

OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

February 2006

P.O. Box 787, Summerland, B.C. V0H 1Z0

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41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

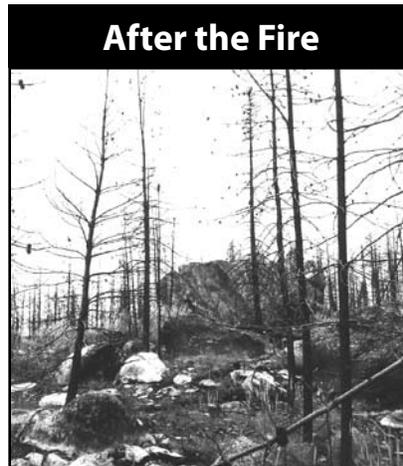
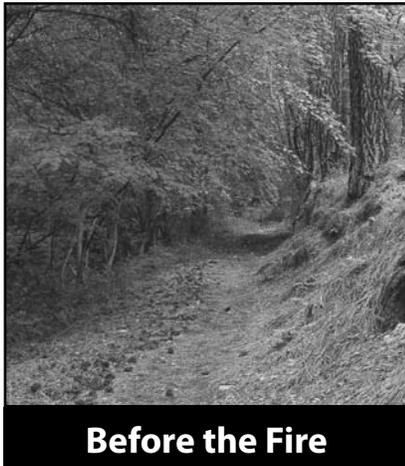
presenting

“A Record of Nature in Progress” in Okanagan Mountain Park

a slide show of recovery by

HAROLD BAUMBROUGH of Naramata

‘naturalist extraordinaire’



Harold was born in Vernon where he received his elementary and secondary education. After graduating from UBC, he taught general science and biology in a Vancouver secondary school. In 1964, he and his wife, Lydia, moved to Penticton. For the next 31 years he taught biology at Penticton Secondary.

The Okanagan Mountain Park fire of 2003 provided the opportunity to record, virtually in his back yard, the regrowth and restoration that was certain to take place. Beginning in the fall of 2003 and carrying on through 2004 and 2005, Harold has documented in journals and by photography this incredible process known more formally as biological succession. His study area is located near the eastern edge of the burned area northeast of Naramata. In April, he will begin once again taking weekly trips to the area recording the changes that are occurring.

CENTRE STAGE THEATRE ~ Rosedale Ave., Summerland

MARCH 10 ~ 7 p.m.

ALL WELCOME ~ NO CHARGE

Refreshments • Donations Welcome

Donations are appreciated anytime - tax receipt will be issued. OSPS appreciates your continued support in our attempts to save OUR parks. 2006 memberships at \$10.00 individual, \$15.00 family, \$20.00 organization have been rolling in. THANKS!

Uranium Mine Seen as Threat to Native Rights

The Penticton Indian band says it's gravely concerned about the prospect of a uranium mine being established within its traditional territory.

Signet Minerals Inc. of Comox announced last week it had acquired the exploration rights to a 600-hectare uranium and precious metals project, about 25 kilometres northwest of Penticton.

According to a company news release, the Aura project's uranium deposit is similar to those found in Brent Lake and Farleigh Lake, about seven kilometres to the south.

Under terms of its agreement with two private owners, Signet has an option to acquire a 100-percent interest in the claims for \$1 million over 10 years. The claims may also contain gold and silver deposits.

The company is compiling historic data from assessment work and is planning initial exploration plans.

