

OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

April 2006

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

Office Phone: (250) 494-8996 • Fax (250) 494-3131 • E-mail: newhorizonart@telus.net

The Okanagan-Similkameen Parks Society Members

Probably you know that over \$500,000 of work was done on the Trans Canada Trail this past year. Much of the money came from the Softwood Lumber Accord. We think that you will enjoy the new part of trail from Faulder back towards Summerland. Park your car near the tracks at Kettle Place in Faulder and give it a try. We plan to have a train ride one way, walk back and barbecue on October 1st of this year as part of Summerland's centennial celebrations. Please keep that date in mind.

Three of our four bridges are now finished. Starting at the Summerland Research Station with bridge number one (not completely paid yet), we finished Trout Creek 2 west of Faulder in fall 2005. Trout Creek 3 was finished earlier. So we only have Trout Creek 4 Bridge to finish.



Bridge finished in Fall 2005 ~ Trout Creek #2, West of Faulder

Unfortunately, there's been a serious rock fall west of Faulder that we'll have to clear up soon. But another matter is the required 55 metres of chain-link fencing that we have to install between the railway tracks and the trail, where the trail snugs in close to the tracks because of Trout Creek. The railway safety inspector has mandated this. We got bids on doing the fencing, and found that we will need \$2,500 in addition to the Community Foundation Funds that we already have. As you all know, fund-raising isn't easy. If there is any way you can help us with this necessary project, we would be grateful, and we would gladly put a Parks Society recognition label on that fencing so that the Society's name would be noticed.

The Trans Canada Trail will be a linear park someday, and we are happy with the progress that has been made, partly due to donors like your organization and private donors.

*From the Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society
Marilyn Hansen, president*

NOTE: At its April Directors Meeting, OSPS PASSED A MOTION TO GIVE Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society the \$2,500 to pay for the required fencing. OSPS feels the gigantic project calls for all the help possible and hopes members will make a donation to OSPS or to the Trails Society.

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

Government Hides Facts on Polluters

Why in the world would the B.C. government want to cover up pollution violations in the province? The public used to get regular reports on the big polluters in the province – the companies and government organizations that violated their permits for discharging wastes.

It didn't seem a big deal. Once every six months or so, the government would release a report on the major polluters over the previous period. If companies or public organizations were releasing more waste than allowed under their environmental permits, the public knew about it. The violators had to explain.

Obviously, the government has to track the information. Companies and municipalities get permits setting limits on the waste they dump in the air, water and on to the land. There are penalties for going over the limits.

If government is actually enforcing the regulations, it has to gather the emissions data to be sure the rules are being obeyed.

Violations were regularly made public, just as you can walk down to your local courthouse and see who has broken other laws. But the Campbell government quit providing the reports months after they were elected. And now they are fighting to keep the violations secret, demanding an extraordinary amount of money to provide information that used to be readily available.

The Sierra Legal Defence Fund has been trying for more than two years to get the facts from government. But the most open and accountable government in Canada, as Gordon Campbell likes to call his administration, would prefer that the polluters' identities stays secret.

*Paul Willcocks "Inside B.C."
Okanagan Saturday - March 18, 2006*

Could MLA Rick Thorpe or any other MLA please explain why obtaining information as to the worst polluters in B.C. is so expensive?

Gordon Campbell said, "Government information belongs to the people, not the government."

Too bad that was said when he was Leader of the Opposition in Victoria.

As Premier, his Ministry of Environment, when asked for the list of worst polluters by Sierra Legal, presented them with a bill for \$173,000 for the information. Yes, that's right: one hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars for the data.

Why the ludicrous charge? Why this attempt of secrecy? Who are the worst polluters? Why not expose them? Why is the public, in essence, being locked out?

Sheila White

So Many Lies

After a while you can see them coming a mile away. "Incoming whopper at 6 o'clock, Sir. Everybody duck!"

There are so many lies. So many wars. Environmental assessments that cover up the damage, or just get tossed when the money's in play. Mining and logging companies whose mother lode is the tax payer. Radioactive waste used as a weapon. Deterrent Attack. Sustainable Profits.

