

OSPS NEWSLETTER

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

May 2004

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HANSEN RECEIVES LIFE MEMBERSHIP FROM PARKS SOCIETY

Summerlander has contributed 38 years to parks group

Juergen Hansen has been involved with the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society almost as long as the group has been in existence.

Last Friday the Summerland resident received an honorary life membership from the society for his 38 years of valuable service. The presentation was made during the group's annual general meeting.

"I joined the year after the society began," adds Hansen.

The group first formed in 1965.

"They were the only group at the time that was doing anything with parks in the area," recalls Hansen.

At the meeting, Don Sloan, president of the society, spoke of Hansen's significant contribution to the group over the years. During his time with the society, Hansen was president for a few years in the 1980's, and has been a director.

One of the major accomplishments Hansen and the other society members made since the group began, was securing the protection of Bighorn Sheep winter range land east of Vaseux Lake. Hansen says the members of the society helped come up with the money to purchase the land.

"It cost about \$40,000 at that time," he adds.

The group then sold it to the Canadian Wildlife Service who now looks after it.

Another major role the society has played over the years is establishing and working to protect parks such as Okanagan Mountain Park, Brent Mountain and Cathedral Lakes throughout the South Okanagan.

"We were the major power pushers for these," says Hansen.

Since securing these parks, the society decided to branch out and look at ecology both in and outside parks. Hansen says ecology in the area is an ongoing issue that the society continues to work on.

He adds that the goal is to protect various lands from air and water pollution, pesticides and excessive use of chemical fertilizers. This also includes pushing for selection logging and small clear cuts.



"Many of these things can't be shaped into law, but have to be negotiated year after year."

One of the current issues at hand for the Society is negotiating with the provincial government to stay out of Okanagan Mountain Park, especially with respects to logging.

"It's mostly burnt down and should be left alone because it's a wilderness park," he explains.

Hansen notes that any human activity will destroy the character of the park.

"We want natural regrowth."

Hansen, who was born in Hamburg, Germany, pursued his love of plants and nature through his studies at the university in Germany and later received a scholarship to attend university in Wisconsin where he attained his Ph.D in Plant Pathology. Following graduation, Hansen went to Costa Rica for five years, where he worked on cocoa diseases.

Once he returned to Wisconsin for two more years, Hansen and his wife Marilyn eventually moved to Summerland, where they have resided ever since.

Since living in Summerland, Hansen has worked at the Summerland Pacific Agri Food Research Centre from 1965 to 1991 and during that time researched virus diseases of tree fruit and grapes.

*By Roxanna Maron
Summerland Review, March 11, 2004*

IF YOU HAVE A RED DOT with your address you have an enclosed membership form. (Individual \$10., Family \$15, Organization \$20.) Donations are appreciated anytime - tax receipt will be issued. OSPS appreciates your continued support in our attempts to save OUR parks.

OSPS ANNUAL MEETING

At the 39th Annual General Meeting, Dr. John and Mary Theberge charmed the attendees with their slides and talk on Wolves. Questions about their study were still being asked an hour and a quarter after their presentation ended. They were thrilled to announce the 3-year moratorium on the wolf kill had been extended by the Ontario Government based mainly on the long-term study in Algonquin Park done by the Theberges. The couple now reside in Oliver and we expect continuing reports of their work.

At the Annual General Meeting which preceded the presentation, Treasurer Bert White reported a six thousand dollar increase in Net Worth, resulting partly from a decrease in expenditures in 2003.

The Annual Election saw Directors, John Bremmer, Joe and Jessica Klein and Clive Johnson returned and the welcome member Don Guild to the Directorate. Don has retired from his work with Telus and looks forward to furthering the work of OSPS as well as his other naturalist club interests. The six elected directors join the six who were elected in 2003.

COPIES OF THE WESTERN WILDERNESS COMMITTEE REPORT "Public Forest at Risk", A History of Okanagan-Similkameen Parks Society, and reports pertaining to the meeting were made available. As well, the book "WOLF COUNTRY" by John and Mary Theberge was for sale.

R.D. White, Editor

NEW CENSUS CONFIRMS CRASH IN LOCAL MOUNTAIN CARIBOU POPULATIONS

Results of the 2004 census of the Mountain Caribou herds in the Kootenay region have confirmed the population crash of 2002. Numbers are continuing to show population declines for most herds in the Kootenay region, confirming recent scientific studies that are predicting extirpation for all Kootenay herds within 40 years. These predictions include even the once populous Revelstoke herds. The Central Selkirk herd that resides in an area between New Denver and the southern Boundaries of Glacier National Park has declined in population by 67% since 1996.

"The BC government is ruthlessly driving this priceless species to extinction," says Craig Pettitt, a director of the Valhalla Wilderness Society. "Scientists state that habitat destruction by clearcut logging is the major cause for this population decline. An immediate moratorium needs to be placed on all activities within caribou habitat including logging, to stop further declines in these populations."