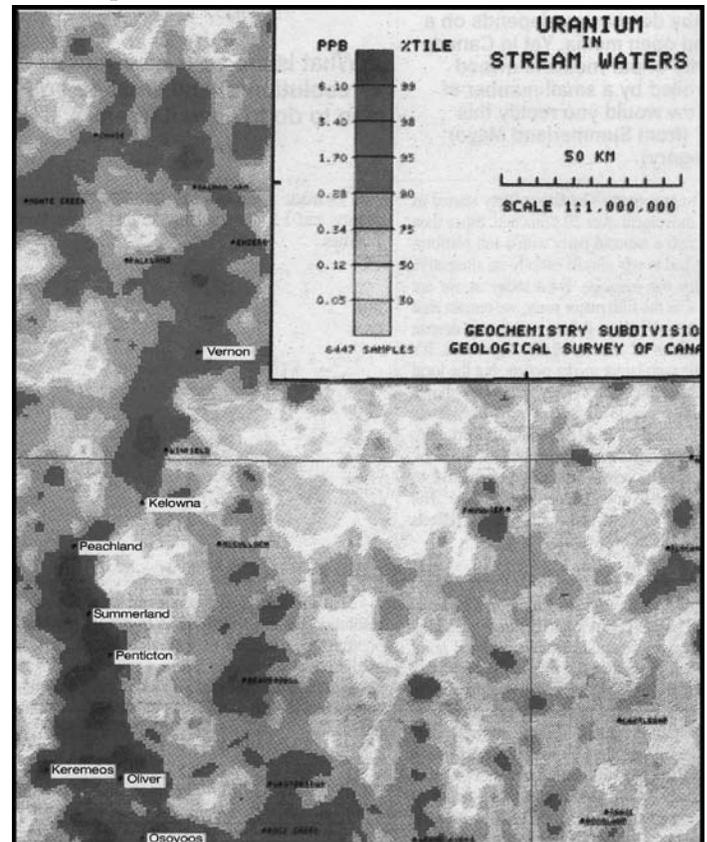
However, the Penticton Indian band says the announcement represents a serious threat to its aboriginal title and rights.

Chief Stewart Phillip said in a letter to energy, mines and petroleum resources Minister Richard Neufeld that the lands lie in the Seven Peaks area, which the band considers part of its traditional territory: "This recent announcement in our view represents an enormous threat to the environment, wildlife and water within those areas and also represents an unacceptable infringement upon our constitutional enshrined titles and rights," he said.

Penticton Herald, Nov. 25, 2005

Princeton resident attempts to sue province - Former lawyer fears coal bed methane wells will pollute the area's watershed with toxic metals and salts.

Penticton Herald, Dec. 1, 2005



Uranium concentration: The darker areas on this geothermal map show where the concentration of uranium is highest in stream waters in the Interior of BC.

EXPERT OFFERS TIPS TO AVOID BEAR ATTACKS

The first principle of safety is to prevent an encounter .

Bryn White offers the following tips:

- Don't go alone. Make plenty of noise.
- Watch for bear signs - scratching on trees, ripped-apart logs, bear scat, scavenger birds that may be feasting on a carcass or even the presence of cubs.
- Runners and bikers must be extra cautious because moving quickly increases the likelihood of surprising or startling bears.

Should you encounter a bear that is not aware of your presence:

- Quietly leave the area.

- Do not run. That could invite pursuit.
- Go back the way you came, or if you continue your hike, cautiously change your route, giving the bear ample space.

Should you encounter a bear that is aware of you:

- Identify yourself as a human by talking slowly and waving your arms.
- Carefully go back the way you came, keeping an eye on the bear and watching for any change in its behaviour.

There are several reasons a bear might consider you a threat. Have you surprised the bear? Does it have cubs? Is it defending a food source? If so:

- Do not run. Stay together as a group. Pick up small children.

Con't next page

PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LAND

Once again Agricultural Land Reserve owners and friends are facing the problem of the incursion of development on property that was meant to be saved for the production of food.

Most recently the Agricultural Land Commission in the East Kootenays has seen fit to exclude 267 hectares (660 acres, or more than a section) of active ranch land despite protestations from the lessee, the Windermere District Farmers' Institute and Livestock Association, as well as a committee of the local government.

This will now allow an Alberta real estate developer to build additional recreational and residential homes for wealthy Alberta oil barons. The ludicrous action of the commission was justified with the statement that "development (of the land) for recreational and residential homes would take similar development pressure off other agricultural land in the area."