Now the only really strong legislation in the entire country to protect the environment, the federal Fisheries Act, is being thrown out the window. Oh it's just a little amendment – called Schedule 2 of the Metal Mining Effluent Regulation (MMER).

Schedule 2, which will go to the Canada Gazette sometime soon, enables any fish-bearing water body in

Canada to be redefined as Tailings Impoundment Area (TIA) for a toxic mining waste.

So a lake is not a lake any more; it's a tailings pond.

Aur Resources, which is opening a mine in central Newfoundland in the Exploits River watershed at Duck Pond is the first mine to be listed on Schedule 2, but there are many others, notably Red Chris and probably Kemess and Huckleberry in BC, lining up to get their names on the list.

And so the lies go on. More water trashed. On our watch.

What are we going to tell the future generations?

Delores Broten, Whaletown BC - March 2006

Continuity of Life for BC

BC keeps pushing “economic progress” as if there were unlimited resources in the province. These days, Gordon Campbell loves to use the word “sustainability” in his speeches. I wonder what exactly he understands of this word?

I propose replacing the sustainability word with an easy-to-understand term: continuity. At least this word does not need an explanation. It is easier to say: “...Such and such project will ensure a continuity of services, a continuity of quality of life for all,” or “...We cannot guarantee a continuity of the same environment for the future if we keep growing at this rate.”

Victoria Trade and Convention Centre Budget Lockup

This is where a couple hundred folks get locked in a really big room, get given a stack of books that outline the government’s proposed budget for the coming year and get to ask questions from roving bands of bureaucrats.

It’s not a very wilderness-like setting, but hey, I’ll try anything if it has a chance of saving wilderness or wildlife.

I was there with Gwen Barlee, the Wilderness Committee’s endangered species campaigner. We had a giant stack of government finance documents on the desk in front of us, which both of us were sifting through.

Then I hit pay dirt. It was a Liberal Whopper of massive proportions. On page 30 of the government’s Strategic Plan document I read that the Liberals had been successful at “passing species at risk protection legislation for the first time in BC.”

It is true that changes to the law concerning endangered wildlife were introduced last year by the Liberals. But Bill 51 Amendments to the Wildlife Act actually does nothing to protect BC’s species at risk.

That’s because it is a kind of a fake law, designed to stave off federal intervention while actually doing nothing to

Perhaps this way Gordon will finally understand that “economic progress” is not good when it cannot guarantee a continuity of life to all citizens and eco-systems in BC.

In a beautiful book about Ladakh, a small and remote region of the Himalayas, Helene Norberg-Hodge says: “Ladakh is such a paradise. What a pity it has to be destroyed.”

It would be very sad if in a few years people say: “BC used to be such a beautiful province. What a pity that its citizens failed to understand what continuity is all about.”

*Norberto Rodriguez, Whaletown BC - March 2006
Watershed Sentinel*

protect endangered species and their habitat. Here’s how it works.

- a) Endangered species falling under the protection of the Wildlife Act must be listed by provincial politicians, not scientists. Consequently only four of BC’s 1,300 species are on the provincial government’s official list.
- b) The Amendments to the Wildlife Act are not yet in force, and
- c) Even if the BC Liberal government finally got around to listing some of BC’s species at risk, and putting the Amendments to the Wildlife Act into force, the provincial law is so weak as it is now written as to render it useless in protecting endangered species and their habitat.



Consequently wild creatures are being pushed off the map all over the province.

Then, Gwen came up with another nugget buried in the reams of budget numbers.

Under the title “Environmental Stewardship” she found a line about how the Ministry of Environment plans to

pay for activities concerning protection of species at risk. Cost recoveries are to be garnered from “stumpage from tree removal in parks and protected areas.”

“Wow, that sounds like they are going to be logging our parks and are claiming that they’ll use the money to pay for non-existent endangered species protection,” remarked Gwen. We button holed one of the bureaucrats and asked how much they figured on getting from “tree removal” in parks. He came back with a startling answer. He said, “I am told we got a million bucks last year and we plan to get about the same this year.”

