

Friends of Strathcona Park
Newsletter - Spring 2011
Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5
www.friendsofstrathcona.org

Update on CWR Application

At the time of publication BC Parks have informed FOSP that Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's proposal to take horses into the Bedwell Valley is going to be approved. So far the actual Park Use Permit has not been signed off as detailed conditions are being worked out with Park's staff. The recent amending of Strathcona's Park Master Plan has made this possible. You will read more detail in the rest of the newsletter. FOSP has not given up its opposition to what we consider commercialization of a public park.

CWR Permit and FOI

Through the 2201 pages of Freedom of Information material we have received it is clear that a) Parks staff initially entertained the application by Clayoquot Wilderness Resorts(CWR) to take horses up the Bedwell Valley and into Strathcona Park because of the benefits offered – trail repair, bridge building, and liability coverage b) with respect to the CWR application, Parks staff was instructed by ADM Nancy Wilkin to “make it happen” and the means was always towards this end and c) the decision to amend the Master Plan (MP) was not made (as stated by Parks) because of lack of clarity in the MP but because Friends and the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee (SPPAC) said the MP did not, by clear implication, allow horse use up the Bedwell and into Strathcona Park. The MP was amended, not to achieve



Map of last year's trail building project in the Bedwell Valley. This year's proposal is to extend it to connect with the original route and continue up the valley. If you'd like to be involved, there is more information on page 2

clarity but to “make it happen” for the CWR application. Otherwise the BUFO Report recommendations would have been considered and applied in the wording of the final MP Amendment – instead of the “wordsmithing” of the amendment to ensure that the Bedwell situation (eroded roadway and long sections of missing road) would be covered.

The FOI material confirms our analysis and shows Parks' lack of respect for real public process and their inability to listen to the over 90% of the public responses which said “NO” to increased horse use in the Park. Instead the government elected to “mitigate” any objections

in order to manufacture consent, the public was asked to come up with a “show stopper”. Whenever they did Parks mitigated the point. To challenge the issuance of this PUP, the Friends have hired legal counsel. We have already received some WCEL assistance with legal start-up costs, but will need your support to finance this legal action

Volunteers Wanted for Bedwell Centennial Trail in August

We have decided to complete the Bedwell River "Source to Mouth" (Alpine to Ocean) Trail as our Strathcona Park Centennial Project. The first phase of this project was finished 2 years ago when volunteers repaired the Gayle McGee Bridge over the Bedwell River. The second phase was completed last year when 20 volunteers built the trail along the river as far as Sam Craig Creek. This year, with a bit of luck and enough volunteers, we intend to finish the remaining section, from Sam Craig Creek to Bedwell Lake. We need your help for this!

We believe that if we can gather 40 volunteers who are willing to donate 5 consecutive days of their time in the last 2 weeks of August (exact dates to be decided), we'll complete the project and have a lot of fun in the process. The more volunteers the better, so we're asking people to consult their calendars and plan to take part.

The project will probably involve 2 crews, one going in from the mouth of the Bedwell River on the west coast of Vancouver Island and the other working from the east coast, via Bedwell Lake. The trail will be completed where everyone comes together in the middle. All ages are welcome, with the proviso that a certain level of physical fitness

is necessary, because at this stage it takes at least one day to hike to where work starts at either end.

Some mention must be made of the fact that, although we believe that building the centennial trail is a worthwhile project in its own right, it's also intended as a political gesture, which will be nothing new in the history of Strathcona Park. It must also be said that the trail will be a very low-impact trail, and will be completely in keeping with the philosophical goals for the park as outlined in the Strathcona Park Master Plan.

As most people know, the government has been trying for years to allow one of their political friends into the Bedwell Valley to conduct horse tours. To permit this they have amended the Master Plan. Our dream for the park seems to be in direct opposition to government plans, which seem to centre on commercialization and privatization. With these differences in park philosophy coming to a head, the government may not view our Centennial Project with favour.

We believe the political and ideological story which is currently being played out in the Bedwell is extremely important, not only for Strathcona Park, but for the future of our entire provincial park system. The Bedwell Centennial Trail is intended to show that it's neither necessary nor desirable for the government to donate pieces of our provincial parks to their commercial and political buddies in order to provide trails and facilities for our parks. Not only are volunteers more than capable of providing and maintaining facilities such as park trails, (as they've frequently done in the past) but people genuinely enjoy doing so, and develop an

enriched sense of stewardship as well as many other side benefits as a result.