Last year, despite objections from citizen groups, the Municipality of Summerland went ahead to give a developer permission to apply for exclusion of 155 hectares (383 acres) of land. The pathetic attempt by the land commission of the Okanagan region to appear democratic by allowing the public discussion of the exclusion, when the decision to exclude had already been made, was a pitiful excuse for democracy. That the action of the municipal council promoting this exclusion was wrong was shown in November's election in which only two members of the previous administration were returned.

Now this year, Penticton also faces the prospect of having ALR properties excluded by this same commission.

An historic 25-hectare (64 acre) farm in the area of Hope is also in the process of becoming an industrial park despite protestations from people in that area. And I could go on and on.

This quotation from the ALR website:

"The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. Farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are controlled."

We keep trying to point out to people in B.C. that ALR land supports more than 200,000 British Columbians, contributes \$2.2 billion to our economy and still provides 50 percent of our food needs.

Obviously, the pressure on the land commissions throughout B.C. is coming from our pro-business Liberal government. When is the next provincial election?

*Frank Martens, Summerland
Penticton Herald, Jan. 23, 2006*

-
- Prepare to use your bear spray.
 - Hold your ground as the bear charges, speaking calmly and non-threateningly.
 - If the charge or approach stops, increase your distance from the bear while watching for another charge.
 - If it charges again, hold your ground. If it stops short, increase the distance between you and the bear.

If the bear follows through on its charge and makes contact with you, this is the time to play dead and show it you are not a threat.

- Lie on your stomach with hands protecting your head and neck.
- Keep your backpack on to protect your body.
- Spread your legs so it will be more difficult for the bear

to turn you over. Protect your vital organs.

- Do not cry out or move until the bear has left the area.

If the attack is prolonged, or the bear starts eating, it's time to fight back.

Rarely, a bear will see you as a source of food. Sometimes it will test its dominance or simply be curious about you. In such instances, the bear does not appear stressed, but focussed, approaching intently with ears erect, either circling, zig-zagging and glancing at you periodically:

- Do not run. Stay in a group. Pick up small children.

*Joyce Langerak
Penticton Herald, June 9, 2005*

Update: Activities of the SOSNPN (South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Network)

In January, 2005, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society hosted a meeting of conservation organizations active in the SOS area that resulted a consensus to establish a network (as versus a formal organization) to provide a cooperative umbrella for promoting a national park. All of the above organizations have written letters of support to the federal government twice over the past 2 years. These letters have been important expressions of local support.

Under the umbrella of the South Okanagan Similkameen Network for a National Park (SOSNPN), a number of loosely coordinated activities have taken place focussed on increasing public awareness and support.

- 1) three poster boards were produced for use at public events, and a set of volunteers took them to: farmers markets repeatedly in Penticton, Oliver and Osoyoos;
 - the Desert Center's Romancing the Moon
 - the Mt. Kobau Star Party
 - the Dominion Observatory's open house.
- 2) four information sessions were run for businesses in Penticton, Oliver, Osoyoos and Cawston, with Parks Canada's Doug Harvey as presenter. These form an initial round of contacts with the business community, which we hope will be followed up when more economic information becomes available.
- 3) two public sessions with speaker being the Revelstoke Economic Development Officer.
- 4) glossy brochure promoting the park produced in bulk by CPAWS and available to whoever will distribute them.
- 5) mail-in cards produced by CPAWS, also available.
- 6) a 2-page economic fact sheet on the proposed park produced by J. and M. Theberge. (The brochure and cards were distributed at the above forums, as well as by individuals to circulate through naturalist clubs and among other potential supporters.)
- 7) letter writing by the Central Okanagan Naturalist club and North Okanagan Naturalist Club.
- 8) trips into the high country to acquaint people with the area, lead by Harry Nielsen.
- 9) presentations by Bob Lincoln and by J. and M. Theberge to local clubs about the proposed park.

So far, Parks Canada has received more than 1,000 cards and letters. That is a good start, but we need to increase that amount.

Funding for various activities has been successfully procured by CPAWS, including the part-time hiring of a local communications leader to work on our behalf, Doreen Olson. Doreen ran the work with the business community mentioned above, based on a contract with funds procured by the Theberges. As well, additional funding through CPAWS has resulted in a detailed economic analysis of the impact of a national park that will be completed soon.

