

Friends of Strathcona Park
Newsletter - Spring 2014
Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5
www.friendsofstrathcona.org



Cream Lake, (Insert Strathcona Blockade 1988)

**A PARK IS A PARK
BILL 4 PARK AMENDMENT ACT,
2014**
by Marlene Smith

Alarming actions recently came from Victoria. Bill 4 has passed 3rd reading and is now law. Bill 4 is closely tied in with the Parks Boundary Adjustment Policy. It changes the Park Act to allow Park Use Permits (PUP) to be issued for research for

industrial and commercial purposes. There is no clear definition about what this industrial research may be. Mining, logging roads, pipe and transmission lines are not specifically excluded and are mentioned in an associated policy paper. In discussion with CPAWS and West Coast Environmental Law, the Minister of Environment, Mary Polak, refused to add exclusions for that type of research to the Bill.

The Park Boundary adjustment policy allows

the Minister of Environment to delete or exclude pieces of park land slated for development based on such research. The decision still has to go through the Legislature, but that seems just a matter of rubber stamping these days. Bill 4 was introduced under the pressure of many industrial applications, mostly for the purpose of pipelines. Permit applications for this “research” will go through “Front Counter BC” (fast track application process) or the Oil and Gas Commission. The Minister of Environment responsible for Parks will not even see these permits or have any input into them.

It is déjà vu for the FOSP. In 1986, based on faulty legal advice, the government buckled under the pressure of industry to open BC parks to mineral exploration. It seems that industry and commercial development are hammering on the doors in Victoria again for private industrial opportunities incompatible with the natural and public purposes of our Parks.

The BC Parks system was established after the creation of Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island in 1911. Initially all parks were closed for industrial activity including mining, logging and hydro development. In 1917 the ban on mining exploration was lifted. This eventually resulted in the development and establishment of Western Mines at the head waters of Buttle Lake. The damming of what was once one of the most beautiful lakes on Vancouver Island, Buttle Lake, was also a result of that change to “The Act”. The Parks were subsequently closed again to further mining exploration and a poorly developed mine at Della Falls was closed. However Western Mines continued to operate. This has left a large hideous scar in the middle of

Strathcona Park.

In 1986 the government appointed a committee to make recommendations on industrial claims within the parks. Large sections of many parks in BC were downgraded to accommodate mining activity. This decision was based on faulty legal government advice over a law suit about a mine in Wells Gray Park. It is referred to as the Tener case. (See <http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/50/index.do> .) Strathcona Park, originally the first park in BC and the “Flagship in the BC Parks system”, roaded, logged, mined, burned and flooded, got the worse deal of all parks. The heart of the Park, including Cream Lake (see picture) was downgraded from Class A to class B park to accommodate mining. An outraged public, already dissatisfied with the then Social Credit government protested with a blockade in the middle of winter in the middle of Strathcona Park for over three months. 64 People were arrested and 11 were jailed for defending a public trust, the oldest Park of BC, from industrial activity.

To see the original Parks Act and the proposed change see http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_96344_01 and the *Bill 4 Park Amendment Act*: http://www.leg.bc.ca/40th2nd/1st_read/gov04-1.htm .

FOSP has joined a coalition umbrella group consisting of The Wilderness Committee, CPAWS, Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Forest Ethics, Kootenai Environmental Coalition, BC Wildlife , BC Nature and the Suzuki Foundation.

Some of us created an online petition which now has over 166.000 signatures, the largest

petition ever on parks issues in Canada.

This petition asking that Bill 4 be rescinded was presented to the government (Minister Mary Polak), the NDP Environment Critic (Spencer Chandra Herbert) and the Green Party MLA (Andrew Weaver) on May 14th in Victoria.

Many people have written letters opposing Bill 4 and asking for its reversal; we have to keep our parks free from industrial and commercial development. The government must change its mind on Bill 4?

Meanwhile Kinder Morgan has already received 2 permits before this bill was passed and an additional 5 since!

If you care about keeping your parks wild and natural, you have to stand up for them.

Write a letter to Minister Polak, your MLA, Don McRae or Clair Trevena, join and support those organizations lobbying and fighting for your parks.

