

# Friends of Strathcona Park

## Newsletter - Fall 2019

Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5  
[www.friendsofstrathcona.org](http://www.friendsofstrathcona.org)

### **A Conversation about the Mine in the Park by Jennifer Pass**

A few years ago I got interested in the Myra Falls mine. I gathered binders full of information, looked at annual reports and generally got buried in paper. I was a member of FOSP and also deeply concerned about mines, particularly open-pit mines (as Myra Falls mine had been in the past). But I also learned the old adage is true –“ a little learning is a dangerous thing”. It is impossible to get one’s (or at least my) head around the chemical studies, statistics, and simple quantity, size and frequency of reports. It is literally too overwhelming for most of us. So the usual course is for us to say, (something like), “whatever I might think about this mine in the park, the complexity makes my involvement in the discussion impossible”. This is where we go deeply wrong.

Our recently formed “mining subcommittee” of FOSP want us to be able to have an ongoing conversation between the public and the mine at Myra Falls (presently Nyrstar),. In order to do that we, as members of the public, need to find our own “sea legs” for this journey.

How much do we really need to know? What are our concerns and how do we understand and evaluate the answers we are given? How do we increase our knowledge and our confidence to have these conversations? And how do we do this civilly so that the conversation can truly be ongoing?

To that end FOSP is hosting a number of

meetings starting May 28th, 2020 (at the Seniors’ Lounge at Florence Filberg 7-9pm) to initiate and help form this engagement process. (save that date!). At the first meeting, Nicole Pesonen, Environmental Advisor for Nyrstar, Myra Falls, will present a brief description of their mining operations. We will also present a short history of mining in Strathcona Park. If you are interested in being part of the FOSP subcommittee to develop the plans for these meetings, please contact me at [passj@telus.net](mailto:passj@telus.net).

### **SPPAC and Park update**

The last Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee meeting was held last May. Usually another is held in the fall, but to date nothing has been set, so we're not sure when the next meeting will be. In the past as many as 4 meetings were held per year and as few as 2 with 3 being the most common number depending on what issues need to be discussed. Usually we glean information about what's been happening in the Park based on these meetings. We'd like to thank Andy Smith for sharing news of park happenings with us so we could pass on this to our members. The highlights of this season follow.

A Student Ranger project begun in 2018 carried on this year with many jobs being completed. They were used to repair winter storm damage to trails in several locations, installing signs, helping with the Accessibility Day and promoting the new group campground at Croteau Lake.

Capital projects this summer involve beginning the creation of 60 new tent platforms and the construction of three new toilets at Circlet Lake.

This work is necessary to meet the high demand being placed on this area. If, in future, there is still not enough room with these new expansions to accommodate the use, a reservation system will have to be implemented. Along with this project three new prefabricated toilets will be installed next spring at Kwai Lake, the Helen McKenzie Day Use area and campsite. This will further reduce the need to fly sewage out of the Park.

The new Croteau Lake group campsite had its second summer of operation. Bookings doubled from the first year. A campground host program was implemented there this summer for the first time. It will be continued next season and, if anyone is interested in being a host, they can contact Andy Smith, Strathcona Supervisor at B.C. Parks Miracle Beach office for details.

In the Buttle Lake corridor trail repairs were done at Lower Myra Falls trail and around the Ralph River campground by the student rangers. As many of you know a movie was partly filmed at the Ralph River campground last year. This paid for some trail upgrades at the campground. As well, money from this shoot will finance an invasive plant study and revegetation over the next few years. As part of B.C. Hydro's requirements the boat launches at the Buttle Lake campground and Karst Creek were upgraded to make them more useful especially at low water. At the Buttle Lake campground a new trail was constructed to the point looking down the lake and some picnic tables installed there. In various places around the lake some planting was done in the drawdown zone to help stabilize the shore.

