

# OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY - AFFILIATED WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA

August 2004

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## SUMMER NEARLY OVER: MANY DISAPPOINTMENTS AND A FEW ACCOMPLISHMENTS

First re protected areas, WE'RE STILL DOING OUR BIT TO PROTECT WHAT WE HAVE AND HOPE TO GET MORE PARK LAND. Well into the fire season, fewer big fires this year and so less money needed to be spent on fire fighting.

Last year we lost a national heritage, the trestles of Myra Canyon, part of the Kettle Valley Railroad route. We had just updated our BROCHURE Kettle Valley Railroad - Opportunities for Outdoor recreation. Local tourist bureaus report this brochure very much in demand, surprising as the Okanagan Mountain Park part of the route from Midway west is closed. Luckily a route around the burned-out area of Myra Canyon has been marked out. Page 62 of the Kelowna tourist booklet shows an alternate route.

We were glad to hear that the sites on the Lake part of Okanagan Mountain Park were opened midway through the summer. Also glad privately-owned areas have filled in the Park total through purchase and donation. Still waiting to hear of funding that will see the re-building of the Myra Canyon trestles - the recent announcement of some \$4.2 million by the BC government was a repeat of last year's proposal, and is only a small part of the expected cost.

## PROMISED PARKS DISAPPEAR

On May 12, 2004 the BC Liberal government introduced Bill 50, The Parks and Protected Areas Statutes Amendment Act. Trumpeted as increasing the provincial park system by 150,000 hectares, in reality the Act rubber-stamped areas already slated for protection under regional Land Resource Management Plans (LRMP), reclassified protected areas into Class "A" parks, and expanded 29 existing provincial parks by less than 5,000 hectares in total. At first blush the Act appears a modest step in the right direction. However, under closer inspection it seems the provincial government actually used the Act as an opportunity to eliminate 15 "about to be designated" protected areas in the Okanagan, an area with the highest concentration of endangered species in the province. Astoundingly, these areas had previously been agreed upon in the region's 2001 consensus driven land use process.

*Western Wilderness Education Report, BC Parks, Summer 2004*

Donations are appreciated anytime - tax receipt will be issued. OSPS appreciates your continued support in our attempts to save OUR parks. 2004 memberships at \$10.00 individual, \$15.00 family, \$20.00 group have been rolling in. THANKS!

***Most of you are members so give your form to friends or neighbours, especially the younger ones.***

**Note: Last minute TRAIL REPORT - Page 8**

## USER FEES

On May 15, 2003 the provincial government did something that has never been done before in British Columbia - they introduced user fees to 28 provincial parks on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. For people wishing to visit these popular provincial parks to hike in the woods, canoe, watch a wild salmon run or have a picnic lunch with their children, they would now need to bring their wallets along and pay between \$3 - \$5 for the privilege. Since 1911, when BC's first provincial park was created, people from all walks of life have been able to visit BC's public parks free of charge.

Despite the fact that BC parks are enormous revenue generators and have been paid for many times over through taxpayers dollars, the provincial government is continuing with a mandate of incremental privatization, ignoring public opinion and forging ahead with the decision to institute the much-hated parking fees. Although deeply unpopular with the public, earlier this year the BC Liberals quietly expanded user fees to an additional 13 provincial parks — bringing the total to 41 parks.

*BC Parks, Summer 2004*

## SKAHA LAKE HOME TO SOCKEYE AGAIN



**Fisheries technicians Fabian Alexis, foreground, and Elliott Tonasket from the Okanagan Nation Alliance release buckets full of sockeye fry into the Okanagan River Channel during a ceremony Tuesday. The release of 350,000 fry is part of a 12-year study aimed at reintroducing sockeye salmon in Skaha Lake.**

Lake, pending the final results of the study.