Don't allow the government to leave a legacy that could lead to the local destruction of wild life, fish or fauna habitat. Let's leave a legacy for future generations of full protection of our Parks as it was intended in the establishment of our BC Parks system in 1911. Let's keep our government to its promises and safeguard those promises in perpetuity.

Time for More Civil Disobedience Training ! by Kel Kelly

“We will work as a coalition to provide education on peaceful direct action in our Comox Valley community. We will mobilize as many citizens as possible to relearn that peaceful direct action is a fundamental democratic right, to remember that when governments are ignoring the will of the people, it is our responsibility to react strongly, collectively and peacefully.”

The paragraph above comes from the joint statement of the Comox Valley Peaceful Direct Action Coalition (PDAC). The Friends of Strathcona Park are one of the founding members of the coalition, established in 2010. The coalition is now comprised of twenty community groups and organizations, including environmental, labour, church, social justice, peace, water protection and food security groups.

The passing of Bill 4 (see article in this newsletter) and the opening of BC's Parks to potential logging, mining, exploration, pipelines and other “research” has prompted the Friends to approach PDAC to organize another training on Civil Disobedience and the Law here in the Comox Valley.

Environmental leaders and activists from around the province have agreed that Bill 4 will be fought on an “as-needed” basis – that wherever the government gives approval for inappropriate use of a park or protected area that we will immediately respond to halt this morally illegitimate activity.

We will once again have to dust off our non-violent civil disobedience tools. The Friends will be working with PDAC to organize training here in the Comox Valley. Stay tuned for the announcement of dates and times, and please come out to participate and learn with others in our community.

Who Nurtures the “Heart of Darkness” Now?

by J.E.Welsh

Ben Gadd dedicated his book, “The Rockies”, “**To all those who open their eyes to the beauty of nature, and their hearts to its preservation.**”

This dedication of a 1992 book of photography focussed a jumble of thoughts in my mind about the proposed, “BC Parks Partnership Agreement”, and the evil lurking throughout it. Gadd’s dedication did this because it so beautifully supplied the words I needed and couldn’t think of. I wanted to define the nature of, and the motivation leading to what I will call “wilderness volunteerism”. I had to be able to describe us, to us, in order to quantify the terrible theft our government is preparing to commit against the citizens of this province with this deceptively simple draft agreement, in conjunction with the recently passed Bill 4.

Re-reading Gadd's words now, their beauty and meaning meld to completely describe the selfless and worshipful motivations that fuel wilderness volunteerism. I can imagine no better or more complete answer as to why volunteers exist, and what they will have stolen from them if the government persists.

In addition, Gadd’s single sentence is easily remembered shorthand for all our experiences “out there”, where freedom mixes with responsible restraint, or, for brief moments of rare courage, doesn’t.

The dedication is to us and to all the thousands of volunteers throughout our province who willingly, and with joy do

not hesitate to donate hours of their outdoor time to maintaining the trails throughout our public parks. The parks, that is, that residents like you and I have been paying taxes to support, maintain, improve, and expand; in my case, for over 50 years.

You will recall Ebenezer Scrooge's wild Christmas eve as described in Dicken's "A Christmas Carol". The fourth ghost to visit Ebenezer that night was the Ghost of Christmas yet to come. He showed Ebenezer what was going to happen in the future in the neighbourhood if nothing changed, but broadly hinted that it could all be different, and better for all concerned, if Ebenezer wished it to be – he'd just have to alter his ways. The following is pure speculation, and doesn't have to happen unless our Liberal government persists in its privatizing ways, and gives full force and effect to the current draft of the partnership agreement.

So how does the horror story unfold? There are five steps in my speculation on what could happen next, and they are as follows:

1. Adoption by Parks of **version 1.2 BC Parks Partnership Agreement, dated March 2014**, as policy to be applied by Parks staff. (A copy of this agreement is available on the net by searching the above highlighted description.) Parks begins collecting the pool of volunteers and organizations that have signed the agreement and concomitantly begins winnowing activists and activist organizations out of the pool pursuant to the preamble, unnumbered paragraph three. These people with a track record of opposition voiced or acted upon to any of the “...recreation and/or conservation objectives set for the Agreement Area by the Province...” will simply not be able to

confirm their adoption of these self-same objectives and on that ground will be unacceptable as volunteers. I would guess these excluded persons will not be able to work upon any project in any park. Neither will these excluded ones have any access other than that provided the touring public. There will be no freedom for citizens to simply walk into a park for solitude, away from the business of civilisation. Normally accessible areas may also be off limits due to maintenance, construction, film shooting, fracking, or the government's version of "research".

