

OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

Summer
2007

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Reaching Out to Victoria

Back in the good old days, our founding fathers had quite a close relationship with the decision-makers in Victoria, especially in the Rec and Con Ministry and in Forestry. The ministers or one of their mandarins would even respond to out telephone calls.

As the inevitable social and political changes occurred, and as younger members with less personal connections took over, these links deteriorated, and our luck in creating new protected areas and parks took a nose dive. Our hard-fought campaign to protect the Cascade Wilderness, adjacent to Manning Park, was the last tangible success. And even that was only half a success, since we had to make the by now legendary swap proposal (a small little-used heavily-forested piece of Manning Park for the 15,000 ha Cascade Wilderness, with low forest productivity but outstanding ecological, educational and recreational values) to make it happen. "Protected area" status was the best we could get at the time. We still hope that we can trust the government to take the next step, upgrading to Class A Park.

The OSPS parks proposal for Brent Mountain is in the same political boat: stuck in Victoria! Our first detailed submission, strongly supported by many of you, went to the government in 1972, complete with excellent environmental and traditional recreational/tourism reasoning, aerial photos, shots of several intact (and a few damaged!) ecosystems. Victoria is where the proposal still sits, 10 govern-

ments later. Meanwhile, more and more logging permits have been granted, the clear cutting has moved up the mountain side, removing large volumes of old growth timber, and access to the top for destructive motorized use is becoming easier.

In June of this year, we probably moved a step closer to seeing out vision for a future Brent Mountain Park become reality. Former OSPS president and director Juergen Hansen attended the annual meeting for the B.C. Outdoor Recreation Council which serves as the coordination body for such proposals. The council endorsed the OSPS proposal and asked government to move Brent Mountain from "protected area" status to "Class A Park".

The government's official Okanagan Similkameen Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) has recently re-affirmed the status of Brent Mountain as a "protected area". But while 35 other such protected areas have already been given park status, Brent has once more been left out! Why? According to some government sources, the new government has a policy of not making any changes to land status in the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) until the issue of the national park proposal south of Oliver is resolved. That can take another six or seven years, especially if local would-be politicians keep opposing the proposal before it is even clearly defined.

Here are the details of the proposal ORC submitted to government:

WHEREAS – The previous governments have repeatedly assured the South Okanagan outdoors community that the top of Brent Mountain/SheepRock, including the part now in the Merritt Forest District, is being considered for "park" status, and

WHEREAS – the designation of Brent Mountain/Sheep Rock under "park" status would protect a locally unique ecosystem as well as an opportunity for hikers, XC skiers, school classes and tourist to enjoy the sub alpine area, and

WHEREAS – the Okanagan/Shuswap LRMP reinforced this intent and provided a good ecological rationale for this planned move, and

WHEREAS – many other similar areas of outdoors interest that had received temporary "protected area" status have recently been moved to "park status",

BE IT RESOLVED – that ORC request that the provincial government remove the National Park restraining policy from the northern part of the RDOS and provide "park" status to the remaining undisturbed Brent Mountain/Sheep Rock mountain tops, including the western part that was included in the original proposal but is now in the Merritt Forest District.

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Donations are appreciated anytime - tax receipt will be issued. OSPS appreciates your continued support in our attempt to save OUR parks. 2007 memberships at \$10.00 individual, \$15.00 family, \$20.00 organization. Please renew now. THANKS!

Backcountry/Recreational Trails

The OSPS have suggested for literally decades that the government take measures to designate trails for specific uses and thus separate the conflicting uses from each other. The governments of Quebec and Ontario, and of the states of Washington and Oregon have implemented such laws quite successfully. If they can do it, why can't we?

Such designation should apply to all present and future trails on crown land, including the Trans Canada Trail, and should include the logging roads which provide ten thousands of kilometers of motoring opportunities for trail bikers and ATV's. Once the pending legislation on ATV and trail bike licensing and insurance becomes law, it should be easy to designate trails and to enforce the designation.

As an expression of our collective hopes, ORC has already forwarded a resolution to the government. ORC is not asking for any great revolution but just for a better and clearer policy and process:

RESOLUTION, ORC 2007-03 Proposal to establish a collaborative regulatory system for the designation of backcountry recreational trails.

WHEREAS – B.C.'s backcountry trails were originally established and dedicated for use as native, trade, game, cattle, explorers' or settlers' trails and

WHEREAS – most of these trails are now considered by the general public to be multi-purpose non-status trails, and

WHEREAS – the relatively recent use of these trails by motorized vehicles (specifically, ATVs, dirt bikes, snowmobiles and resource user trucks) has led to ever-worsening ugly conflict between motorized and non-motorized user groups (such as organized recreational clubs and organizations, loggers, ranchers and other resource

users, tourism operators, individual hikers, cyclists, horseback riders and XC skiers), and

WHEREAS – neither the government nor organized or unorganized trail users have been able to agree on preventive measures or trails management systems to prevent such conflicts and violent clashes between incompatible trails users, and

WHEREAS – several LRMPs have made suggestions for the designation of major trails within their jurisdiction, along the lines recently adopted by the collaborative Apex resource management round table for the XC trails in that area

BE IT RESOLVED – that ORC ask the government to develop and establish a comprehensive and collaborative enforceable system or policy for the designation of backcountry trails for specific or unregulated uses, as locally appropriate.