The reintroduction of sockeye to Skaha Lake is seen as a key to the restoration of increased spawning habitat for the fish. Currently, Okanagan sockeye only have access to Osoyoos Lake, where the surface water is too warm in late summer and deeper waters have a low oxygen content.

*John Moorhouse*

*June 2, 2004, Penticton Herald*

Deana Machin, fisheries program manager with the Okanagan Nation Alliance, said from 50,000 to 75,000 of the 350,000 sockeye fry involved in the study were released Tuesday. The remainder will be released today. The fry will spend a year in Skaha Lake before heading down the Okanagan River to the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean.

This is the pilot year of a planned 12-year program to reintroduce sockeye back to their historic habitat in the Okanagan. The spawning fish will not yet be allowed to return to Skaha

## SPIRIT BEAR SANCTUARY STILL UNCERTAIN

There is growing doubt that the final protected areas will be large enough. And there is every indication that the BC government will compromise protection by allowing logging and mining roads in key ecological zones.

Spirit bears only live in the lush, coastal rainforests of British Columbia's central and north coast, also called the "salmon forest."

*December 2003*

*Valhalla Wilderness Society*



## A VISION FOR BC PARKS

Vision and hard work have resulted in a park system that have helped make BC world famous. From the mighty Tatshenshini to Pinecone Burke, BC'S network of parks and protected areas is a proud public legacy. But if we are to maintain this legacy for our children we need to protect our public parks against cutbacks, privatization and industrial development. We must ensure that parks, which are enormous revenue generators, are adequately funded and staffed by the provincial government, and we must ensure that the BC Park Act remains inviolate — protecting our parks for the public good, not private gain.

The BC provincial government appears to have missed the point as they continue to pursue an agenda of privatizing and commercializing our provincial parks. They have lost sight of what British Columbians think is the single most important aspect of our protected areas system: to set wilderness areas aside for the sole purpose of preserving natural areas.

*BC Parks, Summer 2004*

## BULLFROG PLAGUE INVADES OSOYOOS

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The plate-size, aggressive meat eaters were brought to British Columbia by an eager restaurant owner in the 1950s. He thought local diners would enjoy meaty frog legs. But when the venture failed, he released his stock into the wild.

Dyer said isolated populations of the bullfrog – the largest of all North American frogs and toads at up to 20 centimetres long – live in the Osoyoos area. He wouldn't divulge their locations for fear curious people may be tempted to collect a few for pets.

Large portions of Vancouver Island and the southwestern part of the Lower Mainland, however, are being invaded as the big frogs continue to multiply.



**Joe Steward, 8, of Kelowna and his cousin, Samantha Steward, 7, of Victoria get a close look at an American bullfrog. The frog is held by Elizabeth deVries, interpreter at the Okanagan Nature Centre in Kelowna.**

Dyer said they feast on rats, mice and ducklings.

He said the bullfrogs also eat other native species of frogs and amphibians, making them a huge threat to the environment because they could potentially wipe out a species.

"I'm surprised they haven't moved farther away from these ponds," said Dyer.

Despite the threat, the provincial government recently cut funding for an eradication program.

The Okanagan-Similkameen is home to five frog and toad species, with one, the spadefoot, on the threatened species list.

*July 22, 2004, Penticton Herald*

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## TECK COMINCO TARGETED OVER MINING IN PARK

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An environmental group is targeting Teck Cominco, saying it supports mining exploration in the South Chilcotin Mountains Park.

A small protest group held a large banner in front of the company's Vancouver office Thursday, urging Teck Cominco to keep its hands off the park north of Whistler.

Joe Foy of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee said his group will try to shame mining companies and the provincial government into leaving B.C. parks alone.

"Once mining kicks the door open to a park, all sorts of industrial uses come walking in," said Foy.

The committee said the government plans to roll back park boundaries, allowing mineral exploration and opening the door to clear-cut logging.

But the province's minister for resource management said no decision has been made yet on what will happen.

George Abbott said both the park and working families are being considered in the land and resource management plan.