2. Bill 4, the amendment to the Parks Act begins to be explored and commercial research projects begin to abound resulting in private individuals and small groups no longer being able to meet the standards of work and training required by the new people in the park. They are given their notice that their agreements will be cancelled at the end of 60 days. This is possible under clause 2.04 of the agreement. There is no call for any cause for the termination to be defined in the notice, nor is there a complaint process. There is simply the right of the person terminated to be "heard" by the person doing the terminating with nothing defining what "heard" means or what it could lead to, or how it is conducted.

3. The government begins to change, "(e)xisting conditions and land uses of Province lands within or in the vicinity...", of areas of the park in question covered by a specific partnership agreement, and this may include changes to, "...the status of roads, visual landscape conditions and the location and status of existing and new resource tenures...", pursuant to Bill 4 amendments and section 1.04 of the partnership agreement.

4. The termination of this process

comes, after more amendments to the Park Act, the Partnership Agreement, and other, perhaps new, enabling legislation, with the complete slathering of B.C.'s parks with multiple layers of privately controlled, and bureaucratically mediated resource tenures.

5. Capitalization takes place during the next election cycle as our creative government is surprised at the immensity of the largesse donated into their political war chests by the happy private capitalists. Who will, of course, have to spend them on hate-filled propaganda to make sure we dummies vote them back in. We citizens are comforted by the fact that at least our government hasn't sold the parks off, yet. Unlike our creeks and headwater lands tied up in "Run of the River" projects, and our disappeared forests, fish, and fresh air, the parks remain. They are less peaceful, perhaps, more cluttered with the junk of adventure tourists, and the wastes of resource extractors, but still there whether we can currently gain access, or not. They will remain a promise. As despoiled as they are, they will still present a promise of a better future. A future that's free from the periodic deluge of hate ads spawned by the arrogance of deluded hate mongers seeking our votes. These are the people holding the "ne tenure" on the heart of darkness.

Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee Meeting

The last SPPAC meeting was held on March 27th in Parksville. A Strathcona Park update is posted on B.C. Parks website and on SPPAC's facebook page. To find it on facebook search for Strathcona Park Public Forum. In summary what is happening in the

Park follows.

The Crest Creek Penstock removal has been completed and a few problems with water flow are being corrected.

Clayoquot Wilderness Resorts plans for the Bedwell Valley will be submitted to Parks for consideration this fall. Construction cannot proceed until Parks have approved of the plan which will come before SPPAC before being acted upon.

Carol Hunter is spearheading a project to install signs at various locations in the Park with the goal of educating the public on not having fires in the Park. This has been an ongoing problem for some time. Carol received \$2500 funding from Parks for this project and she has involved high school students in this project.

The access to Gold Lake is deteriorating and it seems there are no plans at this time to repair the roads leading to the Park boundary.

The Vancouver Island Spine Trail is being discussed especially its route through Strathcona Park.

Chris Barner made a presentation to SPPAC explaining why the Heathens are no longer doing any volunteer work in the Park. It's a complex topic, but boils down to problems with the new Volunteer Agreement structure and with some historical problems in working with Park staff. The Heathens are responsible for the wonderful trails and infrastructure in the Crest Crags rock climbing area along Highway 28. Their work has been of incredible quality and it is a shame they are pulling out. Chris did state they have opportunities to do other volunteer work outside the Park so hopefully, they will.

Nyrstar Mine, the operator of the mine within

Strathcona Westmin Park, continues to work on its Closure Plan. Several options are being considered for dealing with the waste rock at the mine site. SPPAC is being consulted and asked for input. The mine's bond currently sits at \$75 million, but this amount may increase depending on closure plans. More detail is available by looking at SPPAC minutes on the Strathcona section of BC Parks website.