A million bucks in stumpage payments represents a lot of logging in our parks.

If you go out in the woods today ...

These days, Prince George is awash in wood. Trucks laden with logs are everywhere, coming into the city from all directions and in some cases heading out, as so many trees are coming down that not even milling powerhouses like P.G. can consume them all.

The first site lay just south of the Yellowhead Highway, off a logging road covered in fresh snow. Driving up the crystalline corridor where a moose had cut a fresh trail earlier that morning, small-scale logger Dave Jorgenson pointed to a thick stand of towering trees.

“That’s what I logged,” he said, before braking and putting his silver pickup in park.

Down a thin skid trail, Jorgenson stopped to explain how he had taken roughly 1,000 trees out of this forest, 95 per cent of them killed earlier by beetles. The fruit of that labour now lay by the logging road in neat rows beside Jorgenson’s idled green forwarder.

But Jorgenson wasn’t so much interested in what he’d logged as what he’d left behind. Following logging, three-quarters of the trees remained untouched, many of them tall, commercially prized, spruce. And climbing up out of the shade rose other young spruce and balsam trees.

After driving five minutes east, we veered north into a clear-cut that branched in so many directions it defied description. Jorgenson reckoned that at least 50,000 trees had come down in this now barren landscape, enough wood to build a major subdivision. All the trees here were allegedly salvaged to extract economic value before the pine beetle-attacked trees lost their use for lumber or pulp. Trouble was that many, many of the trees were perfectly healthy spruce trees. Greed had trumped common sense.

If all the forests that those marauding beetles are attacking these days were homogenous tracts of pine trees, then the massive salvage logging operation now underway on public lands might make sense. But as work by scientists with the Canadian Forest Service, B.C.’s Ministry of

Environment Minister Barry Penner says his government doesn’t allow logging in parks, which goes to show you that if you really want to know what’s going on – just follow the money.

*Joe Foy, Watershed Sentinel - March, April 2006
Joe Foy is Campaign Director for the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Canada’s largest citizen-funded membership based wilderness preservation organization.
WCWC currently has 28,000 members from coast to coast.*

Forests and the University of Northern British Columbia is showing, just over one-quarter of forests attacked by the pests are comprised of trees that are 80 per cent or more pine.

That means that the vast, vast majority of stands now being salvage logged have some pine in them but are also comprised of other trees like spruce in the north and fir in the south. In fact, in many “attacked” stands almost all the trees are non-pine, while in others significant minority of trees are non-pine and perfectly healthy.

Such a continuum should dictate very, very different approaches to logging. Instead, a cookie-cutter approach is used.

Clear-cuts race across the landscape – clear-cuts where perfectly healthy trees are logged and vigorously growing young trees in the understorey are mowed down as well, thus denying future generations wood – all on the specious grounds that the forest is dead and must be salvaged before losing its value.

If a concerted effort was made to put a stop to the clear-cutting of so-called mixed forests, it is interesting to note that the province might not have to ratchet up Interior logging rates to today’s record highs. Nor might many Interior communities be faced with the humbling prospect of precipitous declines in future logging rates, the price paid for today’s over-consumption.

For the sake of a saner and more sustainable future, let’s hope provincial Forests Minister Rich Coleman listens to what forest scientists are saying. Better yet, he should head out into the woods with Dave Jorgenson. There are lots of healthy trees out there the beetles haven’t killed but the companies soon will if something isn’t done and done soon.

Ben Farfitt is a resource policy analyst with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ B.C. office and author of ‘Battling the Beetle: Taking Action to Restore British Columbia’s Forests’.

Penticton Herald - March 20, 2006

Forty-first Annual General Meeting - March 10, 2006
Centre Stage Theatre, Summerland, BC

Joe Klein opened the meeting as he welcomed all at 7:15 pm. He introduced the Directors, and the guest speaker, Harold Baumbrough. Some 45 members were in attendance.