*August 7, 2004, Penticton Herald*

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## NEW MODEL FOR PARKS

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Government has put in place a new model for park, fish and wildlife recreation that will protect and expand recreation opportunities while maintaining conservation.

Under this new model, our park facility operators are able to provide interpretive services where there is such a demand from park visitors. This year at least 16 British Columbia parks will provide interpretive programs — at no cost to the taxpayers. This fact is a testament to the success of our new model.

A great deal of information on parks and wildlife is also

available to the public through the ministry's website. I encourage everyone to visit [www.bcparks.ca](http://www.bcparks.ca) to learn more.

Our government has made a commitment to revitalize the economy and get the province's finances in order. We've had to make some difficult decisions but I believe they are responsible ones.

And with an expected surplus next year, British Columbians will again have choices about the types of investments we make with our tax dollars.

*Bill Barisoff, MLA, Penticton-Okanagan Valley  
Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection  
July 14, 2004, Penticton Herald*

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## BRIDGE NEARS COMPLETION

**Trout Creek bridge closed to public while upgrades underway, expected to reopen mid-September.**

The end is in sight for work on the safety upgrade of the Trout Creek trestle, but fundraising continues.

"We're about to start putting on the final decking on the second half of the bridge," said Rick Valenti, chair of the Trout Creek trestle task force.

Although Valenti wouldn't commit to an exact date for the grand opening ceremonies, he is hoping for mid-September.

"It's our opinion that this project will make the trestle/bridge the No. 1 tourist attraction in the Okanagan Valley," Valenti said.

The bridge will be an attraction for cyclists, walkers and hikers. Its easy access and spectacular view will be important factors in attracting visitors.

At some time in the future, a Kettle Valley steam train may again cross the bridge.

The safety project was spearheaded by Maggie and Elio Ricciardi, whose 20-year old son, Mark, died in a tragic fall from the bridge in October 2002. A plaque will be placed on the bridge in his memory.

Construction crews began work on June 28, following almost 20 months of organization and fundraising.

Bridge reinforcement work was the first step before putting decking on the walkways on either side of the railway track. Decking began July 26. A chainlink fence, required as a safety measure, will be installed on the outside edges of the walkways.

The bridge has been closed to the public while construction is underway.

"We apologize for any inconvenience," Valenti said.

The task force hired South Okanagan Security staff to be on site in the evenings and on weekends to ensure no one ignores warning signs and tries to cross the structure.

"We've had to turn away as many as 45 people on a weekend day," said J. Paul Quevillon, SOS regional supervisor. "I hadn't realized how many people use the bridge."

Quevillon told of a Summerland resident who, before construction began, crossed the bridge twice each day on his bicycle going to and from his work in Penticton.

When the safety project was announced in the spring, the anticipated completion date was the end of July.



**A crew from Greyback Construction works on the decking of the Trout Creek trestle in Summerland. The end of the work is in sight and the bridge should be open to pedestrians and cyclists by mid-September, but the fundraising continues as the project ran into significant cost overruns.**

Difficulty in obtaining supplies, especially the wood for the decks, delayed the project. This delay has meant having to pay SOS for a longer period, which has contributed to a significant overrun of the original estimate of \$75,000.

"The total project will probably cost in the neighbourhood of \$178,000," Valenti said.

In addition to higher security costs, the overrun is due to having to revise the design drawings several times to meet railway safety standards and to hire a professional construction company instead of relying on volunteers. There has also been a dramatic increase in the cost of wood from the 2003 quotes. Approximately \$78,000 has been raised to date.

The largest single donation so far was from the 2003 Ironman Canada athletes.

"The task force will continue to fundraise. I have faith we'll achieve our goal," Valenti said.

He intends on continuing to approach all levels of government, businesses, service groups and the public.