In 2001 China had 2,500 giant pandas left; Africa had 2,700 black rhinoceros. The world put pressure upon China and Africa to stop the loss of these species, despite the fact that over population and poverty made it very difficult for these countries to set aside wildlife habitat. In 2002, BC's once numerous population of mountain caribou had diminished to only 1,900 animals. The BC and Canadian governments have disgracefully colluded in hastening the disappearance of this species. Canada is not a Third World country, yet the BC government is allowing logging companies to relentlessly destroy the life support of this species, while the federal government looks the other way.

Caribou were first identified as a "species at risk" and placed on the provincial Blue List in 1993 by the Conservation Data Centre. Despite

SUMMERLAND TRAIL PROJECT

The Shaughnessy Trail, a centennial project to honor our past by building a walking path linking our historic roots in lower town with our present day downtown core, has preceded a step further.

Tourists today are seeking a recreational component to their holiday or day's outing.

They will find many parking locations along the route from which to start their hike.

The Centennial Committee is now seeking community involvement to make this trail project a reality. Presently, there are four sections of varying lengths that require upgrading and the repair or replacement of the pedestrian bridges.

Any club or organization that feels they would like to make the upgrading of a section of the trail their contribution to Summerland's Centennial, can do so by contacting either Bill Atkinson at 494-1382, or Don Henderson at 494-8570 for further details.

this recognition we continued to log their habitat and drive them out of critical late winter habitat with snowmobiles. These practices are continuing at present despite the population declines and need to be stopped immediately.

Statistics show that 285,000 ha of caribou habitat have been logged since 1960, forcing these animals onto poorer habitat and placing them into greater proximity of predators, while another 9,000 ha of logging is proposed within current and proposed special management areas for caribou identified in the Kootenay Boundary Higher Level Plan over the next 5 years. This proposed new logging excludes proposed blocks in the Revelstoke area that aren't subject to the Kootenay Boundary Higher Level Plan.

Woodland Caribou were identified as a threatened species by the federal government in 2002 and are recognized under the *Species at Risk Act*. However, Mountain Caribou (all caribou in the Kootenay region) are an ecotype (sub grouping) of Woodland Caribou and are on the brink of extirpation, yet the federal government refuses to consider this ecotype separately. Unfortunately the *Species at Risk Act* is mired in bureaucracy and may not have any effect for years. Scientists predict that 10 of the 16 studied Mountain Caribou herds that range between Prince George and Northern Idaho will be extinct in less than 50 years if we continue as we now are. Three of these herds have less than 20 years to extinction. The Monashee herd was not considered because of too little data and the South Selkirk herd was excluded because it has been maintained with 100 transplanted animals over the years.

"Unless we are prepared to make major changes in our land management practices we are dooming the entire ecotype of Mountain Caribou in the world to extinction," says Pettitt.

Craig Pettitt, Director

Valhalla Wilderness Society, May 04, 2004

Summerland Review ~ March 11, 2004

SUMMERLAND TRANS CANADA TRAIL NEWS

Exciting possibilities are awaiting us. An application has been made by Tourism BC for federal money from the Softwood Lumber Accord, called the "Rails to Trails Infrastructure Improvements". The total amount requested for all of BC for the Trans Canada Trail is \$4,203,100. The federal government will pitch in a goodly sum as will the Trans Canada Trail Foundation. But there's a fly swimming in this elixir of welcome news. All the regional districts have to agree to leverage some money against this grant by June 30th or BC will lose the whole amount. The money will be used for completing the Trans Canada Trail across BC. Our regional district alone would gain \$1.2 million if the District members agree to leverage about \$190,000. The next regional district meeting is May 20th, so if you know any of the representatives on the board, please urge them to ratify the leveraging. There will probably never be such an opportunity for monetary help for our Okanagan section of Trans Canada Trail again.

We're still working with the KVR Society on the Trout Creek Trestle/Bridge Task Force to deck and put safety railings on the highest KVR bridge located at the Summerland Research Station. The bridge design had to be changed due to new requirements from the Railway Safety Inspector. This new design has been approved now, but it's costlier than the old one. Doug Clayton and Geoff Solly are working out lumber prices. We hope to get started with the building by the end of May.

We're still about \$40,000 short of what we need. Donations to the bridge fund can be sent to Ken Ostraat, Municipal Treasurer, Summerland, BC V0H 1Z0. A charity receipt will be issued for anything over \$10. Be sure to mark your cheque: Summerland Trestle/Bridge project.

More Summerland Trans Canada Trail news: Geoff Solly has made and put up new benches along the trail. Henri Frioud is mounting interpretive signs using funds from the Bronfman Foundation. We're sponsoring a walk for the Meadowlark Festival on the May long weekend, and we'll probably be having a July 1st hike as well.

If the Softwood money comes through, we'll have a busy building season making trail improvements. We'd welcome help from competent chainsaw users for eliminating some trees blocking the KVR steam train's sight lines. We would welcome any donations, too. Donors will be issued a charity slip. Donations of \$40 or more will be listed on the handsome donor's board located on Brown Street behind the badminton hall. Donations may be sent to our treasurer, Ron Awai at RR2, Site 71, Comp 8, Summerland, BC V0H 1Z0. Other questions may be directed to Marilyn Hansen, (250) 494-9265.