Actions speak louder than words. So far, thousands of people have used thousands of words, with absolutely no discernible effect on the government. We believe it's time to demonstrate, in a concrete and positive way, that we **care** about Strathcona Park, and we're willing to work actively and constructively to prevent the Bedwell Valley being given to friends of the government to satisfy intrusive commercial desires.

Plan to join us in the Bedwell in August. We offer rewarding work, good conversation, and lots of fun. We'll provide more info as it becomes available, but if you already know you're interested and want to be kept informed, please tell us. If you are interested in joining us in this project please immediately contact Bob St. John at bobincomox@gmail.com or Kel Kelly at kelkelly55@yahoo.ca to register or seek more information. The sooner we know you are interested, the better we can plan for the project.

FOSP Outreach and Lobbying By Marlene Smith

The FOSP directors have been busy this year. Our first meeting took place on February 10 with the Green party. Huddled together in Bob's van he (Bob) drove Karl, Ken and Marlene to Victoria, to meet with Jane Sterk. Walking into her tiny office, bulging with desks, information and paperwork was "déjà vu" from 25 years ago when we were lobbying the NDP for help to save Strathcona! Jane was easy going and said she has the Minister's ear even less than we! We worked through our prepared agenda introducing who we are, our history going back to our formation in 1986, how we were formed to protect the Park from mining, what we had done (blockade and many

other things) what happened as a result of the blockade (creation of the Masterplan and SPPAC) and the reason for SPPAC, which is to represent the public and avoid future conflict.

We explained how the Masterplan was amended to accommodate CWR's Park Use Permit application for private horse guiding in the park. We tried to explain how the current issue developed and what we had tried to do to change that, how SPPAC and the public were against the MP change and the issuing of the permit and how we all have been ignored. Jane was very supportive and reiterated that she has NO influence on the government. She promised to write a letter to the Minister and invited us back to discuss how this issue could be resolved.

Bob and Karl followed up on her invitation and did a TV interview with her on February 25 (see our website for this interview)

On Valentines Day, February 14 Bob, Karl and Ken set off for Victoria once again to meet this time with the NDP MLA's, Claire Trevena, Scott Fraser and Rob Fleming. They tried to follow the same format as with the Green party and got involved in further conversation. The NDP was supportive and promised to help us.

On February 24 Jennifer Pass and Marlene Smith drove north to meet with Colin Gabelmann, former Attorney General in the NDP government who was also very supportive of the Strathcona Park issues 23 years ago.

Finally, on April 4 Bob's trusty van took Ken and Marlene to Victoria again to meet with the

latest Minister of Environment, Dr. Terry Lake, another “déjà vu” experience. Memories of the multiple visits to the ever changing Ministers responsible for parks over the last 25 years created a collage in my mind! I think I only missed 2 ministers in that time period, Penner and Coel! We tried to follow the same lobbying format and got off track early on in the conversation; my eyes riveted on the large horse picture in the office; we don’t stand a chance here! Don Cadden was present on speakerphone and revealed how SPPAC was indeed against and the MP change and the permit issuing. However their objections were mitigated so it was now justified to issue the permit! I had a last ditch effort to try to get Dr Lake to listen to us by reminding him that we were both veterinarians! NO luck folks! Manufacturing consent is where it is at! BC Parks and CWR held their public meetings and claimed they had successfully mitigated all the problems and objections anyone had with private horse guiding permits and building private commercial infrastructure in our park!

FOSP Website and Facebook Group

Visit the Friends website at friendsofstrathcona.org for information on upcoming events. The website's Blog page has many examples of excellent letters to inspire you to write your own. The Letters Help page has several lists of email addresses to send your letter to, including local papers and politicians.

Our Facebook Group is linked to from our website, or google 'friends of strathcona park facebook'. We started the group last fall by



Citizen's response

The blockade site where the first arrests were made in the defense of Strathcona Park.

inviting participants from last year's trail building parties. Today we have over 160 Facebook members whom we hope to draw upon for our upcoming trail building this summer. You need not be Facebook member to view the site, but it is free to join and to participate in.

100 Years of Strathcona and BC Park; 25 years of FOSP.

Yes, it is hard to believe that we have been a part of the chequered history of Strathcona Park, one quarter of its existence to be precise!