We are a loosely-knit group, with an objective of facilitating volunteer efforts as they arise. As Parks Canada continues to provide additional information, such as proposed boundaries and acceptable activities, we will need to increase the activities of our Network, and possibly coordinate to a greater degree. We are open to, and need ideas on how to gain greater public exposure and support for a national park here. We ask organizations and individuals to think about activities that they may be willing to undertake, and let us know so that we can provide periodic information exchange among you, the key supporters.

*John and Mary Theberge
CPAWS-BC Okanagan Reps*

According to information collected by biologists Mary and John Theberge:

- Parks Canada has a \$20 million-plus budget for establishment and initial operation of a national park in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.
- Parks Canada estimates an operations and maintenance budget for a park in this area to be \$2 million per year.
- In British Columbia, for every dollar spent by Parks Canada, there is a 9.3 times multiplier in direct and spin-off expenditures by visitors.
- In 2000-2001, Parks Canada spent \$34.5 million in British Columbia, which generated visitor spending of \$320.3 million.
- Applying the above to the South Okanagan-Similkameen, the anticipated annual infusion into the economy is \$20.6 million per year.
- In 2000-2001, Parks Canada had 970 full-time equivalent employees in B.C., generating another 4,796 full-time equivalent jobs in the visitor services industry.

Okanagan Sunday, Dec. 4, 2005



The world's only Inland Temperate Rainforest and the world's only mountain caribou are found in southeastern BC. The old-growth rainforest has trees up to 1,500 years old or older. Some people say that forests such as these are the cathedrals of Canada.

Sadly, this rare ancient rainforest is disappearing because of clear-cut logging. The caribou that live in these mountains are unique and rare. But these shy and gentle creatures are on the verge of extinction because logging has destroyed too much of their old-growth habitat.

The BC Species At Risk Coordination Office is asking for public input on whether five of the remaining 13 herds should be allowed to die out. The spotlight of blame is being focussed upon wolves and cougars, and the killing of these predators is receiving far more attention than maintaining and restoring habitat. Predator extermination would only keep the caribou herds propped up long enough for the timber industry to cut the rest of their habitat. Eventually, the Inland Rainforest Region could have no caribou and no wolves or cougars either. Please read the information we've provided and take some time to send SaRCO your input.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

- Immediate moratorium on logging caribou habitat.
- A truly independent multi-disciplinary science panel for the inland rainforest.
- New and expanded parks - The Craighead Environmental Research Institute recommends that 55% of the Inland Rainforest Region must be fully protected to save large carnivores, caribou and salmon.
- Special management areas - The Craighead Environmental Research Institute recommends that 30% of the Inland Rainforest Region be designated for harvesting techniques that will maintain biodiversity. This should include Mountain Caribou Recovery Areas and harvesting techniques such as selection logging with high levels of old-growth retention.
- No more old-growth logging in the ICH-ESSF of the Inland Rainforest Region.

Valhalla Park Threatened by Lodge Development

Any proposals for new lodges will have a full environmental impact assessment and public hearing - Given the record, it is highly unlikely that an environmental impact assessment would actually turn down a development. The result is usually to build the development and have "mitigation" and "monitoring". There is no way a lodge can be built in the park in a way that would be safe for ecological and wilderness



BC Parks Lodge Strategy identifies the Wicca/Drinnon Lake area of Valhalla Park as a potential lodge site. Numerous other parks have been identified for potential lodges.

values; monitoring is useless because if ecological damage occurs, the lodge cannot be removed.

A lodge would have to be consistent with the park zoning - the sensitive areas VWS are zoned to allow a hut or lodge.

Valhalla Society

**Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society
Box 787, Summerland, B.C. V0H 1Z0
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Postal Code: _____

Individual (\$10.00) _____ Family (\$15.00) _____ Organization (\$20.00) _____

Donation: _____ (Income Tax Deductible)

Please help support our continuing programs

UPDATE: Species at Risk

Chinook salmon designated endangered after emergency assessment.