Donations for the project can be made at the Summerland Municipal Hall, 13211 Henry Ave., Summerland, VOH 1Z0. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$20. Cheques should be made payable to the District of Summerland (Trout Creek Trestle/Bridge Project).

*By Susan McIver  
August 12, 2004, Penticton Herald*

## **TROUT CREEK TRESTLE/BRIDGE: QUICK FACTS**

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- Built in 1913
- Tallest structure on the Kettle Valley Railway at 73 metres or 238 feet above canyon floor.
- Third largest steel girder bridge in North America.
- One of the highlights of the KVR
- Engineered by Andrew McCulloch.
- When completed and lowered into place, the bridge was only one inch short of a perfect fit — a tribute to McCulloch's engineering skills.
- Called the "infinitesimal bridge" in early years because of its size and time required to build.

*August 12, 2004, Penticton Herald*

## **PARK RESTORATION WORK**

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Ten people will be hired to work in Okanagan Mountain and Myra-Bellevue provincial parks for the next six months clearing trails and making the parks safe for recreation again.

Both parks are still closed because of damage following the Okanagan Mountain Park wildfire last summer, with trails criss-crossed by fallen trees and concerns about dangerous trees that are still standing.

Leigh-Ann Johnson, project manager with Katim Enterpriser, said funding has just been approved from the federal Human Resources Skill Development Canada for the project and there is additional money coming from community sources.

Katim will work with the Friends of the South Slopes to get the work done where it's most needed in the two parks, as they are the organization contracted to operate them.

*JUDIE STEEVES*

*August 10, 2004, The Western*

## **GOV'T GIVES IN TO BIG INDUSTRY**

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Dear Editor,

I am extremely angry, but not at all surprised, that the government has once again bowed to special interest groups such as mining, logging, and individual local government officials who want the broadly based consensus decisions of Land and Resource Management Plan processes to be amended to suit their view of how the land should be used.

Spruce Lake Park in the South Chilcotin was part of such a process and the recently announced decrease in its size by 20 per cent, including areas of great importance for grizzly bear and containing magnificent flower meadows, is deplorable from both a public and a conservation point of view.

In addition, it is far from the first with regard to LRMP decisions about protected areas. Just recently, the government omitted all the parks and other protected areas from Bill 50 that was to legislate them as part of the Okanagan-Similkameen, Shuswap LRMP.

This government and Water, Land and Air Protection Minister Bill Barisoff, readily spout their strong support for parks, conservation of wildlife and habitat, and "science-based decision making". This is a lie, of the first order.

Their agenda is shown clearly to be to pander to big industry of all kinds and to ignore the science, the results of years of public land-use processes, and the regularly declared value that the citizens of B.C. place on wild areas and their protection.

Such attitudes violate public trust, public processes, and the most basic principles of wildlife conservation.

*Eva Durance, Federation B.C. Naturalists,  
July 29, 2004, Penticton Herald*

## **PARKS AND ECO-TOURISM NEED EQUAL ATTENTION IN BUDGET**

Approximately \$625,000 was spent on upgrading the wine route signage and investing in promoting British Columbia's wineries. It's a good investment; one we're certain the government will find has an excellent cost-benefit ratio.

Yet, an equally strong investment was chopped two years ago. At a cost savings of \$800,000 annually, Barisoff's ministry ceased funding education and interpretive services related to parks, fish and wildlife in 2002.

And while the primary function of the parks interpreters was educational, the service did promote the province's natural wonders and provide a higher quality experience for visitors, thus bringing them back for a repeat visit and providing a benefit in return for the cost.

No doubt he will announce some sort of funding to promote our parks; without the interpretive services, however, what's to promote?

British Columbia is one of only three jurisdictions in North and Central America without government-funded interpretive services in its parks. Even El Salvador and Belize fund park interpreters.

The biggest bang for our bucks Barisoff could announce this Saturday is the return of our parks interpreters.

It would be Super. And Natural.