It all started in 1986 when Jim Boulding from Strathcona Park Lodge asked me (Marlene Smith) to take over his fight to save Strathcona Park from being sold out to commercial



An editorial cartoon from the 1980's. Marlene's deja vu experience. The original 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan and SP-PAC came out of this conflict.

industry. It was the document called the Wilderness Mosaic that led to the decision to down grade Strathcona and many other BC Parks to accommodate mining and logging. It was legal trouble the government found themselves in as a result of the Tenner Mine in Wells Gray Park that led to setting a legal precedent. Interestingly enough, now 25 years later the current Minister of Environment, Terry Lake, has his stomping grounds in that very same Wells Gray Park! Is history repeating itself?

In spite of numerous meetings, lobbying, letters, and questions in the legislature, the government still went ahead and issued a Park Use Permit to Cream Silver and other mining companies to do exploratory drilling in Strathcona Park. The Friends were ready but still got caught off guard. Fortunately the Stevenson family started the blockade. It did not take long before we all joined in for three months in the middle of the winter of 1988. Kel Kelly, Carol Latter and Gordon Cyr made history by being the first Canadians to get arrested for defending a public park! I don't think Ruth Masters missed one arrest and blew O Canada on her harmonica for all of them!

The Friends provided the government with an alternate legal opinion showing the government's mistake in concluding that the Tenner decision would stand in Strathcona! After 64 arrests, court cases and SLAPP suites, Strathcona Park was reinstated as a Class A "Statute" park. The first Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee was formed, which created the Masterplan. The Plan was meant to be a document to guide parks staff on making decisions for the park. It was created with extensive public input and seen as "the bible" for Strathcona Park (until recently). The Strathcona Public Advisory Committee's function was to advise parks staff on issues and permits for Strathcona Park in order to avoid similar conflicts as that which occurred in the late eighties.

Over the years there have been a few more conflicts FOSP has engaged in with BC Parks. One was the TimberWest road built in the Park along the shores of Buttle Lake. That resulted in a court case where government's lack of consultation was criticised. Another was the attempt by the mine to siphon water

from Greenview and Carwithen Lakes to increase power supply for the mine. Joyce Murray, Minister at the time, wisely denied this application.

Things seemed to be OK for Strathcona and other BC Parks, until CWR decided that they wanted to expand their commercial operation into Strathcona Park. The initial request for a Park use Permit was turned down as it was seen to be incongruent with the Masterplan. The Wilderness Tourism Association did some slick lobbying through Ric Careless and Nancy Wilkin (ADM BC Parks at the time) and the WTA got a big foot in the door! CWR and Strathcona Park Lodge (yes the very same lodge were it all started for us!) are both big players in the WTA. The “corporate” (read government) appetite changed from taking care of the public trust (our park) to being interested in down loading trail repair, maintenance and liability to CWR! The resort promised to repair the trail and bridges and take on future maintenance. This can easily run into ½ million dollars! This offer was too attractive to resist, so any objections, reasons or whatever the public or SPPAC had against the issuing of the CWR PUP were “mitigated”. Consent was manufactured this way by BC Parks staff to change the Masterplan to enable the CWR permit application (or as Nancy Wilkin called it “make it happen!”). It was up to the public to come up with a “show stopper”!

And so we are now “celebrating” Strathcona’s first centennial with the first Park Use Permit for commercial horse guiding and the first commercial infrastructures (tent platforms initially and who knows what will follow). The Masterplan and its contents are no longer worth the paper it is written on. It is just “guiding principles” the government can ignore if they wish! Strathcona Park has fallen back again into the abusive situation we pulled it out of 25 years ago! We then had to protect the park from

industrial mining; now it is the Recreation Industry that wants to exploit our park! That is a sad start for the next 100 years to come!

Strathcona Park 100 years....what are we celebrating anyway?

Mining in Bedwell Valley

Strathcona Park was established in 1910. In 1913 the Ptarmigan mine was opened inside Strathcona Park in the Bear River valley. The river was renamed the Bedwell River in 1922.

The Ptarmigan Mine was financed by Finbury Pavement House of London England. The company was an organization promoted by the Earl of Denbigh, who authorized an expenditure of about \$40,000 for building a road, bridges, and development work on the claims. The ore sampling indicated silver and gold.