NOTE: The 2003 KVR hiking and biking brochures that were distributed throughout the area are still available. Extra copies can be obtained by contacting the OSPS office. Audited copies of the audited Financial Statements are also available upon request.

Okanagan-Similkameen LRMP Still Meeting! The meeting will run from 8:30 to 4:30 on Friday, June 11th at the Mt. Boucherie Community Centre at 2760 Cameron Rd., Kelowna on the west side of the lake. To get to MBCC, turn east off Hwy 97 at the light at Ross Road (left if heading south, right if heading north), drive due east along Ross Road to Cameron Road, turn left and follow Cameron Road to the end (one long block) and you'll come to a T junction. Turn left and MBCC is straight ahead. You'll spot the arena first and the hall (our meeting place) beside it.

From Terry Macdonald ~ Ministry

TEMPORARY BYPASS ROUTE

On an east-to-west journey, the more obvious bypass route uses Myra Forest Service Road to descend to McCulloch Road in the outskirts of Kelowna. Then, after following McCulloch road west for about 5 km, the traveller can return to the rail grade via June Springs Road and Little White Service Road. While this 25-km - long route uses well-travelled forest roads to provide access to the amenities of the city and a welcome break for those who have spent a week or two camping, it does have a disadvantage of an elevation difference of 760 metres.

The second choice involves a series of lesser-used forest roads and trails that loop south and above the canyon. While slightly shorter at 22.3 km, this route has an elevation difference of only 340 metres. The main disadvantages are a 1.5-km steep section near the apex of the loop and a total lack of amenities.

Spring 2004 Newsletter

PARKING FEES AT SUN-OKA!

The new government decree of paying for parking isn't going to be just for Summerland's Sun-Oka Beach but for provincial parks in general. So this is going to affect all of us.

Most of us care about our parks AND about our fellow citizens. That's why we signed the petition saying: "We, the undersigned, believe in a compassionate society, where all, rich and poor, should have access to our provincial parks without paying parking fees.

We have paid for our provincial parks through taxes, and we do not believe in the commercialization of all our public assets.

Outdoor recreation in our provincial parks contributes to the health and spiritual well-being of our society. These public spaces should be available to ALL!"

There's an old rhyme that sums up the situation: "The law pursues both man and woman who steal the goose from off the common, but lets the bigger felon loose who steals the commons from the goose."

(Once again Park users have not been heard ~ but we have to keep trying. Editor)

OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN PARK

As you are well aware, there was extensive damage to Okanagan Mountain Park during last year's fire. There is now the question of how to handle the damage and where we go from here.

Many of us are anxious to be able to hike in the park again, to see what has happened to once familiar areas and to be able to witness the stages of recovery of the area over the coming years.

Mike Ladd, the Area Supervisor for BC Parks, has provided us with some idea of how Parks will proceed. A contract has been let to assess the danger not only from the standing dead wood but from the many green trees that survived the burn but which are no longer wind firm. Ladd expects that the assessment will also show that 80% of the damaged trees will be on the ground within the next ten years. It is Parks intention, once the assessment has



been completed, to remove the dangerous trees from the main trail corridors and then let nature take its course with the remainder.

Those trees that are designated for removal for the safety of hikers will be dropped, bucked up, and left on the ground where they fell. It is expected that the clean-up and clearing of the trails will cost approximately \$200,000 dollars. Parks is hoping that some of the funding will come from the Provincial Emergency Fund.

BC Parks hopes that the park will be open by August.

At times like this, it is important for the government to know that we care. If you have a moment, please write to the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection, the Hon. Bill Barisoff, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4, in support of the necessary work to reopen the park.

BIGHORN SHEEP ON ROAD TO SURVIVAL

From being almost decimated by pneumonia four years ago, the current estimate of 240 animals shows the herd is healthy.

A dozen California bighorn sheep are fitting in to their new homes in the Shorts Creek area just fine, reports Penticton-based wildlife biologist Brian Harris.

The sheep, formerly part of a herd on the Kamloops Indian Band, were collected and transported March 4 to an area on the west side of Okanagan Lake where there was less chance of sheep-human conflict.

"They were on the Kamloops Indian Band land, on a portion of the reserve being developed with a golf course and condominiums," said the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection Okanagan region wildlife biologist. "It was becoming a significant highway-kill area. While we were there (catching the sheep), 17 ran across the road."

After binding the sheep for transport and having them checked out by a veterinarian - the group included University-College of the Cariboo veterinary instructor Scott Mann and 10 of his students - they were trucked to Shorts Creek and released as a group.

Eight of the sheep were wearing tracking collars which, a week later, were still beeping indicating the sheep were alive.

Harris is hoping to conduct another transplant operation, this time to the Okanagan Mountain Park area, with more of the Kamloops sheep.