*July 12, 2004, Penticton Herald*

## **FIRE AND PINE BEETLES ARE NO EXCUSE TO LOG PARKS**

In BC, we do not log our parks. What parks need is fire breaks to protect communities, and prescribed burning.

### **LOGGING IS NOT FIRE PREVENTION**

Several studies in the US have found that logged and roaded areas increase the intensity and rate of spread of wildfires because they leave fine fuels on the ground and open areas to the heat of the sun. A number of their huge interface fires burned ferociously through heavily logged areas. In addition tree plantations — once the trees grow to a certain age — are one of the most flammable fuels in the woods.

*December 2003, Valhalla Wilderness Society*



## **DON'T GIVE UP OUR OPTIONS**

Please do not curtail the option of successive governments to change the course of things in the public interest and do not hobble successive governments with huge fiscal and/or legal liability when necessity and the broad public interest are at odds with the narrower interests of corporations and their investors.

Please do not surrender our options in the interest of a short-term economic flush.

This land is not our land. It belongs to our grandchildren.

*Dave Cursons, Green Party supporter, Cawston, July 12, 2004, Penticton Herald*

## PARK PROTECTION CONCERN

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Dear Members,

This photograph was taken just a short walk away from the Valhalla Wilderness Society office where I am writing this letter. You see the slopes of Valhalla Provincial Park, protected in 1983 through the efforts of this Society. It looks grand and tranquil, but there has been nothing tranquil about the VWS office this year.

The BC government has continued dismantling forest protection laws. Ongoing budget and staff cuts to all our public land management agencies are wiping out the institutional legacies that would be needed to implement present or future restraints on the timber industry. Poorly regulated logging has brought the mountain caribou, spotted owl and the marbled murrelet to the very brink of extinction, and what regulations there were are being systematically removed. The new Working Forest legislation will enable the government to lock up virtually all unprotected forest land in a logging designation that would likely require large compensation to logging companies if any of it were to be protected. It will also make it easier to sell Crown land to private interests.

This summer, amidst our weariness and discouragement, there came a message from one of the benevolent foundations that has funded us over the years. Could we send four people from our office to a conference in San Francisco, all expenses paid? Some of us, beset by crises, doubted it. But what good fortune that we did it!



The conference brought together 3,500 activists of all stripes. There were blacks, whites, chicanos, aboriginal people, Russians, Brazilians, women's activists, scientists and environmentalists. There were young and old; the very poor, and the very rich. We were amazed at all the networks there are around the world that are working for the values of equality, health and peace; and at how many extraordinarily talented activists there are.

We were reminded that we are part of a huge international unity. It is made up of all those who are trying to protect life, and quality of life. We are all fighting a common enemy: misguided human values that have put monetary profits before life. We are fighting private financial interests that are taking over the world – commandeering the machinery of governments to militate against the public interest, in order to concentrate the world's wealth for themselves.

Amongst this mass of 3,500 people, there was a tremendous, uplifting spirit

of each person doing what they can. One man, Percy Schmeiser, told of heartbreaking attempt to defend himself from Monsanto corporation, which is tyrannizing farmers with its genetically engineered grain. Mr. Schmeiser, a once well-to-do farmer, had been left penniless by fighting a law suit Monsanto brought against him. "I'm 72 years old, but I'm not going to stop," said Percy. "I don't

want my children and grandchildren to grow up in a world like this. I'm going to give everything I have to give."

Though his commitment would be hard for many of us to live up to, this is what we are all longing to hear. Mr. Schmeiser was deluged with an immense tidal wave of standing applause that was undiminished after nearly five minutes. The facilitator had to ask the audience to stop clapping.

Connected within this circuit, we understood that every crisis, every tragedy, every need, is an opportunity to give ourselves and to receive, in return, the benefit of being connected to world circuits for positive change. It isn't whether we succeed or fail that matters. This is what life is about. This is what makes the kind of world we want to live in. We went home re-inspired for the year to come.