After an emergency assessment in May 2005, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) recommended that the Okanagan population of Chinook salmon be declared endangered under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

Already the only remaining Columbia Basin population of Chinook salmon in Canada, the severely depleted Okanagan population risks imminent extinction due to a combination of factors, most notably changes in fisheries downstream in the Columbia River that are expected this summer. Habitat loss, overfishing, dams, the presence of non-native fishes, and hatchery projects also contribute to the Chinook salmon's current status.

The assessment was requested by the Fisheries Department of the Okanagan Nation Alliance, a First Nations

organization concerned about this unique population.

Five hundred species are now considered to be at risk by COSEWIC. Visit cosewic.gc.ca for more information.

Nature Canada, Fall 2005



The Okanagan Chinook salmon is the only population remaining in Canada's Columbia Basin.

Fish Kill to Last 'Generations'

Salmon and other fish species in the Cheakamus River will take 50 years or more to recover from a devastating toxic chemical spill last summer, according to reports obtained by *The Vancouver Sun*. The government-written reports say more than 500,000 adult and young salmon, steelhead, trout, lamprey and other species died of suffocation from "severe burns" to their gills from a "concentrated pulse" of caustic soda after a CN Rail car derailed and dumped its contents into the river.

Nearly all fish were killed along an 18-kilometre stretch of the Cheakamus, while effects were also noted in the Squamish River downstream of its confluence with the Cheakamus.

"The effects of the (Aug. 5) caustic soda spill on the fish community in the Cheakamus was immediate, severe in nature and will be persistent for many generations" says one report co-written by provincial and federal fisheries biologists.

The authors note the role of salmon as a keystone in the Pacific Northwest ecosystem food web and say it is "possible and probable" that the impact of the spill will also be felt by birds and animals that rely on Cheakamus salmon for food.

Public outrage is building toward a confrontational pitch in Squamish, where fishing-related businesses are suffering and anglers complain that neither CN nor government agencies are moving quickly enough to deal with a situation that is described by one expert biologist as the worst spill of its kind in British Columbia's history.

"I have two young sons who may never be able to fish the river," laments fishing guide Dave Brown. "When the accident happened I was sick to my stomach and just devastated."

*Scott Simpson
The Vancouver Sun, Feb. 7, 2006*

FBCN **Parks and Protected Area** Coordinator, Eva Durance has written a letter to express FBCN concern over the proposal from Fairmont Hot Springs Resorts to remove a section of Columbia Lake Provincial Park from park status so that they can construct an access road to an expanded resort complex they are planning. The FBCN letter explains the impact that road bisection of the park would have on recreational and ecological values, and further states, "The matter of removing lands from parks for the benefit of private commercial interests is also of great concern to our members because of the precedent this would set for the incremental erosion of park values elsewhere in the province."

Province paves way for Brigade Trail Park, which runs from Priest Camp to L'Arbre Seul

SUMMERLAND - Provincial approval of Summerland's Brigade Trail Park will kick-start the town's 2006 centennial celebrations.

The trail extends from Priest Camp at the southern edge of Garnett Lake northeast to the spectacular viewpoint at L'Arbre Seul (Lone Tree) overlooking Okanagan Lake.

Last week, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands approved a 10-year lease for the approximately 0.5 kilometres of the trail that traverses Crown land.

The remainder of the 4.1-km long linear park runs through District of Summerland land. Linear parks are usually 100 metres wide.

Priest Camp and L'Arbre Seul were in existence in the early 1800s, before any other non-native site or settlement in the Okanagan Valley.

L'Arbre Seul was first identified on maps dating back to 1827, and the settlement at Priest on maps made in 1850.

Pandosy's Mission in Kelowna was founded in 1860.

The Brigade Trail Park is the only site that preserves a portion of the original trail that ran from Astoria, Ore., on the Pacific Coast to Fort Alexandria in north-central

British Columbia.

Previously, the trail was also called the Hudson Bay Fur Brigade Trail and the Cariboo Trail.

The portion of the trail in the new park was a well-used native trail that has been in existence for at least 700 years, according to Bob Harris, noted expert on British Columbia trails.

