

Friends of Strathcona Park Newsletter - Spring 2015

Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5
www.friendsofstrathcona.org

Alpine to Ocean Adventure

The Friends of Strathcona Park will be hosting a hike for the public through the beautiful Bedwell Valley this summer. The hike, which will take five days and four nights, will follow a wild route through the valley which was discovered by the Friends several years ago. The hike will take place in the last week of July or the first week of August. Exact dates are yet to be determined.



“This is one of only three valleys within the park that go from the alpine all the way out to the ocean”, says Kel Kelly, a director with the Friends.

“The other two valleys, the Megin and the Moyeha, are much more difficult to access than the Bedwell.”

The hike will require two groups, one coming down the valley from Bedwell Lake and another coming up from the Pacific, launching at Tofino. The groups will meet halfway, exchanging car keys to allow everyone to get back home. “We’ve done this trip several times already”, says Kelly, “and it’s always fun when the two groups meet and share stories of their adventures going up and down.”

The Bedwell route goes through a variety of fascinating ecosystems, including alpine meadows, a rare high elevation maple forest, old growth cedar and fir groves and

Camping on the gravel bar below Big Interior Mountain on the Bedwell River. (from FOSP website)

past several magnificent waterfalls. The river itself is never far away. Swimming at the end of a hot day of hiking is an exhilaration beyond description. Hikes with the Friends are renowned for their camaraderie and fun.

There are still spaces available. Hikers must be experienced and fit and are expected to carry everything they need for shelter, food, clothing and comfort in their backpack. The trip, which usually takes four days, has been extended to five

**Annual General Meeting
Sunday, June 21, 2015
2 - 4 p.m.
location - Merville
Details on the next page.**

to allow more time for enjoying the scenery. Participants will be asked to cover the costs of transportation, including the water taxi in and out of Tofino.

“We encourage anyone who is fit and eager to come with us to see one of the most beautiful places on the planet”, says Kelly. For more information, he can be reached at 778 992 0246 or at kelkelly55@yahoo.ca.

Annual General Meeting

This year's Friends of Strathcona Park AGM will be held on Sunday, June 21 from 2 to 4 p.m. It will be at John and Jennifer Milne's house in Merville at 1169 Williams Beach Road. Their phone number is 250-337-8203.

To get there you can find Williams Beach Road about 1 1/2 km north of the Merville Store. Head down the road towards the ocean for a bit less than a kilometre. It is the first house past Hecker Road on the right. It is best to park in the field and there will be a sign there to show the entrance.

The agenda will include the usual reports as well as future projects for the Friends and updates we will have on Park issues.

Please consider joining us as a new director as we could use some new people to supplement those of us who have been serving for a while, or just come to find out what is going on and help with your opinions and thoughts.

Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee

Over the last while there has been a major change in the members of the SPPAC committee. Several members who have

served for a while have retired as their maximum terms were up. These members were Peggy Carswell, Nick Page, David Campbell, Tawney Lem (chair) Mick Taylor and Erik Holbek. These members were steadfast in their stand against the CWR proposal which FOSP had been opposing for over ten years.

New members are Jan Hesseling, Paolo Tancon, Sandra Borton, Kevin McPhedran, and Greg Johnson. FOSP wishes them well in their deliberations and hopes they are as effective and perceptive as the retirees.

It should be added that Philip Stone is now the chair even though his term was also up. He is providing continuity between the old committee and the new. Other members who have joined SPPAC in the last few years are Hardolph Wastenays, Alison Mewett and Darren Saare.

The next SPPAC meeting is scheduled for June 19th, 6 - 10 p.m. (just before our AGM). It takes place in a building at the works yard in Miracle Beach Park and is open to the public. You are welcome to attend to find out the latest in what's happening in the Park.

Myra Falls Mine

As you probably know the mine in the Park is temporarily shutting down. This came as a big surprise to all of us. There have been big changes in the management at the mine recently and what the connection is, if any, is unknown.

Last year the mine manager, Robert Behrendt and environmental manager, Ivor McWilliams both retired. Since then Robert was replaced

by a temporary manager, then a permanent one, Shannon Campbell. Ivor's replacement is Nicole Pesonen. There have been a total of 12 or 13 other management changes in senior staff in the last while. What effect this will have on Park issues is anyone's guess. We'll have to wait and see.

With the change in management there is a new look being taken at the mine's closure plan. Evidently, there is about 13 years worth of ore left. In the past the amount of life left in the mine has changed as new sources of ore have been found, so the 13 year estimate could certainly change. At some point when the closure plan is ready there is supposed to be a chance for public input. This will be announced when it is happening.

Other issues at the mine concern sources of clean fill, diesel generation and power supply, the changes to the dam at Jim Mitchell Lake, general site cleanup and moving the trail head to Upper Myra Falls. For more detail please consult the SPPAC minutes at:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/strathwk.html>

Wood Mountain Park

Wood Mountain is the old ski hill on Mount Becher through which hikers access Strathcona Park and the Forbidden Plateau. As you know the ski development fell into disrepair and has been a huge environmental mess for years. Wood Mountain Park has been offered as Treaty Settlement Land and will eventually be transferred to the Komox Band. Recently the Comox Regional District has been trying to organize an effort to clean up the ruins and it seems as if some local volunteers are about to come forward to clean up the mess. Hopefully this situation can be resolved before too long.

Access to Strathcona Park through this area has been negotiated as part of the Treaty Settlement process, so this should not be a problem in the future.

Backcountry Park Facility Operator

A new ten year contract has been awarded to Strategic Natural Resources Consultants who have taken over from the previous contractor in the Park, so expect to see some new faces there this summer. This same contractor has prepared a plan for a new group campground at Croteau Lake consisting of 10 - 12 tent platforms, a seasonal shelter, food cache, wastewater facilities and composting toilet.

Composting Toilets

Andy Smith has been researching a new type of toilet for the alpine areas in the Park. These designs separate liquids from solids, use worms and should save costs in reducing the need to helicopter out waste. Two toilets should shortly be installed, one at Croteau Lake, the other at Bedwell Lake.

CWR's Park Use Permit.

Parks have received the proposal from Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge for building their horse trail and facilities in the Bedwell Valley. This is the proposal the FOSP have fought for over ten years and lost in a disappointing judicial review in court. The proposal was sent back for revision and has been resubmitted. FOSP has been promised a copy which we are still waiting for. When we receive it, we hope to analyze it and check out what is going on when our hike is conducted later in the summer.

Strathcona Wilderness Institute and the Fire Signs

Recently FOSP donated \$2100 to help hire a student for the summer. This student will be working on no trace camping workshops and other educational initiatives. FOSP felt this was a good use of the money as SWI can use our donation to get more grants.

Last year a committee from FOSP designed interpretive signs with the message of preventing people lighting fires in the alpine areas of the Park. This initiative received a lot of positive feedback. BC Parks gave FOSP \$2500 to complete this project and

when all was done \$900 was left over. The plan is to transfer this money to SWI and have them install more signs this summer. At this time this is still being worked on.

Internet Sites
Friends of Stathcona Park - www.friendsofstathcona.org
Friends of Strathcona facebook page - Friends of Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island
Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee facebook page - Strathcona Park Public Forum
B.C. Parks Strathcona Park page - http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/

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Thank you for renewing.	
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