*Anne Sherrod, Chairperson  
December 2003, Valhalla Wilderness Society*

**(OSPS echoes these concerns – we must STOP government from dismantling our park system! - Editor)**

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## SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS?

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This ideological shift to commercialization and privatization means that provincial parks will increasingly be managed less for the public good and ecological integrity and more for short-term profits and private interests. Furthermore, under far-reaching trade agreements like NAFTA and GATS once private operators have an expectation to profit from parks, any legislation or environmental safeguards that impact on these profits could require future governments to pay for the private operator's projected lost profits. As auditors PriceWaterhouseCoopers advised BC Parks in 2001, "Big outside investment money means big outside control."

*BC Parks, Summer 2004*

## **RDOS RIGHT GOOD CALL TO REQUEST ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY**

It takes living in a rural economy and lifestyle to appreciate our society's continued dependence on a healthy environment.

Proof of that is the move by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen to send a few letters to Victoria requesting an environmental impact assessment regarding coalbed methane exploration in the rural Princeton area.

But the South Okanagan and Similkameen region has no experience with large-scale gas extraction. A little caution goes a long way.

Who'd want to visit the region if the water supply was fouled by methane extraction? Who'd buy the fruit or the wine? Or the beef?

Like any good stakeholder, the regional district simply wants the homework done first.

Hopefully Victoria will take heed and make sure the environment doesn't get overlooked in the quest to find more revenues for a government eager to balance its books before the next election.

*Penticton Herald Editorial*

## **LAKESHORE PARK ON KELOWNA'S WESTSIDE WAS ACQUIRED IN 2002, BUT WON'T OPEN TO PUBLIC UNTIL 2005**



Though the park has been open for a few special occasions, such as the nut harvest in the fall, it will not be open at all to the public while development work takes place in the spring and summer of 2005.

The nut farm, unique to the Okanagan, started production in 1905 under the guidance of Westside pioneer David Gellatly. Seeds developed at the farm have been sold worldwide.

The Gellatly Nut Farm, purchased in 2002, remains closed to the public.

*June 4, 2004, The Okanagan*

## **NEWS FROM SUMMERLAND TRANS CANADA TRAIL SOCIETY**

The federal government, (through the softwood lumber accord), Tourism BC, our Regional District, and the provincial government, have all kicked in money to help make the Trans Canada Trail a reality throughout the Okanagan and across BC. What does this mean? The announcement about the exact amount of money will be forthcoming as this letter goes to print, so watch the papers and the next newsletter for all the details.

It seems that we'll have enough to replace two missing bridges west of Faulder and complete the missing link from Summerland to Faulder. Princeton and Naramata will also be receiving money for building the trail.

There're also \$38,000 in the pot towards the Trestle/Bridge project at the Summerland Research Station. This trestle, built in 1913, is the highest bridge on the KVR line and the third highest of its type in North America. The Summerland TCT Society (and you, our parks Society members) and the KVR Steam Train Society are all part of this project of making the trestle/bridge safe for cyclists, hikers, and eventually for the train. We hope to be finished by the end of September.

Unfortunately, our costs have escalated to almost double the \$75,000 we had projected, why? The railroad safety engineer made us change the design to a much more complicated (but better) wider walkway on either side of the bridge. There have been delays in getting the pressure-treated lumber that we had been promised, and we've had to hire security guards seven days a week after a safety cable was cut and some bolts went missing. So far, security has cost us \$15,000. Also, we had counted on being able to have lots of volunteer labour for construction. However, with WCB breathing down our necks, volunteer labour for most jobs was not allowed. All workers have to be bonded, insured and attached by safety harnesses because of the height of the structure.

This is why we're still into fund raising for the other \$75,000 that we'll need. If you can help, please send your donation to the Municipality of Summerland.

Write Municipality of Summerland (trestle/bridge project on your cheque). For donations over \$20, you will be issued a charity receipt, send your donation to the Municipal Hall, attention of Ken Ostraat, Box 159, Summerland, BC, V0H 1Z0.