In the backcountry work was done on the cable car crossing on the Della Falls trail as well as some brushing and falling of dangerous trees around the campsite. Repairs were completed in the spring to the Elk River trail. This trail is experiencing heavy use and there are plans to install a new toilet in the future. No upgrades were done in the Bedwell Lake area, however, trail conditions are being monitored and repairs will be done some time in the future. The Cream Lake area is also being monitored for impacts. Toilets will be upgraded when funding is available. After August 31st the campsite at Bedwell Lake was temporarily closed due to a persistent bear hanging about. It wasn't aggressive, but it wasn't fearful of people. It is hoped it will be gone next season. The Ahousaht are still interested in taking over the Bedwell Trail leading to the west coast, but are waiting to establish plans for their reserve at the mouth of the river first. Along the Kings Peak Trail there is a possibility of some

improvements being done in future as well as a new toilet being installed.

BC Parks together with the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation will be exploring the potential for a campground development at Kunlin Lake along with marine sites at Donner Lake as identified in the Master Plan/ Amendment. This is for the longer term.

The new campground being created just outside the Park near the Crest Creek Climbing area continues to be worked on. The old hydro penstock corridor will be utilized for a connecting trail between the campground and the climbing area.

Andy also shared an update from the Myra Falls mine. There have been some changes to management at the mine with the General Manager leaving and others being promoted for the time being. A number of permits have been applied for, in process or approved. The Lynx pit Tailings Disposal Facility continues to be worked on. Ore has been mined and milled from the Price and HD areas of the mine and will soon be shipped. Waste material has been processed into paste and will soon be pumped back underground. The public access gate has been moved. (The public needs to know they can still gain access through the mine site to get to trails beyond.) Hauling is taking place at night along the Jim Mitchell Lake road. A new 5 year mine plan is scheduled to be submitted in January 2021. This will include a reclamation plan.

Again, we'd like to thank Andy Smith for sharing this information with us.

### **Snowmobiles in the Park**

Illegal snowmobiles in the Park are an ongoing problem. Last winter we know one was ticketed so Parks do what they can to enforce the regulations. We would encourage any of you who meet a snowmobile rider illegally in the Park to try to get a photograph or some way of positively identifying them and turn the evidence over to the park staff.

### **Youth outdoor program** by Marlene Smith

In the beginning, FOSP followed in the footsteps of Ruth Masters and the old CDMC in helping to create and build trails for public use for many years. Parks administrators were most of the time helpful and supportive of our efforts and offered support in helicopter time, tools, bridge supplies or staff time to

help clearing trail sections with chainsaws. Times have changed and volunteer trail building and youth education in caring and love for the parks came also to an end with the court case against the “delinquent trail builders”, the Heathens. At the same time the last two generations of adults and governments have failed to dream a future world for the generations to come after us. High use of drugs, overdosing and desperation amongst the youth about a bright and safe (environmental) future for them and the world, shows that this problem extends well beyond our parks. Over the last two years I had several discussions with Chris Barner, ex parks administrators, many outdoor leaders, guides and outdoor educators. We need to bring back a connection between the youth and the environment and nature. The more I delve into this issue, the more wonderful and dedicated people I meet! I tried to start an awareness at the level of the SD 71, the Comox Valley School district. I was soon joined by Jill Paacock, retired school teacher and Dawn Christian, retired school worker. We traveled to Powell River where there is an outdoor education program for ALL school kids available through the schools. Not only do they learn the hard skills as canoeing, trail building, rock climbing etc., the soft skills of mindfulness, self-awareness and love, working together and caring for each other and nature is also a big part of the program. So now two years later the SD 71 school board is on board and actually employs a coordinator to create such a program! A framework for opportunities for youth grades 10- 12 to connect with community based businesses as agriculture, farming, carpentry, mechanical skills etc is almost ready to be launched. The outdoor component is also being worked on, with a focus on Tribune Bay being revitalized as an outdoor education centre. There are many details and connections to be unravelled before we have something that is responsible and safe to be launched. Representing FOSP I have been knocking on many a door and had numerous discussions. I am very proud that FOSP has not “just” saved our parks and continue to be the watch dog for the park, we now also look at reconnecting the youth again with their roots, nature and our parks, and teach them what a special place this planet earth really is and how our parks are the jewel in that special paradise we are already in.