"The Okanagan Mountain fire has created some dandy habitat," said Harris, pointing out the heat of the fire has cleaned up the thick carpet of needles on the ground, which should allow the vegetation on which the sheep depend to flourish.



California bighorn sheep are carried from their capture location to a staging area near Kamloops before being transported to Shorts Creek on the east side of Okanagan Lake.

DISCUSSING THE FUTURE OKANAGAN GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK

It was a cloudless sunny afternoon when a group of hard-working University of Victoria geography students finally returned to their temporary headquarters at the Old Osprey Lodge. They had spent the day in the South Okanagan, looking at some of the lands that have been proposed for a future grasslands National Park.

I had met the group's leader, Professor Rick Searle, about 25 years ago during the heydays of the environmental movement. In retrospect, "those were the days" when we all had wonderful hopes and dreams about how governments would wake up to the need for environmental thinking, care and protection, in that order.

Rick and I agreed that both of us had aged since, and that the movement had done the same. So we were eager to compare notes on what we had achieved. Rick wanted to hear how the Parks Society had managed to get protection for the Cathedrals, Brent Mountain, Okanagan Mountain and the Cascade Wilderness, and what the society thought about the future of the Grasslands National Park. I wanted to hear how UVic is going to get involved in the preparatory studies for the grass ecosystems between Oliver and the border.

What could have turned into a mutual congratulatory exercise became, instead, a lively swinging discussion between the students, Rick and me. I had forgotten how strenuous debates with students can be! But we did manage to touch on most aspects of the park plans and the way the grasslands park idea could be enhanced and put up for public discussion.

The grasslands that have been proposed for park status are the ancestral lands of the Osoyoos and South Similkameen bands. The area is being used for aboriginal and non-aboriginal ranching and there is a certain amount of logging where forests are intruding into the grassland. In late spring, the hills are covered with bitterroot in full bloom, a delight to hikers and traditional aboriginals who collect the roots for food. One of the students from Rick's group hopes to do a detailed ecological study of the rare and endangered species of the South Okanagan and of the degree of biodiversity that remains after grazing.

At present, grazing is one of the bones of contention. Much of the ranch land has been severely overgrazed. On the other hand, the ranchers claim that they need these grazing leases to maintain a viable cattle industry in the area. We discussed whether this may become another one of those uncontrolled "progress" vs. conservation issues that tend to split us into opposing camps. Some people looked at this conflict as the apparently unavoidable NIMBY ("Not in my back yard") syndrome that has always

slowed down parks' creation in Canada and the USA. Yet the conflict can be resolved by re-assignment of grazing licenses if the B.C. government is willing to cooperate. Most of the land is public property and belongs to all of us. At least it is supposed to.

Closely related to the grazing discussion was a debate about how to develop and apply ecologically-sound land management methods to the southern grasslands. Seven years ago, the OSPS delegates to the LRMP had tried in vain to start a dialogue about these methods. Little has been done about it since then. The usual excuse is lack of sufficient funds for enforcement. In reality, the lack of creative management ideas is even more appalling. Broadly-based education on the local ecology certainly should be part of any parks' planning. The students seemed quite eager to shore up and promote the ecological viewpoint in such future discussions.

The grazing, grasslands, management and education debates inevitably brought us back to the central issue: how can you bring opposing groups and divided provincial government factions together to discuss the contentious issues peacefully and productively, based on good science (as the premier likes to put it!), instead of clashing head on, to the detriment of all heads and society as a whole?

At the risk of singing my old tune once more, I'd say that this is another opportunity where a structured and facilitated round table could provide a solution that will please everybody. In their new "dynamic" format, round tables can work fast and efficiently. They can include large numbers of interested stakeholders, provided all participants are willing to work together to find a solution that's somewhere between two extremes.

Luckily, our south Okanagan MLA, Bill Barisoff, has already approved the park idea in principle. As Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection, he'll also have major input at the cabinet level. Meanwhile, the students and we as OSPS members should look at this exercise as an opportunity to contribute support and creative management ideas to the park.

By Juergen Hansen, Summerland



B.C. Forest Service workers use drip torches to burn off fuel in the forest and to improve grazing for California bighorn sheep April 5 on the west side of Vaseux Lake. Conditions in the Okanagan are drier than normal, and unless the region gets lots of rain by the end of June, residents could be in for another summer of fire.

BC'S INCREDIBLE SHRINKING ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

The government's "one-window" approach to approving everything from oil and gas development to fish farms to selling off BC land does not include a view from the Environment Ministry.

Bill 84 allows mega-resorts in provincial parks, oil drilling underneath parks, and an oil and gas access road through a northern park. That bill, and another introduced in January 2003 that allowed private operators into our parks while increasing park fees, nicely booked the year of the Incredible Shrinking "Environment" Minister.

Unfortunately, there is more. In 2003, the responsibilities of BC's "Environment" Minister were eliminated for 80% of BC's toxic waste and most pesticide use. The Minister will not have to consider licenses, or even issue codes of practice, for all but the most high-risk toxic waste sites. Monitoring what is left of waste management regulations has been downloaded to municipalities.