EDITORIAL NOTE...

On July 3, the executive of the OSPS-supported Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society met with government representative from the Ministry of Tourism, the Arts and Sports to discuss the future status of the Trans Canada Trail, especially in regard to motorized use. The society has received numerous complaints about ugly encounters between non-motorized and motorized users. The government people assured the Society that they would do their best to prevent such encounters in the future. Watch for our next newsletter for more information on this issue. Meanwhile, whether you are motorized or not, please let us know what you think about this issue.

JUERGEN HANSEN
Life Member, OSPS

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The good news is that the B.C. government, under its new land use policy, has finally created an integrated one-stop-shopping system for such public requests from outdoor groups. The Thompson-Okanagan Management Committee is the functional successor to the old less formal Regional Resource Managers' Meetings. Such Managers' meetings are supposed to bring together the regional administrators from the four land use ministries (Forestry;

Agriculture; Tourism, Sports and the Arts; and Environment) who, in the end, evaluate proposals like Brent and recommend action to the ministers.

If you agree with this initiative, please tell the four ministers! They need to know that there is public support for this proposal. All it takes is a few lines, in your own words, preferably handwritten; typed or e-mailed letters are ok:

Hon. Stan Hagen
Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts
Room 028, Parliament Buildings, Victoria,
B.C. V8V 1X4;
e-mail: stan.hagen.mla@leg.bc.ca

Hon. Barry Penner
Minister of Environment
Room 112, Parliament Buildings, Victoria,
B.C. V8V 1X4;
e-mail: barry.penner.mla@leg.bc.ca

Hon. Patrick Bell,
Minister of Agriculture and Lands
Room 137, Parliament Buildings, Victoria,
B.C. V8V 1X4;
e-mail: pat.bell.mla@leg.bc.ca

Hon. Rick Coleman
Minister of Forests and Range
Room 128, Parliament Buildings, Victoria,
B.C. V8V 1X4;
e-mail: rick.coleman@leg.bc.ca

JUERGEN HANSEN
Life Member, OSPS

Alberta-BC Trade Deal Could Jeopardize Green Measures

Suppose you move to a particular city because you admire its reputation for protecting the environment. Time after time, the local council makes decisions to keep the air, land and water clean. Parks are plentiful. An abundance of bike trails and public transit system second-to-none make your community healthy and walkable. Your city is a world-leader in green initiative and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Then what if, all of a sudden,

such a scenario could play out in Alberta and British Columbia.

The Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) that came into force on April 1, 2007 between BC and Alberta is aimed at creating a new regional economic powerhouse in the West. However, the new agreement has the potential to undermine initiatives implemented by democratically elected government and seriously erode progress made toward protecting the environment, including protection of endangered species and efforts to combat climate change.

“Although TILMA only applies to BC and Alberta, its powers appear to go far beyond those in previous agreements such as NAFTA”, says Sierra Legal lawyer Keith Ferguson who wrote the legal analysis.

“Given the broad scope of TILMA, it’s quite remarkable how little the public has heard about it”.

Under TILMA, a corporation or individual can sue the provinces for up to \$5 million for interfering with trade or investment opportunities – even if a government



April Fools' Day legislation is no joke for endangered Alberta and BC caribou

the vision of sustainability that made your hometown paradise became threatened – all because a corporation challenged your city bylaws as being “more restrictive to trade and investment that necessary?”

According to a new analysis by Sierra Legal,

Provincial Parks Get a Facelift

The BC Government is Spending Close to \$14 Million this Year to Upgrade BC Provincial Parks Infrastructure to Improve the Camping and Day-Use Experience for Visitors

The BC government said Thursday it will spend close to \$14 million this year to improve facilities at provincial parks, including campground upgrades and new drinking water facilities.

Environment Minister Barry Penner said in a news release the government spent \$65

TILMA means trouble

Dear Editor,

On April 28, 2006, the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta entered into an agreement, a free trade agreement if you will.

On April 1 of this year the Trade, Investment, and Labour mobility agreement (TILMA) took effect. It will have a devastating effect on local democracy, public health and the environment.

The agreement allows corporations and individuals to sue provincial governments for any measure they feel may hinder their bottom line, even measures designed to protect the environment or public health care will be at risk to corporate lawsuits as high as \$5 million.

Not only was TILMA not debated in the legislature in BC or Alberta but municipal and local governments weren't even consulted before it was signed.

For more info on TILMA please go to www.canadians.org or e-mail me at venalee@nethop.net

Thank you.