If you've never been out on the bridge, you're in for a spectacular view of Trout Creek canyon once this project is completed. Please help make the bridge safe for all to enjoy!

*Submitted by Marilyn Hansen, pres., Summerland TCT Society*

*August 27, 2004*



## ALGONQUIN BECOMES FIRST PARK WITH SURROUNDING, PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR WOLVES

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On March 3, 2004, the Ontario Government announced a permanent ban on the killing of wolves in all townships surrounding Algonquin Provincial Park. These townships are about 10 to 15 km wide, and encompass almost as much land as within the 7,600 km<sup>2</sup> park. More importantly, it is within these townships that most wolf killing has occurred, as detailed in our research between 1987 and 1999. That mortality, through snaring and shooting, was threatening the viability of the population, causing a drop of 33% over the years of the study, and exacerbating the ongoing problem of gene swamping by coyotes.

This action represents a conservation milestone, the first time any park in North America and perhaps the world has enacted a permanent ban on killing a large carnivore adjacent to a park. Conservation organizations pressed the government repeatedly for several years to enact the ban, including World Wildlife Fund Canada, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, and Earthroots. The ban is significant given a general concern among conservation biologists that the large parks of the world are failing to protect the large carnivores of the world, due to competing land uses and exploitation around them. In a recent survey of Canadian National Parks, all but one park with resident wolves

reported a significant problem over exploitation of its transboundary wolf population.

Three years ago, the government enacted a temporary ban on wolf killing, to expire on June 30, 2004. However, a change in political party and leadership brought on a different sensitivity to the issue. In January, with media attention again beginning to focus on the plight of Algonquin Park's wolf population, and after meetings with environmental leaders, the government announced its intentions.

The government's announcement had two other components: a ban on the killing of coyotes as well as wolves, because snares cannot be set for one without catching the other, and hunters cannot distinguish easily between the components of the populations that overlap in size. Secondly, the province committed itself to the development of a province-wide wolf management strategy. In that strategy, hopefully, boundary protection may come for other parks, such as Pukaskwa National Park on the north shore of Lake Superior, where killing outside the park is also a particular problem. And, maybe Ontario's action at Algonquin be precedent setting even beyond, for Yellowstone, Denali, Riding Mountain and other parks.

*John and Mary Theberge*

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Dear Ms. While and Co-signers:

Thank you for your recent letter and petitions regarding the fee for parking in provincial parks and the tax cuts.

The government's net tax cuts total \$1.1 billion in 2004/05 of which \$835 million, or nearly 73 percent, are tax cuts to individuals. With these tax cuts, British Columbians now enjoy the lowest rate of provincial personal income tax for the bottom two tax brackets in Canada. Moreover, the tax burden, including income, consumption and property taxes, for British Columbia individuals and families is generally among the lowest in Canada.

The proposal to charge day use parking fees in some provincial day use is based on the Recreation Stewardship Panel report (2003). The report recommended that recreation services in provincial parks be funded by park users. The report was prepared with input from stakeholders throughout the province.

In 2003, day use parking fees were introduced in 28 park locations in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. In 2004, day use parking fees will be introduced in 13 parks in the Thompson and Okanagan regions. The fees will be one dollar for the first hour, or three dollars for the day. Revenue generated from these fees will go back into the parks system for the provision of recreational services.

As an alternative to daily fees, an annual park pass is available for \$50.00, which entitles the visitor to a full year of parking in any of the 41 parks that will have a day use parking fee in 2004.

I hope you will continue to enjoy the provincial parks in the future.

Sincerely,

Bill Barisoff, Minister

pc: Honourable Rick Thorpe, Minister of Provincial Revenue

***(Reply does not recognize our input but suggests we pay a lower tax so we can afford the fee! - Editor)***

## **ACTIONS AGAINST PARKS NOT SUPPORTABLE**

Dear Editor,

Government spin is truly wondrous.