Highlights:

1. Treasurers Report: Audited report for 2005.
2. \$125 from the Penticton Community Foundation was due to the legacy from Doreen and Irvine Adams. \$175 has been received in 2006 (report available to members!).
3. Sheila White reported 2005 membership as 292, with 24 organizations.
4. Juergen Hansen reported on progress re: the Trans Canada Trail on behalf of Marilyn Hansen. (See Center Page)
5. Harold King talked of the importance of recognizing the limits of water in the Okanagan Valley; it requires careful use. Smart Growth workshops have been held in Oliver, Penticton and Summerland recently. There is great need to plan for the long term, not just "tomorrow". Harold spoke of the study plans for the proposed new park in the South Okanagan and spoke of the significant work of the OSPS over the years being responsible for the creation of every park in the South Okanagan. (See Center Page)
6. Don Guild brought news of the formation of a coalition to be aware of uranium exploration and mining proposals in the Okanagan. Information is available on the internet.
7. Clive Johnson told of hundreds of holes left uncapped from earlier uranium exploration. Bad news for water quality in the Valley. Director Jessica Klein also reported re: Uranium meetings in Kelowna. Good representation from the Bands of the Okanagan. Jessica is on the Steering Committee which has been established. Further – test holes being drilled near Isintok west of Summerland but part of the watershed . . . uranium? Bad history here and in Rock Creek of drilling but NO HOLES EVER BEING CAPPED . . . allows exposed amounts to enter water system. The Uranium group is asking for a moratorium. This would perhaps affect some gravel operations as gravel is also mined in hillsides, etc. Brent Mountain, one of the original OSPS projects, has still not been given park status, so work continues to do so. Clive suggested a uranium moratorium would be good.
8. John Bremmer told the history of the International Hike & Bike Association; it led to the work on the Osoyoos-Oliver path now a popular addition to those communities. Good local support has helped greatly. Now the plans are to extend to Penticton using the CPR right-of-way and with RDOS support.

Elections conducted by Dave McMullen, one of the original Directors.

Continuing Directors Anne Davidson, Harold King, Bill Johnston, Mike Meheriuk, Bert White.

Standing for election: John Bremmer, Joe Klein, Clive Johnson, Don Guild, Jessica Klein, Gordon Northcote, Sheila White.

Dave called for further nominations; none were forthcoming. The Directors standing were then declared elected by acclamation. The Constitution also allows for any casual vacancy occurring in the Board of Directors may also be filled at the Annual General Meeting.

M/S Juergen Hansen/Clive Johnson

That Ron Smith be declared as a Director and Treasurer. CARRIED

Adjournment at 7:35 pm.

Harold King then introduced Harold Baumbrough who he said is well-known for his many beautiful and informative slide shows resulting from various trips.

Harold Baumbrough made his unique presentation. He lives in Naramata and was among those who had to evacuate during the height of the Okanagan Mountain Park fire 2 years ago. He decided to keep a record of the recovery of the devastated land, selecting a specific area. The slides are the fascinating evidence of the progress of nature into a severely burned landscape by an experienced and knowledgeable biologist/naturalist.

Joe Klein thanked the speaker.

Refreshments and discussion followed.