George Venables, Cawston
- Penticton Herald May 22, 2007

action was taken in an attempt to protect the environment.

Sierra Legal's analysis of this potentially sinister development is available at www.sierralegal.org/reports/tilam_mar302007.pdf

million in the past three years to improve park facilities and acquire new parkland.

According to the release, the \$14 million in upgrades – which is in addition to the \$65 million already spent – include:

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BC's PHO Releases Drinking Water Quality Report

In his first formal report since BC's Drinking Water Protection Act (DWPA) was amended in 2003, Public Health Officer Dr. Perry Kendall outlines the provinces, health authorities' and water suppliers' resulting activities and accomplishments. Progress on the Action Plan for Safe Drinking Water in British Columbia provides a comprehensive yet user-friendly update on public health protection, source water protection, water system assessments, water treatment and distribution, drinking water quality, small systems, and full-cost accounting.

The report also offers a list of 18 recommendations for continued improvement, one of which says that "rates for drinking water should reflect the true, long-term costs of water treatment, distribution, and water system operation, maintenance, monitoring.

Revenue generated from charges for water

should be reinvested in programs that promote awareness of water quality and quantity, protect water quality, improve public health, and encourage sustainable water use to promote healthy communities.

Other recommendations state that:

- The province should improve monitoring of the impacts of resource activities on drinking water sources to ensure adverse impacts on water quality can be identified.
- The province should introduce legislation requiring the licensing of groundwater extraction, and restrict access to groundwater where aquifers are being overused.
- The Ministries of Environment and Agriculture and Lands should work to gain a better understanding of how different land-use practices can influence drinking water sources.
- All provincial ministries and agencies should regularly review their activities in

the context of the government's commitment to an integrated approach to drinking water protection.

- All provincial policy decisions related to land use or water management which could have an impact on the province's drinking water program should be taken to the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Water to ensure that policy direction is consistent with the Action Plan for Safe Drinking Water in British Columbia.
- The provincial government should consider options to improve access to funding support for public water supply systems that are currently ineligible for federal/provincial infrastructure assistance.
- All water suppliers should undertake thorough assessments of their systems and develop assessment response plans. Health authorities need to ensure that all water suppliers have established time frames to complete the assessments.

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- \$520,000 for marine facility construction at Plumper Cove marine park near Gibsons
- \$350,000 for drinking water upgrades at Brandywine Falls park north of Squamish
- \$570,000 for shower building and drinking water upgrades at Goldstream park on southern Vancouver Island
- \$300,000 for campground reconstruction at Fintry park north of Kelowna
- \$340,000 for campground redesign and reconstruction at Ten Mile Lake park near Quesnel
- \$100,000 for drinking water upgrades and cooking shelter construction at Mount Assiniboine park on the BC – Alberta border southwest of Banff
- \$150,000 for day-use reconstruction at Crooked River park north of Prince George
- \$120,000 for campground upgrades at Swan Lake park southeast of Dawson Creek
- \$150,000 for water system upgrades

at Lac Le Jeune park between Kamloops and Merritt

- \$270,000 for trail repairs and signage upgrades at Naikoon park on the Queen Charlotte Islands

Gwen Barlee, policy director with the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, said the park upgrades are "definitely a step in the right direction".

But she said the province also needs to hire more park rangers to monitor what goes on in BC's parks.

Barlee said her group estimates there are about 40 per cent fewer park rangers in BC now than in 2001, when the BC Liberal government made significant cuts to the program. According to WCWC estimates, BC has just 64 full-time-equivalent park rangers to monitor 13 million hectares of protected areas.

In comparison, Alberta has 110 rangers and Washington state 235 – even though

they have fewer parks.

Barlee said rangers are needed in BC parks not only to monitor poaching and polluting, but also to handle more mundane concerns like rowdy campers.

"We need to have eyes and ears on the ground," said Barlee. "Right now, parks are kind of taking care of themselves – and that can't last forever".

NDP MLA Shane Simpson, the party's environment critic, echoed Barlee's concerns.

"In most of our parks we have no park rangers", he said. "Are we really treating our parks with the level of attention they require considering what an important legacy they are and how important they are to our tourism business?"

SOURCE: CHAD SKELTON
Vancouver Sun

Limit Growth To Our Water Carrying Limits

In his May 19 editorial, Think ahead, protect options, Editor Tom Wilson, acknowledged that the Okanagan Partnership organization has research from UBC professors that indicate there won't be enough clean water to sustain Kelowna's population by 2050.

Despite this, Wilson states the typical pro-growth position that we shouldn't politically limit growth and we won't because we have the ability to vastly improve sustainability without pulling up drawbridges.

If the city can't sustain water to 2050, how is it going to ensure water is sustained beyond 2050 for future generations?

Unfortunately, in accommodating growth, Kelowna City Hall's strategies of reducing household and yard water use, and it's so-called smart growth high rise densification are futile short-term band-aids.