The government's "one-window" approach to approving everything from oil and gas development to fish farms to selling off BC land does not include a view from the Environment Ministry.

The Union of BC Municipalities, whose member mayors gave Premier Campbell a standing ovation back in 2001, condemned Bill 75, the "significant" projects legislation. At their convention in September, delegates also passed a resolution asking the province to halt all coalbed methane activity until adequate environmental safeguards were in place. They unanimously asked the province to

scrap Bill 48, which gives the BC Cabinet the right to impose agriculture and aquaculture developments on municipalities.

The Oil and Gas Commission, a Crown corporation whose commissioner is appointed by the province, also had a scathing report for the "Environment" Minister. The Commission found that one-third of BC's oil and gas operations violated regulations on stream crossings and one-third had improper sewage management practices.

You would think that BC's government would welcome all watchdogs.

Instead, beginning a year ago, the government cut the budgets of the Forest Practices Board and the Ombudsman by 35%, with the Auditor General facing a 15% budget cut. This is on top of increasing the wait time and restricting the scope of freedom-of-information requests.

So, just as Ontario is waking up to the high costs of environmental deregulation - hazardous waste spills, contaminated water (Walkerton anyone?), risks to the food system, increased pollution - BC seems to be following the same deregulation path.

The risk of British Columbians from a disappearing "Environment" Ministry appears high. Thanks to Ms. Murray, the new Minister, Bill Barisoff, will arrive in his new position to find that much of his Ministry, like his predecessor, has simply disappeared.

*Dale Marshall is the CCPA-BC's Resource Policy Analyst.
B.C. Commentary ~ Winter, 2004*

SOUTH OKANAGAN NATIONAL PARK

Last October, then prime minister Jean Cretien and Premier Gordon Campbell signed a memorandum of understanding that promises \$65 million in federal funding to establish two national marine conservation area reserves and a national park reserve in B.C.

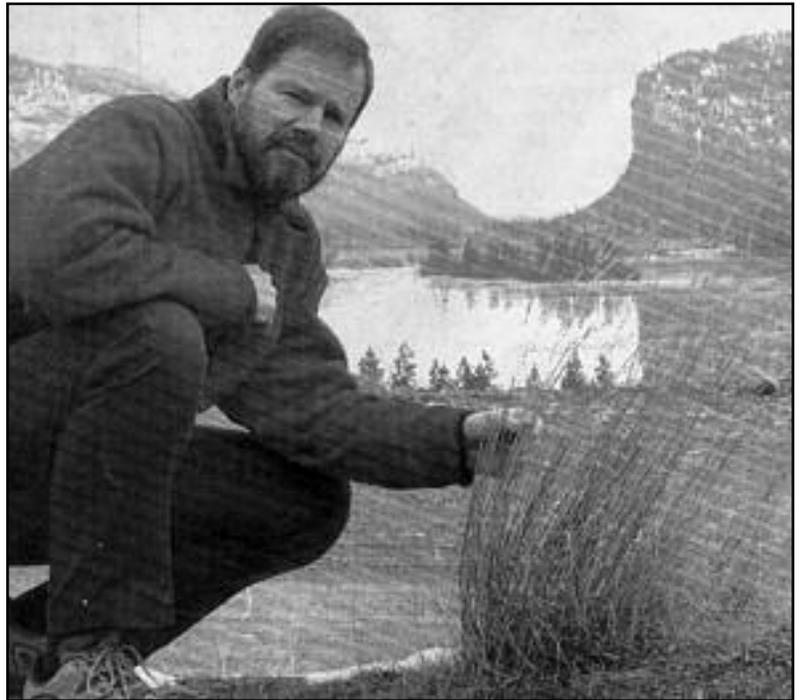
The agreement is part of the federal government's plan to create 10 new national parks and five new national marine conservation areas by 2008. Ottawa and Victoria will work cooperatively to assess the feasibility of establishing a new national park reserve in the South Okanagan.

The reserve would offer environmental protection for the Interior Dry plateau, one of the most ecologically diverse regions in Canada. The park is also expected to increase tourism, with economic spinoffs for rural communities.

Harvey was in the area interviewing for a full-time project manager who will work from a local storefront. So far, nothing has been decided except that the feasibility study will take place, looking into economic impacts, tourism studies and technical studies, over a two-year period.

"People need information, we recognize that. We're working on that, and I hope we can start to get some good information out soon."

Penticton Herald ~ March 19, 2004



Doug Harvey of Parks Canada says there are no plans to force anyone off their property, as planning continues for an Interior grasslands national park in the South Okanagan. However, area ranchers, farmers and others are worried about the impact a national park could have on their livelihoods.

NATURE CONSERVATION EMERGES AS GROWING TREND IN CANADA

A growing number of mainstream Canadians are putting their time and money into a niche formerly occupied by environmentalists.