The park trail has approximately two percent gradient and takes about 45 minutes to walk one way.

"Bring your camera, because L'Arbre Seul at the end of the trail provides one of the finest views of Okanagan Lake," said David Gregory, centennial committee chair and mayor-elect. (David Gregory - Mayor)

Penticton Herald, Nov. 29, 2005

Rather than have Cartwright Mt. developed, I would like to see it become a park. Actually, the municipality should have done this years ago before a developer bought it for development and it was put into our OCP as such. I have wondered about starting a specific Society for such, with people purchasing shares (or a Trust Fund).

Frank Martens

Water Won't be Heading South

Dry southern U.S. states will be unable to take massive sips from the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence basin under a deal reached Tuesday by Ontario, Quebec and other jurisdictions that border the waterways.

The Ontario government called the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources

Agreement a "historic" deal that will essentially prohibit massive, bulk water exports from the freshwater lakes.

Ontario signed the deal in Milwaukee alongside representatives from eight American states - Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Quebec also signed the deal since the St. Lawrence River is con-

nected to the Great Lakes, which account for one-fifth of the world's fresh water supply.

The deal, which still requires endorsement by the U.S. Congress, is meant to prevent thirsty states in the southern U.S. from diverting massive amounts of water to their own jurisdictions.

Penticton Herald, Dec. 14, 2005

Park proposed for land south of Westbank

A new park should be established in one of the Central Okanagan's last big undeveloped areas, recreation enthusiasts say.

The so-called Goat's Peak region between Westbank and Peachland, between Okanagan Lake and Highway 97, has sweeping views and appealing terrain, members of the regional parks advisory committee heard this week.

"It's a beautiful property, with benchlands, humps and

hollows," park advocate John Reddick said Friday.

The land, covering about 160 hectares, is privately owned and slated for residential development.

"Ideally, we would like to see it all preserved as parkland, but it's early days yet," said Reddick, spokesman for the Central Okanagan Naturalist club and the Gellatly Bay Trails and Parks Society.

Okanagan Sunday, Jan. 29, 2006

Most Offspring Died When Mother Rats are Genetically Engineered Soy

The Russian scientist planned a simple experiment to see if eating genetically modified (GM) soy might influence offspring. What she got, however, was an astounding result that may threaten a multi-billion dollar industry.

Irina Ermakova, a leading scientist at the Institute of Higher Nervous Activity and Neurophysiology of the

Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), added GM soy flour (5-7 grams) to the diet of female rats. Other females were fed non-GM soy or no soy at all. The experimental diet began two weeks before the rats conceived and continued through pregnancy and nursing.

Ermakova's first surprise came when her pregnant rats started giving birth. Some pups from GM-fed mothers were quite a bit smaller. After 2

weeks, 36% of them weighed less than 20 grams compared to about 6% from the other groups.

But the real shock came when the rats started dying. Within three weeks, 25 of the 45 (55.6%) rats from the GM soy group died compared to only 3 of 44 (6.8%) from the non-soy controls.

Watershed Sentinel, Jan.-Feb., 2006

ALR WATCH

More Farmers are Cashing Out of Agriculture

After 40 years, California's main tool for preserving agricultural land is facing its biggest test as growth and sprawl smash against protected land. Since 1965, a state law called the Williamson Act has offered lower property tax rates in return for a 10-year commitment by the landowner to farm the parcel or use it for grazing. Of California's 30 million acres of prime agricultural and grazing land, more than 16.6 million acres are under this protection. But spiraling land values and rapacious growth in the Central Valley - and the state's other rural areas - have put more pressure on landowners to cancel their contracts.

*San Francisco Chronicle for ALR Watch -
Harold King, Director*

Park Visitor Services and Nature Interpretation

Once again in 2005 the FBCN sponsored the hiring of a dozen summer students to assist park interpreters in BC's provincial parks. Work with park interpreters, we submitted applications, handled the documentation required for the subsidy provided by Human Skills and Resources Development Canada, and funded the payroll administration costs for these young people, some of whom will hopefully make a career in nature interpretation. Much credit is due to the FBCN's office manager, Maria Hamann, for her expert handling of the extensive paperwork involved.