Indeed, whatever water saved is consumed by increasing population, leaving a net water deficit. The reality is, clean water supplies are finite, where-as growth increases exponentially. This means, the faster the growth, the greater depletion, pollution and drought.

Logically, the way to sustain water to 2050 and beyond for future generations, is to limit growth to the carrying capacity of tipping point of water.

We face two main choices. Carry on with chasing endless growth and blindly speeding along using conservation Band-Aids believing all is well, until we collide with nature's barrier of carrying capacity. When carrying capacity is exceeded, supreme nature, restores its equilibrium of balance by lifting its deadly drawbridges of depletion and drought to terminate the growth plague and to paralyse Kelowna.

Or, we can voluntarily slow growth, by lifting our drawbridges just enough to limit growth to ensure it doesn't exceed the barrier of nature's carrying capacity, in perpetuity.

One method is to simply have moratoriums or quotas on building permits tied to vital water supplies.

In conclusion, endless uncontrolled growth is one of the main causes of water shortages, pollution and drought. Therefore, survival depends on controlling and limiting growth. So, the obvious question is, why is Kelowna City Hall and Okanagan Partnership malingering in properly putting the brakes on growth today to prevent disastrous drought being here before 2050 or after?

Robert Cichocki, Kelowna – OSPS Member Okanagan – June 23, 2007

Keep Thirsty U.S. Away From Our Water: Expert

Natural resource a 'fundamental human right', under threat, trade lawyer tells conference

Canada urgently needs a clear policy to protect that nation's water resources from privatization, pollution and the creeping demands of the United States, a leading activist told an Ottawa conference yesterday.

"Water needs to be regarded as a fundamental human right and not as a commodity", said international trade lawyer Steven Shrybman. "That is critically important. We need to strengthen sovereignty and negotiate an agreement with the United States that makes it very clear that we will determine when and where Canadian water resources will be used. And that agreement needs to trump any right of any claimant in a trade agreement to assert a claim on Canadian water".

Mr. Shrybman was speaking at Integrate this, a packed weekend conference organized by the Council of Canadians, a left-leading advocacy group, to challenge terms of the Security and Prosperity Partnership between Canada, Mexico and the United States. Opponents of the partnership say its proposed increased economic integration of the three countries is a threat to Canada and Canadians in numerous areas.

"Even if Canadian water was a legally designated human right and not a commodity

that would not necessarily mean it couldn't be shared," added Mr. Shrybman.

But Canadian water resources should not, he said be used to support unsustainable management of water in the United States.

"In other words", he said, "If they are not managing water properly in the U.S. and they run out, it is no answer to simply divert Canadian water".

Critics of the U.S. thirst for water point to water-importing desert cities in Arizona and Nevada – especially Las Vegas – as examples of unsustainable use of water.

The majority of water resources in Canada are currently public owned, but there is a growing fear among those who agree the Canadian government develops a firm policy, for-profit private corporations will eat into public ownership with no guarantee that water could be delivered safely to the public at an affordable price.

"Water services should be delivered on a not-for-profit basis regardless of people's ability to pay," said Mr. Shrybman, "and there should be universal access to water".

Most Canadians wrongly think that there is already universal access to water in this country, said Mr. Shrybman.

"It depends", he said. "Many communities live with boiled water advisories and water in many first nations' communities is an international scandal".

Source – The Ottawa Citizen – Sunday, April 1, 2007

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- Strategies should be developed to prevent the creation of new small water systems where other supplies could be expanded or existing supplies amalgamated.

- Public water systems should engage their customers in fiscal planning for maintaining and upgrading their systems over

the short and long terms. In addition, small water supply systems should be offered assistance to develop revenue streams to fund assessments, response plans and system upgrades.

WaterWise – District of Summerland June 2007 – by Interior Health

Farmed Lice Still Threaten Wild Smolts

Researcher Alexandra Morton reports from BC's Broughton Archipelago

News from the Broughton Archipelago this spring is not encouraging. The sea lice situation remains serious despite government and industry's assurances that they have the problem handled. This is not surprising because government continues to refuse to do more than just monitor the situation.

Martin Krkosek, from the Centre for Mathematical Biology at the University of Alberta working in the Broughton finds, "Salmon farms can reduce their lice with the drugs, but after the wild juvenile salmon have passed several farms the effect is cumulative. We are seeing 80% of these fish infected at the end of some migration routes right now". Krkosek and I have both authored peer-reviewed studies demonstrating that these infection rates kill pink and chum salmon fry.

While rumour has it most of the farmers are using Slice, a delousing chemical, and this has likely lowered the number of lice per farm salmon, there are just too many farms. This season started with low sea lice numbers as the young wild salmon reached the first farms and we thought the lice had been suppressed to a sub-lethal level. However over the last week we've been watching the condition of the fish decline rapidly, they look terrible.