The emergence of nature trusts - or land trusts - in several provinces has resulted in the protection of thousands of environmentally sensitive properties to be used for future generations.

But these land-trust members consider themselves to be conservationists - not preservationists.

"We look at the environmental group as more advocacy-type organizations and the nature-trust is more apolitical and non-adversarial," said Doug Walker, executive-director of the Nature Trust of British Columbia.

The Trust holds title to more than 20,000 hectares plus another 40,000 hectares of grazing leases, said Walker, but said there's only so much the organization can accomplish.

"There's always going to be areas that you'd like to save, but perhaps you just didn't have the money."

In some cases, property and money is bequeathed to the Nature Trust. Just this past week, the oil and gas giant EnCana Corporation donated \$750,000 for the trust to buy and maintain land.

Nevertheless, fundraising is an ongoing struggle and donors have to be convinced about the importance of the work, said Walker.

"People have to perceive that there's some risk of loss. It has to be an emotional or scientific belief that if they don't do something now they won't have it for tomorrow," he said.

Bill Graveland, The Okanagan Sunday April 11, 2004

OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

~ MARCH 5, 2004 ~

WATER RESOURCES REPORT

There have been a number of water issues which our directors and other members have been involved with this past year.

In June, the B.C. Lake Stewardship Society (BCLSS) held their spring conference in Penticton. OSPS joined this organization and I attended the conference. Stewardship projects are underway in the Okanagan basin and include Twin Lakes, Osoyoos Lake and Okanagan Lake. There are numerous other stewardship projects around the province. Speakers provided a great deal of information on healthy lakes and watersheds with an emphasis on the importance of stewardship by residents. You can access information on the BCLSS website: www.nalms.org/bclss or by mail at BCLSS, c/o Science Building, College Way, Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7.

The proposal to build an asphalt plant in Okanagan Falls was met with widespread opposition in the community. Concern was expressed on many fronts, one of them being contamination of ground water and the Okanagan River Channel. I attended the public meeting and spoke on this issue.

This summer's destructive fire season has created new concerns over runoff from the burned over areas. Summerland's severe water shortages emphasized the growing issue of potable water availability in the Okanagan. Almost all Okanagan Basin lakes are designated as reservoirs to serve our communities. A provincial government proposal to sell off recreational leases around these lakes was met with the disapproval by all mayors and local governments in the Valley. A water forum was held in Summerland to examine all options to prevent future emergencies. Growing demands on a limited resource makes it imperative that citizens take an active role in providing solutions. Some other water related issues addressed by directors were the Crystal Mt. Resort and Golf Course proposal above Westbank and sewage disposal issues in Summerland. There is no shortage of difficult and urgent water issues. The coming year will no doubt bring more of these challenges. Please keep informed of the water issues near your community and become engaged in working toward solutions.

Respectfully submitted ~ Anne Davidson



KELOWNA PARK

Construction of three bridges along Phase 2 in section of Mission Creek Canyon should start in the last week of July.

"It'll be lovely to walk through the canyon on the bridges, looking up and down at the running water in the creek," said Brenda Thomson, president of the Friends of Mission Creek Society.

Other features along Phase 2 include picnic tables, benches, interpretive kiosks and markers pointing out distinctive geological features such as Layer Cake Mountain, hoodoos and the Rock Ovens.

Much of the \$1.8 million needed to build Phase 2 has already been secured, but supporters are in the midst of a campaign to raise the final \$500,000.

By Ron Seymour ~ The Okanagan Sunday, April 18, 2004

RIVER RATING NUDGED UP

Okanagan River now ranked third most endangered in province, according to Outdoor Recreation Council.

For the first time in three years, the Okanagan River is no longer rated the most endangered river in the province.

However, that's only because of new threats to steelhead and coho salmon runs in the Nicola and Coldwater rivers between Merritt and Spences Bridge.

The Outdoor Recreation council of B.C. released its annual endangered rivers list, which highlights what are felt to be the province's most critical river-related issues.

Decreasing water flows impacting the steelhead runs were the main reason the Nicola and Coldwater were ranked the most endangered.

Council chair Mark Angelo said the Okanagan River is not rated the third most endangered waterway, following the two Merritt area rivers on the Englishman River near Parksville on Vancouver Island.

Although headway is being made on some fronts, said Angelo, the Okanagan still faces an array of threats, including urbanization and increased water extraction - especially noticeable during last year's dry summer.

"The water issue was highlighted last year because of the drought-like conditions that we saw," he said. "Certainly water management issues do relate very strongly to the Okanagan."

Angelo also pointed to the Okanagan Lake headwaters at upper and middle Vernon Creek, where concerns about inadequate management of ground water and surface water have been noted.

However, there is some good news for the Okanagan River.

"Despite all the impacts that it has suffered through it still has some very significant natural values," Angelo said. "It still has one of the last significant sockeye runs in the Columbia River drainage."

He noted a number of groups are looking to remove some of the dams and other structures on the river, in a bid to restore spawning habitat.

