.

### **SWI**

The Strathcona Wilderness Institute will be operating out of its new Visitors Center at the Paradise Meadows trail head this summer. Steve Smith has put about 14 years of effort into bringing this about. Andy Smith of BC Parks has also been instrumental in bringing this project to completion. There have been many donors including the Friends who have contributed money and effort over the years. Please check out SWI's website at [www.strathconapark.org](http://www.strathconapark.org) for details about their programs and how to donate towards their activities. The total budget for both building and new trails was about \$800,000.

### **FOI Update**

FOSP has filed a total of 3 Freedom of Information requests over the last few years to obtain any information we could about the decision making process regarding the Master Plan Amendment process and the CWR application. The first request yielded 1313 pages, the second 392 and the third about 250. Results of the first two were reported in previous newsletters.

The third request shows the word-smithing taking place in phrasing the Master Plan Amendment to make it very clear under what conditions and where horses would be allowed in the Park. Criteria seem to be designed to facilitate the application to take



**The master chef prepares the salmon at last year's AGM.**

horses up the Bedwell Valley.

At first all areas with old roads were looked at, then the list pared down as criteria were developed. Criteria over old road beds were carefully worded to include "associated road corridors" then wording was added to allow "areas of trail construction ...outside the old road's area of disturbance" so areas within the Bedwell Valley where the old roadbed has been washed away would not disqualify horse use.

The Friends opinion for a long time has been that this whole process was flawed, that public input was a sham, and that the decision to allow horses into the Bedwell was made a long time ago. Next steps will be on the agenda for the AGM. We welcome your input and involvement in this issue.

**Strathcona Park Public Meeting**

Friends of Strathcona Park (FOSP) will hold a public meeting on Thursday, May 20, to discuss strategies for restoring the Strathcona Park Master Plan to its original status. The meeting will take place at the Zocalo Cafe on 5th street in Courtenay, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

The Master Plan, a document which has been in place since 1993, was recently altered by the government to allow commercial horse use in Strathcona Park. The Friends contend that a high impact commercial horse operation doesn't belong in a fragile rain forest valley

in the park. Karl Stevenson, a spokesperson for FOSP, said "The emphasis of the meeting will be on concrete actions we can take to persuade the government to reverse what we're convinced is a very bad move for Strathcona. The Master Plan was a good document, it was created by the public, it's worked well for years, and it's not right for the government to suddenly change it, just because some rich guy wants to run a commercial operation in our park".

The upcoming meeting, Stevenson said, is intended to give FOSP some indication of how much public support there is for protecting the park, and also to gather suggestions and help from members of the public. Everyone is welcome. He said FOSP would particularly like to see younger faces, and would very much like to hear younger viewpoints. He also thanked the Zocalo Cafe for hosting the meeting. "Our options are clear," Stevenson said, "we can sit back and let this government trash the park for commercial gain, as governments have always done, or we can try to convince the government to honour the Master Plan, and start treating the park like a park".

The meeting will feature a 15 minute video on Strathcona Park, followed by a short talk on park history. Several planned actions will then be presented by FOSP, and the remainder of the meeting will be reserved for public discussion, thoughts, and suggestions. If support warrants it, more meetings will be held, focussing on various possible forms of concrete action.

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**FOSP Membership Form**  
**Thank you for renewing.**

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

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

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

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

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

**I will be attending the AGM on June 11 - 13**    **Yes** \_\_\_\_\_    **No** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**send to: Friends of Strathcona Park, P.O. Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5**