The biology remains simple: nature very

carefully separates the old salmon from the young salmon. Adult salmon die in the fall and young salmon don't go to sea until spring. If we want wild salmon, this natural law will have to be obeyed and the huge industrial farms moved away from our rivers. They were sited in a time of ignorance, but now we know that wild and farmed salmon don't mix.

Pink salmon are an unrecognized powerhouse to the BC economy. As the most abundant salmon, they fertilize our forests, supporting the logging industry, and they feed tourism's prized Chinook and Coho smelts as they enter the ocean.

The sea lice problem is not confined to the Broughton. We are working from Campbell River to Port Hardy and the story is simple: where there are salmon farms there is a sea lice problem. Scottish researchers have told me, "A five year old could figure this out". It has become apparent the Canadian government scientists are not free to speak their minds – similar to when the Atlantic cod stocks were being destroyed and when the Kemano Completion project threatened wild salmon. They know how serious this situation is, but are immobilized.

Salmon farms can be moved and contained, but wild salmon cannot. There are solutions: we can have both wild and farmed

QUICK FACTS

- The BC Special Legislative Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture, which called for no new farm development and a move to closed container farms, found only 2,945 direct, indirect and induced jobs are provided by salmon farming, whereas BC Stats Online reports that 14,300 jobs are provided by the commercial and recreational fishing sectors (not including processing or tourism numbers)

- Closed containment technologies are currently used to grow many types of seafood on a commercial scale: arctic char, trout, barramundi, tilapia and others.

- In 2003, Price Waterhouse Coopers conducted an assessment of a land-based system. Eco-Farm, in Norway and concluded that profitable land based fish farming is possible. (http://www.eco-farm.no/PWC_Final_Report.pdf)

- Closed, floating systems provide the best option for energy efficiency and the elimination of: solid waste to the environment, escapes, marine mammal kills, disease and parasite transfer to wild fish, and farm losses due to environmental factors.

www.farmedanddangerous.org

salmon. But even as the weight of scientific evidence and public distrust builds steadily, the fish farms remain in the water. Nothing has been done to actually benefit our wild salmon and they are going down.

Watershed Sentinel – May-June 2007

ANNOUNCEMENTS

JULY 21

Canada Parks Day

Watch for events happening around our province. For detailed information, visit <http://www.parksday.ca/eng/events.php?province=British%20Columbia>

July 28

Osoyoos Desert Centre – 8th Annual Romancing the Desert Gala

On this special night, you can stroll along the mile long boardwalk sipping fine BC wines and feasting on local culinary creations. Cost for this special event is \$60.00, with tax receipt available. Contact the Osoyoos Desert Society to reserve your tickets.

KALEDEN THEN & NOW

There's Gold in Them Thar Hills

It happened only a few years ago, but the excitement of the discovery of gold in the hills west of Kaleden has faded to little more than a forgotten memory now. In the mid 1980's with gold fever rampant in North America, the scene was set for the exploration of this piece of property – if not by miners, by stockbrokers at least.

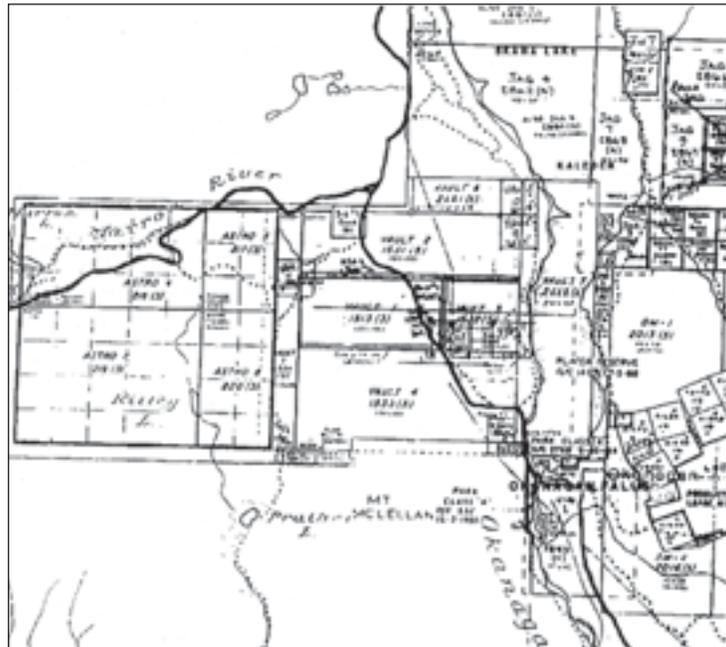
The presence of gold in the Tertiary age rocks (25 to 60 million years old) at Wenatchee, Washington, and the discovery of the Dusty Mac mine near Okanagan Falls sparked an interest in the search for gold in rocks of a similar nature in Kaleden – White Lake area.