Deanna Machin of the Okanagan Nation Alliance said a detailed report into the state of water supplies in the Okanagan Basin is expected to be released this spring. The report looks at water quality and quantity issues, as well as habitat concerns.

Machin said the Okanagan's high population density will continue to have a major impact on waterways.

"Development is going to be fairly rampant in the Okanagan in the next 10 to 15 years, so I think we really need to be thinking about how to be responsible users of our natural resources," she said. "Water use is going to be really important."

The water extraction problem was also noted by Penticton-Okanagan Valley MLA Bill Barisoff, who said that was a key issue at a recent meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Barisoff noted the expanding grape and fruit industries in the South Okanagan are also looking for water, compounding the impact of increased urbanization.

"I think we've got to be very conscious of how we expend water," he said. "Water extraction is the No. 1 concern."

*Penticton Herald ~ March 30, 2004
John Moorehouse*

OWL CAUGHT IN LEGHOLD TRAPS, CRUSHED TO DEATH



An Osoyoos farmer has been fined \$345 after a great horned owl died following capture in two leghold traps on his property Monday.

Murray Cosens of Breaburn Place received the fine Wednesday from conservation officer Bob Hamilton of Penticton.

Sherri Klein, operator of the South Okanagan Rehabilitation Centre for Owls, was appalled at Cosens' apparent indifference to the plight of the mature raptor, which suffered for many hours before its death.

Klein was called by Cosens' neighbours Monday at about 3 p.m. They were distraught at the sight of a terrified great horned owl thrashing in agony, both its legs crushed in leghold traps. The traps had been installed on a platform mounted on a seven-metre-tall pole on Cosens' property, and

the neighbours first noticed the bird at about 8 a.m. Monday.

Klein took the mutilated bird to an Osoyoos veterinarian, who euthanized it.

Klein said she planned to press charges so people realize there is a right and wrong way to address problems with wildlife.

"You cannot use a leghold trap to trap an owl," said Hamilton, who issued Cosens the fine under the Wildlife Act Wednesday, but was unable to discuss the case because it's now before the courts.

Farmers have a right to protect their livestock from predators, said the conservation officer, but the method used was "not acceptable at all."

His interview with Cosens went well, added Hamilton.

"I'm satisfied the problem has been dealt with and won't happen again."

By Joyce Langerak, Penticton Herald ~ April 8, 2004



OSPS PARTICIPATION IN MEADOWLARK FESTIVAL

Osoyoos Indian Band artist Ron Hall signs limited-edition prints of his work, *Working With the Ancient Ones to Heal the Land*. The geometric shapes of the meadowlark symbolize environmental conservation efforts based on science. The native figure represents traditional ancestral aboriginal wisdom and the orb symbolizes the vulnerability of our conservation efforts, Hall says.

Penticton Herald ~ Friday, April 23, 2004

Conkle Mountain Walk, Summerland B.C., 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm, Sunday, May 23, 2004. You will enjoy this 7 km walk along the meandering trans Canada Trail through scenic, rural Summerland. Sponsored by the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society.

PARKS ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTORS

Dear Editor,

My reply to Mr. Barisoff's latest spin on his statement that a healthy economy is needed before a healthy environment is that:

- It's a cheap ploy to say (or imply) you were misquoted, and;
- Before the Liberal government took over, cut out most services in the parks, and started adding more user fees, a commissioned study done on the economic benefits of the parks system (1995) stated that over \$40 million dollars of tax revenues came from parks, about \$5 million over and above costs of operation.

As well, the "net consumer surplus generated by BC Parks is valued in the range of \$670 million (net of the costs of operating the system)."

These figures show only a very few of the economic benefits parks bestow. So why is it that "maintaining and enhancing our incredible parks system comes at a cost - a cost that comes from taxation" as he says? The parks are, or were before all the new fees and downgrades in services, more than paying their way a great deal of which came from out-of-province dollars.

The matter appears to come down to the fact this government sees parks and protected areas as on the one hand a drain on the public purse, and on the other, a handy cash cow where the residents (wildlife, etc.) cannot protest the way their homes are being treated.

Neither view justifies the current incremental degradation of our provincial parks and other supposedly or formerly protected areas.

Eva Durance, Penticton

GOVERNMENT BENEFITS FROM NDP EFFORTS

It was the NDP, not the Liberals, who encouraged new park lands designation through the Land and Resource Management Plan process; the Liberals have scuppered that process and may gut the new South Chilcotin Park passed by the broadly based Chilcotin LRMP Table.

The NDP, not the Liberals started negotiations with Parks Canada for the Gulf Islands and marine conservation areas; the Liberals, however, are no doubt delighted to unload all that "useless" land on the feds.

If, for example, reducing to a meager five the area supervisors in charge of all the protected areas in the Thompson-Okanagan from Manning to Grand Forks and Kamloops is a step forward, well, I guess I was born yesterday.

Ditto the almost total decimation of the conservation officer service.

And the plan to allow commercial activity in Gladys Lake ER (Spatziz P.P.), B.C.'s oldest and largest ecological reserves is outrageous.