During our September visit to meet Barry Penner, BC's new Minister of the Environment, he was impressed with the FBCN's summer student program and he invited the FBCN to submit a proposal for expanding visitor services and nature interpretation in BC's provincial parks. We hope for a positive outcome to this proposal.

Federation of BC Naturalists

TRANS CANADA TRAIL TALK: Summerland

The past year really was successful. Thank you, partner, OSPS! The trail from Prairie Valley Station, (Bathville Rd.) to Faulder (about 6 km.) is now completed. We still need to do some grading work on the few first loose gravel kilometres near Prairie Valley Station, but the latter half of the trail, built in 2005, has an excellent hard surface. If you want to see for yourself, drive to Kettle Place at Faulder, park

your car, and walk back towards Summerland on this beautiful non-motorized trail next to Trout Creek. Long retaining walls built up from the



high water level of the creek provide sufficient width for the trail between the creek and the tracks of the KVR steam train. Geoff Solly built and installed memorial benches for your comfort. (We still need a few more. They can have an inscription for any occasion.) You'll also enjoy the descriptive fauna signs donated by the Bronfman Foundation and recently installed by Henri Frioud and Geoff Solly. Earlier ones were installed by Henri and Bill Johnston.

We're still fund-raising for the trestle-bridge, called "Trout Creek 1", near the Summerland Research Station. Wouldn't it be nice to see your name on our new donors' board at the north end of the bridge? Recognition plaques begin at \$100. There are designations for different amounts. But we'll welcome any donations.

In the beginning of last year, there were the ghostly remains of Trout Creek 2 bridge west of Faulder. Only the cement piers remained of the former KVR railway structure. Now there's a brand new bridge, all paid for by Tourism BC and the Trans Canada Trail Foundation, so that a formerly difficult spot on our (and your!) trail can be navigated safely.



Trout Creek 3 bridge is finished, too. The only remaining unfinished structure on Summerland's section of Trans Canada Trail is Trout Creek 4 bridge near Osprey Lake. The steel understructure is in place, but we are scrambling for funds to finish that and 55 metres of safety fencing, mandated by the railway safety inspector, on the route from Prairie Valley Station. Eventually, we also hope to have descriptive history and flora signs with native uses of plants on the route.

We must mention the heroic clean-up work done all along our trail by Edgar and Lillian Kelbert of Summerland. We've grateful for their regular conscious care!

To find out how you can donate to a wonderful project for your use and for completing the Trans Canada Trail for future generations, please call the number below. If you want to be a helpful member of the Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society, you can call the same number. We'd love to have you be part of this vision! Our Feb. meeting is the 13th at 7:00 p.m. upstairs in the Tourism building on highway 97. Please use the back stairway entrance.

*Submitted by Marilyn Hansen
pres., Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society
ph. (250) 494-9265.*



Provincial Overcut To Increase

By Jim Cooperman

The beetle epidemic, fuelled by climate change, is resulting in huge increases in the province's allowable annual cut. Recently, chief forester Jim Snetsinger announced the latest increases; 745,000 cubic metres/year in the Okanagan TSA and 200,000 cubic metres for TFL 49. All told, the provincial increase so far has been 14,790,039 cu m and the forest service is already looking at another 8,115,207 cu m increase.

The impact on ecosystems and on future harvest levels will be significant. Lodgepole pine forests account for approximately 25 percent of the forestland base and most of these trees are forecast to be dead or

dying within the next ten years.

Despite the rising AACs, the actual amount of wood logged has lagged behind the allowable cut levels. This "undercut" has varied from 2.5 million to as high as nearly 9 million cubic metres in 2001. In the interior of the province, companies are still "ramping up" their operations to be able to cut more pine. On the coast, the cut had only been kept propped up due to high cedar prices, which are now falling. Most of quality timber on the coast is now gone and companies can no longer find markets for the hemlock that dominates the remaining stands. Logging costs on the coast are also a factor, as it is very expensive to log these hard to access forests.