In 1982 a prospector by the name of M. Morrison staked the Vault 1 – 4 claims just west of Skaha Lake and south of the Kaleden townsite. He was successful in optioning the claims to Riocanex Inc., who carried out a mapping, geochemistry and percussion drilling program on the property later in the same year. The drill holes intersected quartz with anomalous gold, enough to warrant further exploration on the property the following year. More gold values were obtained; however, Riocanex must not have been too impressed with the results, because they let the option lapse.

Dome Exploration was the next player on the Vault properties. In 1984 Morrison optioned the claims once again. This time, Induced Polarization and Magnetic geophysical surveys were carried out in addition to a drill program. The geophysics indicated an anomaly parallel of a faulted area that had known mineralized rock. The drill program indicated mineralised widths running from one to seven metres, with

but were also relatively insignificant. The option was dropped once again. The two companies had spent a total of \$150,000 to this point, and both had come to the same conclusion – the property did not contain a viable orebody.

In 1985, Seven Mile High Resources Incorporated acquired the claims and issued a prospectus recommending a three phase drilling program that would see the company snap the claims, perform a geochemical survey on the property and carry out a Mag-VIF survey in the area, followed by percussion drilling to assess new anomalies. Diamond drilling would also be done to assess anomalies at greater depth.



Mining claims blanketed Kaleden and area in the 1980's when gold excitement from the Vault properties peaked.

Although this program turned up little gold, evidence turned up still strongly suggested that the area was conducive to gold mineralization. In May of 1986 Inco Limited entered into an option agreement with Seven Mile to earn 60% of the property by making an initial payment of \$100,000 and agreeing to carry out an expenditure of \$400,000.

gold values of between .59 to 2.5 grams per tone. (Less than .009 oz. of gold per ton.) Some silver values also turned up,

STEVE ARSTAD

Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program

The Central and North Okanagan are following the lead of the South Okanagan in establishing a collaborative Conservation Program, known as the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP). A signing ceremony was held in Vernon at the Allen Brooks Nature

Center on May 16th to allow the supporting organizations to formalize their commitment to this critically important program. To illustrate the broad-based support this program enjoys, some of the organizations who signed on were: BC Ministry of Environment, BC Grasslands Conservation Council, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Central Okanagan Regional District, Sustainable Environment

Network, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club, North Okanagan Naturalists' Club, Lake Country Environmental Society, Central Okanagan Land Trust, The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program, North Okanagan Real Estate Foundation, plus many others.

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Mud Boggers Push Province to Fence Eco-reserve

The risk that mud bogging is posing to a local ecological reserve has prompted the province to consider fencing a lake.

ATVs and four-by-fours have been driving into the Mahoney Lake eco-reserve and causing damage in the unique ecosystem that thrives both in and around the lake, said Mark Weston, the South Okanagan supervisor for the Ministry of Environment.

The proposal to fence the lake is a “last resort” for the ministry as it attempts to protect the sensitive and rare eco-reserve. Signs warning that the 39-hectare Mahoney Lake reserve is not open to recreational activity and motorized traffic is prohibited have not been adequate to turn traffic away, said Weston, adding that completely fencing off an eco-reserve is not a common step.

The ministry only began investigating it as an option after a four-by-four truck drove near the lake’s edge, when water levels were low and became stuck, forcing other trucks to drive in and pull it out. The four-by-four left behind deep marks in the ground and caused considerable damage to the riparian habitat that surrounds the lake and posed potential risk to the lake, as vehicles could leak fuels or impact water flows.

Mahoney Lake, located seven kilometers from Okanagan Falls along Green Lake Road, is one of a few non-mixing or meromictic lakes in the province and has no outflow. As a result, the lake has low oxygen levels and is very high in salinity and alkalinity.

The lake’s unique make-up has made it home to a variety of animal and plant species, both in and around the water, including algae, plankton, a variety of aquatic insects, gopher snakes, rattle-snakes and racer snakes and potential for tiger salamanders in soil.

These features have also landed Mahoney

Lake on the world registry of meromictic lakes and it is recognized in international lake research literature as one of the most outstanding meromictic lakes in the world.

The lake is primarily used for research – and has been studied by aquatic ecologists from across the world – and is not open for any recreational use, including swimming. And for the most part, Weston said the lake is hidden jewel that is only known to locals.

“It’s sort of a well-kept secret”, said Weston. “It doesn’t get used much”.

However, he said four years ago ATVs and mountain bikes began riding near the lake and forced the ministry to fence off its northern portion. The newly proposed fence will completely encircle the remainder of the reserve, making it only accessible to researchers and the volunteer warden that monitors the reserve.

This comes at the same time as the ministry is looking to fence off Myra-Bellvue in Okanagan Mountain Park due to a similar concern with motorized traffic and following concerns by Summerland about mud boggers driving through the water at Garnett and Trout Creek water sheds, posing risks to the water quality.

The increased use of provincial parks and ecologically sensitive areas for recreational use has come with the population increase, as residential areas expand closer to these areas making them more accessible, said Weston, adding the educating public about the environmental concerns with these activities is often the best way to prevent them.