Add the dismantling of all government-supported nature interpretation in provincial parks, the current plan for more resort-type operations in some parks, and a multitude of other measures to commercialize wild lands and wildlife and her statements sound as hollow as a dried gourd.

I am forcefully reminded of a comment Bill Moyers made years ago about the Reagan administration and the "feel-good" society he say in the U.S. "The ship is running onto the rocks, the captain's asleep and nobody's at the wheel, but everybody feels great!"

Penticton Western ~ January 6, 2004

Eva Durance, Penticton

FORESTRY WATCHDOG SLAMS PROVINCE

The B.C. government is doing an inconsistent job of applying its biodiversity strategy, in many cases not implementing measures to safeguard it, the province's Forest Practices Board says.

In a study released Thursday, the board found no one was monitoring implementation of the strategy, and its future under the Forest and Range Practices Act was not clear.

Biodiversity is a scientific term that designates the variety of wildlife and plant species, habitats and ecosystems needed to support plant and animal life.

The study covers the period from the implementation of the Forest Practices Code, passed by the former NDP government in 1995, through early 2003. It does not cover the new Forest and Range Practices Act, passed by the current Liberal government, which took effect earlier this year.

Penticton Herald ~ March 19, 2004

LIBERAL LEGISLATION CLOUDS NATURE'S BIG PICTURE - AND ECONOMIC STABILITY - IN NORTHERN B.C.

What British Columbians call the Muskwa-Kechika supports the richest population of large mammals on this continent. North America's top predators - grizzly bears, black bears, timber wolves, lynx, bobcat, great horned owls, eagles and wolverines - all share this elaborate ecosystem with moose, elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, caribou, bison and deer.

Fifty inter-connected but as yet untouched watersheds teem with beaver, marten, muskrats, snowshoe hares, ptarmigan and grouse. The streams are alive with trout and grayling. Lakes echo with the eerie cry of loons and the noisy splashing of ducks and wild geese.

Back in March of 2001, on the recommendation of land and resource management tables from Fort Nelson, Fort St. John and Mackenzie, the province agreed that the Muskwa-Kechika was a unique region of global significance and should be set aside as a special management area.

It was the culmination of a decade of effort and argument and determined goodwill, for the plan marked an important threshold of consensus. Resource industries, first nations, conservationists, hunters, scientists and government at several levels all agreed upon a new model for environmental governance.

It meant that while resource development could take place, stewardship would also ensure protection for what is the last large-scale temperate ecosystem to survive intact from a pristine North America that has mostly vanished beneath industry, agriculture and urbanization.

Industry liked the agreement because it brought certainty to long-term development plans. First nations liked it because it protected traditional resources while offering the opportunity for serious co-management. The conservation sector liked it because it stabilized long-term security for cherished environmental

values. Scientists liked it because it presented the potential for research that could take place nowhere else.

But now, just as the Muskwa-Kechika is being held up internationally as a model for the way in which the interests of industry,



Wayne Sawchuk

indigenous peoples and the environment can find integrated solutions, fears are escalating that - despite denials - the provincial Liberals have begun to dismantle what the rest of the world sees as a work of genius for the 21st Century.

Since taking power, the Liberals have slashed funding for the Muskwa-Kechika advisory board by two-thirds. Staffing has been reduced. A critical "joint sign-off" mechanism for ensuring inter-agency cooperation has been jettisoned. Unilateral resource exploration has been permitted to compromise vitally important scientific work in mid-research. Controversial wildlife management plans have been imposed to satisfy special interest groups even before scientists had an opportunity report on potential impacts.

Then late last fall, the Liberals passed legislation that seriously weakened the integrity of the whole

provincial parks system. It authorizes resource extraction from parks and arbitrarily changed the boundaries of seven parks.

What really set the alarm bells ringing regarding the fate of the Muskwa-Kechika was a unilateral plan by the Liberals to okay the removal of 1,000 hectares from Graham-Laurier Provincial Park, a remote wilderness area 145 kilometres northwest of Fort St. John, to create an 11-kilometre access corridor for oil and gas exploration.

Everybody should be clear that what's at risk here is not just the ecological integrity of the Muskwa-Kechika. It's also the economic stability of the entire region. Because if you think BC and its forest industry got a black eye when the world mustered behind the Clayoquot Sound protests, just wait until the petroleum industry discovers what comes down the pipe over this issue.

I suspect that our provincial government, not being the brightest of entities, thinks the Muskwa-Kechika is below the radar for most voters because it's far away and most of them will never see what's there.

That is about to change with the publication of an utterly stunning new book by photographer Wayne Sawchuk, a bred-in-the-bone northerner who can't be dismissed as another big city blowhand who doesn't know what he's talking about.

Sawchuk's lovely book instructs us with quiet but indisputable force that here is something here so special that our own children will never, never forgive us if we permit short-sighted politicians to fritter it away in the pursuit of a few quick bucks.

*By Stephen Hume
The Vancouver Sun ~ May 1, 2004*