Stay tuned and if you have skills you’d like to volunteer to reconnect our next generation with our parks and nature, please contact FOSP with your skills, your passion and how you can help us to recreate that beautiful dream again for the children of the future.

## **Bedwell Centennial Trail (Oinimitis-Bear) - Ocean to Alpine Traverse 2019**

by Susan Holvenstot

*In a sense, using the trail is a political act. The very existence of the non-commercial, low-impact Bedwell Centennial Trail shows that commercial exploitation isn't needed or wanted by non-commercial users of Strathcona Park. (Karl Stevenson)*

This is my fifth time leading this route from west coast tide-water to central Vancouver Island alpine. Most of the route is in Strathcona Park, but the trail isn't maintained, nor was it built, by BC Parks. It was an older indigenous trading route, being one of very few west coast valleys that can even connect to the other side of the island.

Friends of Strathcona Park (FOSP) constructed much the trail, and the engineered Gayle McGee suspension bridge in 1992. It was up-graded, again by FOSP, in 2010-11.

I love the Bedwell and worked on the trail many years ago. It is a much abused (logging, mining, threatened horse camps), but recovering wilderness. BC Parks opened the valley to clear cut logging in the 1960s, and then removed it from the park in 1987, saying it had “low park value” because it had been logged. They were forced to return the Bedwell to the Park after the Strathcona Blockade of 1988, in which 64 people were arrested. It has lots of varied and beautiful terrains, and can be accessed from either end, Buttle Lake or Tofino.

Three intrepid hikers went from Sun, Sept 1 to Fri, Sept 6. Five days and four nights up the Bedwell, and did one extra day to Cream Lake. We took the bus to Tofino, and a First Nation water taxi to the head of Bedwell Sound. This is also the location of Clayoquot Wilderness Resort. We had heard that the management of the expensive, exclusive resort had changed, thus ending previous speculations about permanent horse camps within the park. FOSP has resisted the proposal for many years.

We made our first camp at the Gayle McGee suspension bridge, on the beautiful Bedwell River, 2 hours from the dock. The next morning we hiked along the 3 mile long Bedwell Canyon and came to the Living Bridge. The trail clearing from 2018 had not been

maintained or expanded.

What *had* happened is a portion of gravel and small trees on the bridge had fallen off, leaving a 10' section completely exposed, one log wide, over the river 50' below. Someone had rigged a rope to assist in crossing which we removed. We know it is the route up to Mariner Mountain, but that rope was defiantly encouraging unsafe activities.

The group back-tracked about 10 minutes, and took the "new" route up and over bluffs that avoids any river crossings.

It was generally good weather, some overcast. We had great views of Mariner and Big Interior. The second night was a the Second Gravel Bar, near Sam Craig Creek. The next day, before the Old Growth Notch and Sundew Pond, long parts of the trail were very

overgrown with TALL salmon berry. It would take a work party at least a day to hack back so much. It's the middle-most section of the trail, day 3 from either end.

We made it to You Creek for the third night, then on up thru the unique high-elevation Maple Grove and numerous waterfalls. The once-snowfield, vanished for 5 years now, was back, a shadow of its former self, but gorgeous and respectable snow caves none the less. The fourth night was at the main Bedwell Lake campsite. It had been closed for bear activity the week before, but we didn't see any bears.

Total cost \$150 for bus, water taxi and shuttle home per person. The total hiking distance is 34 km, not counting the 6 km to Cream Lake. Elevation gain of 1000m.

[Karlrobinstevenson.wordpress.com](http://Karlrobinstevenson.wordpress.com) website has great trail descriptions and maps in the Aug 2012 archive.

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**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 \$25 or more)** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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