*Tracy Clark - Western News Staff
– July 11, 2007*

NOTE... OSPS has been constant in efforts to keep Mahoney Lake safe from disturbances of any sort.

Sickle Point Kaleden: Government Must Protect Public Assets

Dear Editor,

The front page article in Tuesday’s Herald regarding the unauthorized access to Sickle Point in Kaleden appeared to be factual in detail, but I thought misleading in how it was presented.

The sub-headline “Kaleden residents say work on lakefront property didn’t get proper authorization, but developer says it’s perfectly legal” suggests that this is an “I said, you said” issue and that it is simply our word against Mel Reeves”. The actual story is not really like that.

Representatives from the RDOS, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Transportation all came out to the site last week, and in fact a B.C. conservation officer stopped the work. The only role the local citizens played was to call the various agencies and let them know that work was underway. So it is the government agencies that are agreeing that the work was not properly authorized.

Further along, the story says “According to Handfield, Reeves has applied for a five-lot strata development...” That makes it seem once again like my word against Mel Reeves’ word.

The story would have been more factual if it had said: “according to MOT file number 17687, received on Feb. 12, 2007, the developer has applied for a five-lot strata development”. Although Mr. Reeves maintains he only wants to build a single family home, the only application made by him (more precisely his company) is the above mentioned application for a five-lot strata development. His actions and his words would seem to be at odds.

The public land adjoining the private land at Sickle Point is valuable riparian habitat that is home to a great many migratory birds, many of which are protected under international treaties between Canada and the U.S. Other species at risk may well inhabit the area. We can only hope that the various government agencies will not treat this transgression lightly.

The Skaha lakeshore is a priceless regional asset which can never be duplicated nor replaced once destroyed. The adjacent KVR trail is also a valuable regional asset which is unlikely to be replaced once lost. I am of the opinion that it is inappropriate to use valuable lakefront Crown land that is ecologically sensitive to afford access to a private property.

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Goats Peak Park Proposal – Westbank

In October, 2005, the Central Okanagan Naturalist's Club (CONC) and the Gellatly Bay Trails and Parks Society (GBTAPS) jointly proposed to the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) that a new Westside park be established over much of the area known as Goat's Peak. It is situated between Okanagan Lake and the Glenrosa interchange on Highway 97 to the north, Seclusion Bay Resort to the south, and Powers Creek to the east. The map below shows the location of the approximately 600 acre (245 hectares) proposed park, which is all privately held land.

The proposed park is an ecological gem which has had very little disturbance over its entire area, the notable exception being selective logging primarily to the west, and a single residential house with outbuildings and a wharf on the lake, midway between Pebble Beach and Seclusion Bay. It is also a significant archeological site due to aboriginal rock art, ceremonial, and mineral extraction locations. Unfortunately, some of the rock art panels have been removed (chipped off the cliff face) and those remaining are threatened by young partyers spraying senseless graffiti over the area.

Much of the terrain within the proposed park area is very steep, characterized by rugged rock outcroppings, screeds slopes and cliffs, making it unsuitable for development. Panoramic views can be enjoyed from the tops of the numerous rocky knolls which afford a sweeping view of Okanagan Lake, with Okanagan Mountain Park as a backdrop. Over one and a half kilometers

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It is imperative that the various government agencies – RDOS, MOE, MOT, etc. carry out their mandate of protecting public assets and upholding the law of the land and I have no reason to believe they will not do so. But I do believe that our elected officials must give the various agencies' personnel the utmost support in doing so.

Robert C. Handfield – Kaleden
– June 28, 2007 – Penticton Herald

of lakeshore would be included in the proposed park, with a very narrow foreshore area along most of its length.

Many species of concern call this area home: the western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), northern alligator lizard (*Gerrhonotus coeruleus*), and Lewis' woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) are all found here. An underpass across Highway 97 allows mule deer, moose, coyote and other species access to the area as they need it for their seasonal survival. Due to its south and east aspects and varied forest cover, it offers many different habitats for flora and fauna in a compact locale. Ponderosa Pine, large sagebrush, common rabbit-brush and bluebunch wheatgrass grow on the lower benches, while interior Douglas-firs and saskatoons dominate at the upper elevations, which reach almost 300 meters above Okanagan Lake. Scarlet gilia, sagebrush mariposa lilies and thread-leaved phacelia are some of the more interesting and colorful flowers of the area. A curiosity not often noticed elsewhere is the white-lipped land snail which thrives far from the water in the adjacent Gellatly Heritage Regional Park.

Goat's Peak is a fascinating area, rich in biodiversity, which contains a key linkage between Peachland and Westbank. A safe, reasonably level, non-motorized route between the two communities is possible along its mid bench where a crude road already partially connects across the slopes, well away from the risks of traveling the shoulders of highway 97.

We have been receiving strong public support from all sectors when we give the presentation proposing the park. For all of the reasons just outlined, the Central Okanagan Naturalist's Club and the Gellatly Bay Trails and Parks Society believe this is a regionally significant area which deserves no less than park status to ensure our rich natural heritage is kept intact for future generations to enjoy.