Coastal companies have been pressuring the government to get into the second-growth forests. If they are successful, the Ministry will require that the AAC will have to drop significantly as the remaining stands of old growth hemlock will have to be removed from the timber harvesting land base since companies cannot find markets for it. Meanwhile, on their vast private forestland holding on Vancouver Island, companies have been creaming off the second growth, with much of this quality timber shipped offshore as raw logs.

Despite the increased cut in the interior, much of the massive volume of dead lodgepole pine will never be logged. Of the close to one billion cubic metres forecast to be killed

by the beetles, anywhere from one to two-thirds will be left on the landscape. Nonetheless, problems abound with the massive increase in salvage logging. Companies are taking advantage of the urgency to log, the relaxed regulations and the lack of government monitoring. A “by-catch” of other green tree species is being exploited and feller bunchers often mow down the young trees (advanced regeneration) that would have matured far sooner than the seedlings getting planted in the cutblocks. Plus there is the increase in the negative impacts on watersheds, recreation values and wildlife habitat.

Part of the AAC increase is also due to a leftover policy from the 1990s, the Innovative Forestry Practices Agreement (IFPA). Forest companies have been awarded increases in Merritt, Vanderhoof, Kamloops and most recently, the Okanagan timber supply areas. Supposedly these companies have demonstrated that their innovative practices will result in higher growth rates and thus deserve higher cut levels, even though most foresters now admit that no forestry practice can result in increased growth. Instead, these companies have used voodoo growth and yield data to predict the trees are growing faster than previously

estimated. Predicting faster growth in the face of climate change impacts such as drought, disease and more bugs seems absurd, especially when AACs are now predicted to drop significantly in the not-so-distant future when most of the pine forests are gone.

Most likely, the entire forest industry stands like a house of cards. Once the beetle-killed pine has been logged, the crash will likely be significant. Already, mills are closing or have closed across the province; in Malakwa, Midway, Clearwater and elsewhere. Often the softwood war is used as a scapegoat; when the real cause has been decades of overcutting that has focused on the easy to access, high quality stands of timber. And since companies have been planting too many blocks

with lodgepole pine, the impact could stretch on for many decades, especially now that the beetles are decimating plantations as young as twenty years.

If forestry were managed to sustain all forest values, the chief forester would require licensees to focus as much of the cut as possible in beetle-killed lodgepole pine forests. Recent forest service harvest billing data shows 40 percent of the volume logged coming from lodgepole pine, but ideally the percentage should be double. Interior forest companies should have to switch to logging only beetle-killed pine during the epidemic so the AAC would not have to increase, more non-timber values could be protected and the impending falldown would be lessened.

Summary of AAC and Harvest Billings 2000 to 2005 - Crown Land			
Year	AAC	Volume (m3)	Difference
2000	71,429,075	68,835,668.70	2,593,406.3
2001	72,379,806	63,486,914.88	8,892,891.1
2002	76,214,108	68,126,850.62	8,087,257.4
2003	74,817,792	67,707,301.66	7,110,490.3
2004	78,045,311	74,367,403.35	3,677,907.7
2005	82,500,311	66,009,979.03	16,490,332.0

Notes: 1) Volume Billed* Province by Year of Scale - 2005 is not complete year of billing. *all logs, special forest products, species and grades billed to Crown land including waste. Private, Federal, Xmas trees and reject are excluded. 2) AAC is reported as of July 1st as it would be the most representative number for the year as whole.

Canada Still Lags on Sustainability

A new study, commissioned by the David Suzuki Foundation, found that Canada ranked 28th out of 30 industrialized nations on key indicators of environmental performance. These indicators include energy consumption, water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, air pollutants, pesticide use and amount of protected areas.

Perhaps the most embarrassing finding to emerge from the report is that Canada has shown no improvement over the last decade. Canada’s rank today is the same as it was in 1992: 28th out of 30. (Only Belgium and the United States performed worse.) Why hasn’t there been any improvement? It seems the lack of strong environmental policy is the answer.

*Winter 2005 Newsletter
David Suzuki Foundation*