SPPAC is not pleased about Bill 4 and discussed how to express its displeasure.

SPPAC will be looking at its Terms of Reference with the idea of bringing them up to date. Several SPPAC member's terms are up this year so there will be a number of vacancies for new members. Pay attention to SPPAC's facebook page as well as the Friends. There will be some notification when applications will be welcome. Please consider serving. SPPAC needs good people to help advise on many issues. Previous members can also apply as several of past members have served for more than one term.

This summer the final 1/3 of the trail upgrade from Battleship Lake to Kwai Lake will be worked on. Nyrstar donated \$50,000 to Parks with the hope it will go towards creating a new group campground at Croteau Lake. The Alpine Club of Canada has withdrawn its proposal to operate the Ranger Cabin in the Kwai Lake area.

There is a much more detailed report of Park issues attached to the SPPAC minutes, so feel free to follow up and find out more.

Membership, Finances and the AGM

Over the past few years the number of members in the Friends has grown steadily. It seems as if our efforts fighting the issue of allowing horses in the Bedwell Valley has met with a lot of approval from the public, and some have joined as members and donated money to help with our efforts.

We've spent quite a lot of money fighting the court case, but due to our members generosity we've ended up with just as much money as before. The horse issue was decided in court, but now we're involved in trying to combat the negative effects of Bill 4.

We'd like to encourage you to attend our Annual General Meeting and to bring a friend. This will be the third year it's being held at one of the director's places in the Comox Valley. It's only one afternoon and an evening so is not a big time commitment. The Friends provide barbequed salmon, you bring a potluck dish and everyone enjoys music around the fire in the evening.

This year's AGM will be at Kel Kelly and Peggy Carswell's. The AGM part is from 2 to 4 p.m. followed by socializing and the barbeque. For those who are adventurous, Kel and Peggy have a 65 foot high tree house to visit.

To get there turn up Merville Road at the Merville Store about 10 km north of Courtenay. Follow Merville Road until it becomes Headquarters Road and continue towards the mountains. When you get to the stop sign turn right to follow Headquarters Road. After a short distance turn right onto Railway Avenue and continue to the first left which is River Ave. North. Kel and Peggy's is the second driveway on the left. Please

park on the road as there isn't much room.

New Directors

The Friends of Strathcona Park's constitution lists its purposes as: To preserve and protect the natural beauty of Strathcona Park for the appreciation of present and future generations. To promote public awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the Park, its natural features, environment and ecosystems, its trails and other amenities. To advance a sense of public responsibility and stewardship towards the Park, its natural features, environment and ecosystems.

The FOSP would like to invite you to become a new director. Over time there is a turnover of existing directors and there is now room for some new ones. Meetings are periodic and depend on what is happening at that time. Anyone with an interest in Strathcona Park and in advancing the purposes mentioned above are welcome. No special skills are required, just a willingness to attend some meetings, learn what we are doing and help out in whatever way you can.

Directors are selected at the AGM, so hopefully you can make it and become involved. If you can't make the AGM, let us know and we can add you to the list anyway.

Bedwell Trail Hike

by Pipo Damiano

In early August this summer FOSP will again organize a 4 days/3 nights hiking trip on the Bedwell Centennial trail. Specific dates and more details will be available after we see how many people are interested.

The Bedwell Centennial Trail is 34 km long

from the head of Bedwell Inlet to the Jim Mitchell Lake Road near the south end of Buttle Lake. Prior arrangements are to be made with a water taxi to get from Tofino to the trailhead and for pickup for the group hiking the other way. The trip is best done in July through September when stream levels are low.

It is a splendid, moderately vigorous hike. Hikers need to be in good physical condition. There will be two groups, each starting at one end of the trail and crossing in the middle. I will be the leader of the group going up, i.e., starting from Tofino and ending at Buttle Lake. The leader of the

second group is yet to be determined. Keys will be exchanged when the two groups meet in the middle and cars will be brought back by the other hikers. There will be a fee of \$100 to cover water taxi and transportation costs..

I am hoping tons of pictures will be taken, to be shown at a fundraising event in the fall. Such beauty should not go un-documented, nor should its fragility in the face of corporate greed be ignored.

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 14, 2014) _____

Comments _____

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