Submitted by Don Guild, Director
– OSPS 2007-07-01

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The primary focus is:

- Biodiversity is a key component of Canada's national heritage and the Okanagan Valley natural system is a unique and special place.
- The Okanagan natural system is threatened, but it's not too late to keep it intact for our children and future generations to enjoy as we do.
- We all share a responsibility to protect the Okanagan natural system, with particular help and guidance from the Aboriginal peoples.
- Our common goal of sustainability-embracing environmental quality, human well-being, and economic opportunities can be realized by today's generations and those yet to come.

The intent of the program is to:

- Work to ensure the future of biodiversity is secure and the ecological integrity of this unique landscape is protected.
- Recognize the traditional values and knowledge of the Aboriginal people of the Okanagan so this heritage is honored and applied to new challenges.
- Foster sustainability as a means to preserve the natural heritage of the Okanagan.
- Build on the progress made to date.
- Work together to meet the challenges for the future of the Okanagan natural system.
- Maintain connectivity through the Okanagan corridor from the United States to the caribou region so species can migrate as needed in response to climate and ecological change. Keep low to high elevation connectivity intact as well.
- Translate our commitment into annual action plans.
- Continually monitor our progress and address emerging challenges.
- Pursue all of these objectives through cooperation and collaboration, not advocacy and confrontation.

Submitted by Don Guild, OSPS Director,
2007-06-13

Diverse Factors Play a Role in Determining What Follows in the Wake of Pine Beetle Epidemic

For many decades, a slow change has been taking place in the ecology of forest lands in the interior of BC. Forests have invaded the grasslands, species composition has changed, and forests have become increasingly dense. All that is now changing due to the beetle infestations and the resulting death of lodge pole and ponderosa pines. As the pines die, the understory vegetation (consisting of grass, forbs and shrubs) will benefit from the increased availability of moisture, light and nutrients. A large increase in forage suitable for use by wildlife and cattle will develop. Increases in native ungulates and other wildlife species can be expected. Benefits to domestic livestock will depend on post-beetle management of the forests and on government policies.

Future management may depend on such things as beetle survival and reinfestation, the severity and geographical extent of beetle attacks and wildfires in the dead trees. However, there are many management strategies within human control that can and should be addressed.

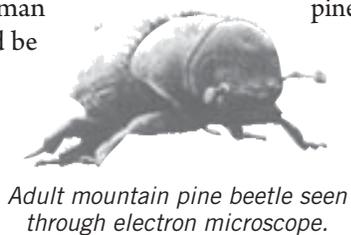
Large amounts of public money may be forthcoming in attempts to return the forests to it previous density and extent. Such objectives are undesirable and probably impossible to achieve. What role will climate play in determining the future vegetative cover on the land? Only insight increases in temperature and/or decreases in precipitation would reduce the extent of forest and expand grasslands. Tree planting

should not be carried out on sites that are marginal for tree survival and growth, on lands adjacent to subdivisions or where natural regeneration would contribute to overly dense stands.



Bugs gone bad: Mountain pine beetle infests about 9.2 million hectares of BC's forests, shown here as the darkest areas within the white outline.

Forest openings and wide tree spacing should be planned to provide breaks in the canopy and a healthier forest for easier control of forest pests and wildfires. One recommendation calls for spacing lodge pole pine at four or five metres so that trees have sufficient vigour to ward off pine beetle attacks. Openings in the forest and four-to-five-metre tree spacing would also allow for greater production of forage for wildlife and domestic animals and more "edge effect" between grass-



Adult mountain pine beetle seen through electron microscope.

lands and forests for greater biological diversity. Tree planting should be staged over decades, which would give more time in which to assess the long-term effects of the pine beetles; climate change, site suitability and societal needs. It would also avoid the growth of even-aged forests.

The time and opportunity is here for innovative thinking and management that is outside the box. Harvesting of beetle-killed trees is underway. How long will the dead trees remain marketable and for how many years will harvesting continue? Will a residual stand of younger and smaller live trees remain after harvesting of the merchantable trees and after the beetle epidemic is over? How much material will remain on the land as a result of harvesting and fall-down of dead trees? How much soil disturbance will take place and will funds be available for cleaning-up and seeding disturbed sites? The answers to these questions are probably unknown or unpredictable and they are almost certainly site specific.

Livestock and wildlife interests must be considered together with endangered species, aesthetics, economics, fibre production, fire, insect control, recreation, etc. Seeding of forage species will be needed on disturbed sites, or wherever a suitable seedbed exists. Seeding adapted grass species would provide additional forage for livestock and wildlife and would also help control erosion, prevent weed invasions (such as thistles and knapweed), and improve aesthetics. If post-beetle management and policies are carried out with full consideration of all interests there could be substantial economic activity and benefits from resources other than the traditional forest resources.

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