In Bill Barisoff's letter responding to the recent article on the lack of interpretive and education programs in B.C. parks, the main message seems to be that parks are a drain on the economy and in order to save the parks services had to be cut and/or 'privatized', conservation and protection staff and programs had to be chopped, and parks had to become 'profitable'.

Now they have been degraded, but are "on solid financial ground", just maybe we can start thinking about protecting them again.

The fact parks have been shown to yield in the order of 25 times more 'profit' to the surrounding communities and the economy of the province as a whole than is put into them of taxpayers' money (about \$30 million annually in recent years) does not appear to count. To the Liberals, 'profitable' only seems to include what is on their balance sheets.

This economic argument also dismisses the environmental, social and recreational benefits of parks.

They house the vast array of creatures with whom we share this land and among other benefits to us are a respite from our hectic modern life. To say the government had only two choices shows a vast ignorance of what parks are and in of why people value them.

The equally cavalier statement that the new model for recreation "expand(s) recreation opportunities while maintaining conservation" is yet another bit of spin.

Parks and fish and wildlife recreation are all now on the same level, that is, restrictions previously put on parks use are reduced to the level of those on Crown land in general, whereas a major point of parks is to increase the level of protection.

The recent loosening of regulations on planes landing on lakes within

provincial parks is a good example of this levelling.

The government has not acted on any of the innovative measures recommended by the government-funded Recreation Stewardship Panel last year whose mandate was to examine new models, choosing to implement from the report only the parking fees.

On the interpretive programs specifically, the statement that "Under this new model, our park facility operators are able to provide interpretive services..." is most misleading.

I applaud those who have such programs: however, as the article by Joyce Langerak points out, this piecemeal way of handling interpretation and education is highly unsatisfactory, inconsistent from park to park and presenter to presenter, very limited in scope, and likely financially unsustainable.

To say as well that programs are being made available where there is public demand, as if this were an occasional and fragmented whim, ignores at least two major, taxpayer-funded, reports in the past five years, the previously mentioned Recreation Stewardship Panel and the Parks Legacy Panel.

These both stated categorically the vast majority of people in B.C. valued the parks primarily for conservation and secondarily for recreation, and they strongly supported park interpretation and education programs in general.

The few interpretive programs available are generally not run by trained nature interpreters, are available infrequently whereas the government-funded ones were on every day, and lack consistency as to how the program is run, the content, or the reliability of the information given out. There are no standards or monitoring of delivery.

Most people only value what they

know about, and in our urbanized world, most are woefully ignorant about wild lands and their inhabitants. And where else can residents and out-of-province visitors find specific, and yes even entertaining, information about these magnificent places?

Regarding safety, how do people unused to being in such areas learn how to behave to protect themselves and wildlife? Websites aren't sufficient and the extremely valuable maps, brochures, etc. formerly distributed are not being reprinted or replaced with new ones. People need to learn in particular parks and about particular situations they may encounter.

One should note the recently announced \$4.2 million for parks is strictly for front-country facilities, not for wildlife conservation. Trail maintenance outside areas near major access routes is almost non-existent as are money and staff to carry out basic inventory of wildlife and other data collection essential for any serious conservation work or to enforce regulations within and outside parks. Conservation is not on the agenda.

Mr. Barisoff reiterates the point over which we had an exchange of letters last winter, namely that one must have a strong economy before one can 'afford' to protect the environment, including parks.

This putting the cart before the horse is astounding in a province such as B.C., so proud of its dependence on so-called 'natural resources'; it also neatly ignores the very large economic spin-offs of parks to nearby communities and the economy as a whole.

This government's actions against our parks and protected areas are not supportable. The lack of interpretive and education programs is only one of the more glaring examples of this obtuse attitude.

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Federation of B.C. Naturalists,  
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