In 1913 a wagon road was constructed from the tidewater for a distance of 7 ½ miles. The road consisted of 25 bridges with several large crossings to be completed. A tunnel was started at the mine. In 1914 the road was completed to the 7-mile post including a 73-foot truss bridge made of timber. A horse trail was completed to the 9-mile post near the mine site.

Then WW1 broke out. The men downed tools and enlisted, leaving everything where it lay. When the few survivors returned in 1919 the road had been damaged by weather so that it was unfit for even light loads. The camp was in disrepair. Equipment including dynamite was ruined because it had been left exposed to the weather.

The mine did eventually open again and operated until winter 1922/1923. Heavy snow load again destroyed several bridges and high water during the freshet severely damaged the road and washed away sections of plank road. Operations did not resume in 1923.

Ptarmigan mine was just one of several mines opened in the Bedwell Valley. Mining activity waxed and waned with the economy. Usually the mines would shut down due to difficulty of access exacerbated by road and bridge washouts even though there were promising assays in some explorations.

Government money was used to maintain the road. In 1930 The Department of Mines repaired the lower end of the trail and restored some of the bridges to again make the Bedwell Valley accessible for prospecting and operating.

References

Annual Report Minister of Mines,
1913,1914, 1919, 1922, 1926, 1930

AGM - Help us to celebrate 25 years of FOSP and 100 years of Starthcona Park!

The Friends Annual General Meeting is set for June 24-26 at the group campground at Driftwood Bay, Buttle Narrows in Strathcona Park. Its format will be similar to that of previous years. People are welcome to arrive Friday night and camp with the rest of us.

The actual meeting will take place at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 25th at the campground. It will finish by 12 noon, then after lunch we will go on a hike somewhere nearby. Saturday night there will be a potluck feast with wild salmon provided by FOSP. All you have to bring is something to complement the main dish and your utensils.

On Saturday evening there will be music around the fire, so if you have an instrument please bring it along. On Sunday morning we will clean up and leave by noon.

We really hope you can join us for another year of celebrating our successes, hearing reports of our activities and determining plans for the following year. One issue that has cropped up this year is the increase in the cost for reserving the group campsite. As a result we will be happy to receive any donations to help offset this cost. However, this is not mandatory as it is more important members join us than to offset the cost of the camp.

Fundraising appeal

The Friends have been very active over the last year. We worked on constructing a bypass to open the Crest Mountain Trail, completed a significant portion of our "Centennial Trail" in the Bedwell Valley, travelled to Victoria a number of times for interviews and to lobby the new Minister of the Environment, made presentations to a large number of other sympathetic groups, and the big expense was paying \$3000 towards hiring a lawyer to work with us on the CWR application.

Plans for the next year include further work on the Centennial Trail and pursuing our legal action to attempt to quash the Park Use Permit. Who can tell what other projects and expenses we will incur. Many members already give generously, more than the \$10 annual membership fee we charge. We hope more of you will do the same to help us carry on the struggle to protect Strathcona Park and keep it public. Please consider adding more to your membership contribution when you complete

your membership renewal form. Remember we are a registered charity and will give you a tax receipt for any donation over \$25.

Appeal for help

As you have read your Board of Directors have been very active; applying for and analyzing the FOI disclosures, meeting with government officials, assisting in legal action, assessing, planning and building trails, writing articles for the media, putting newsletters together, organising the AGM , lobbying government and SPPAC, attending SPPAC meetings, researching information and facts, social media and website development, working with the youth etc., etc. We welcome new members to our

board. Please send a note to John Milne at jsmilne@telus.ca. if you are interested in attending directors' meetings. Our board has grown significantly over the last few years, and there is always something new members can do.

We can put you to work to become a part of the legacy of Strathcona Park for the next 100 years!

Parking fee cancellation

Just before this newsletter went to press, Christy Clark (not the Minister in charge of Parks) announced the cancellation of the very unpopular parking charge at many provincial parks. There is also a \$500,000 fund now available for park projects, but we have no details about how to apply or criteria for projects yet.

FOSP Membership Form Thank you for renewing.	
Name _____	
Address _____	
City _____	Postal Code _____
Phone _____	alternate phone (cell) _____
e-mail _____	
Membership (suggested \$10 per year) _____	
Donation (tax receipts for anything over \$25. _____	
Number of People coming to AGM (June 24-26 _____	
Would like to take part in trail building project _____	
Comments _____	
send to: Friends of Strathcona Park, P.O. Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5	