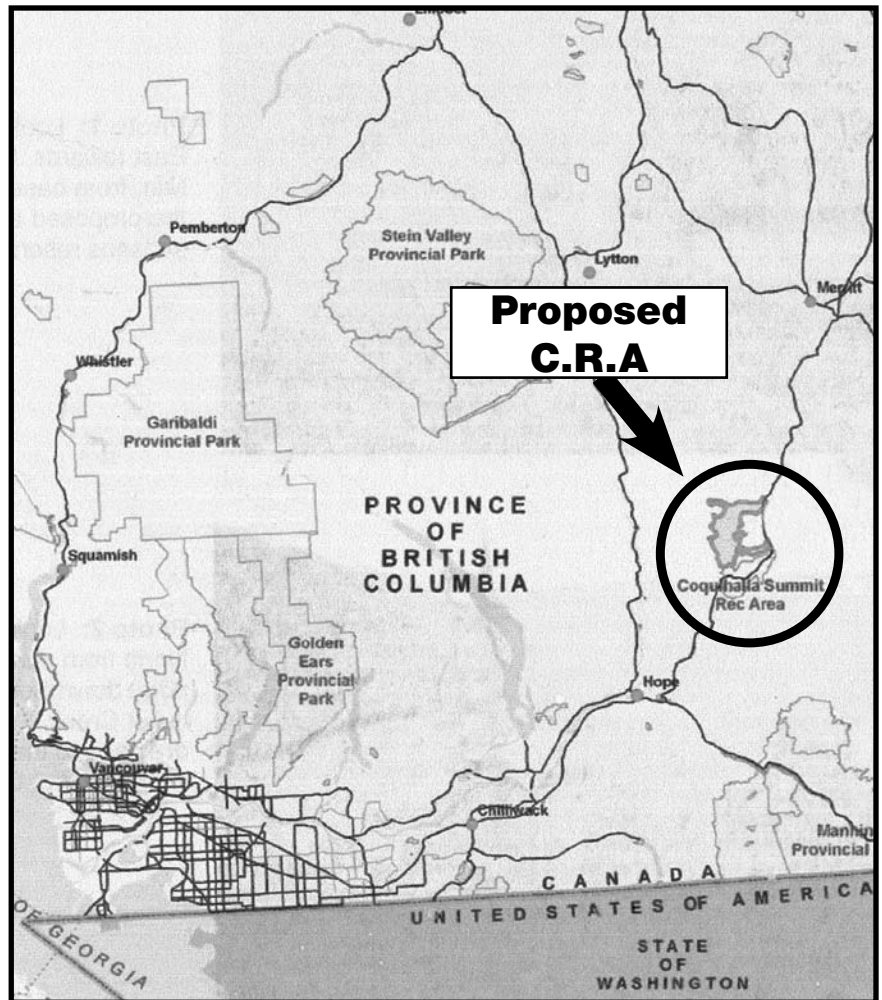
**Director Don Guild Report (Annual Meeting) re:
Proposed Juliet Creek All-Season Resort which he
is currently monitoring.**

It is most likely that any grizzly bear that currently uses the Juliet Creek valley as part of its territory would abandon that portion of the territory if developed. The development of the proposed resort is also likely to preclude bears from immigrating to the area from nearby or distant locations. Typically, grizzly could occur in conjunction with a winter ski resort, utilizing the habitat in summer and denning over the winter. The four season resort that is planned for the area would not allow for this behaviour.

Because of their reclusive habits, it is most likely that the construction of a four season resort would preclude wolverine from using the area.

Potential constraints represented by climatic conditions in the study area relate to the availability and seasonality of snow cover on ski-able terrain and the seasonal activity window between sufficient snow pack for skiing and sufficient melt for summer activities.

It should also be understood that the development and operation of a four season resort would be likely to impact many other species which are not currently blue or red listed. Consideration should be given to these species whenever possible to ensure wildlife movement corridors and sufficient foraging opportunities. A healthy wildlife population will increase the value of the resort for visitors.



Off-Road Vehicles – Recommendations to Government

More than three years of work culminated in 47 recommendations to the BC government by the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Coalition. These recommendations advocate legislation for the licensing and registration of off-road vehicles. They were developed by a diverse group representing motorized and non-motorized interests, as well as land owners and managers. The recommendations were presented to government on Jan. 19.

In the FBCN letter to the coalition co-chairs, we explained our support for immediate government action on new ORV legislation. We support a one-time registration at purchase or resale, with the requirement for a visible decal or plate prominently displayed on all ORVs.

The FBCN recommends that government undertake a second phase that would see further public discussion on and consideration of annual licensing fees and the administration and allocation of a trust fund funded by part of the fees. There is coalition agreement that the trust fund would be used to finance work in five program areas: education, safety, trail development, enforcement and conservation/stewardship. FBCN is requesting stronger language to ensure that the program areas of enforcement and stewardship receive their proportionate share of trust funds.

More information on the ORV Coalition is available on the website: www.ORVCoalitionBC.org including the Final Recommendations for Registration, Licensing and Management of Off-Road Vehicles in British Columbia.

Brace yourself now for the coming water shortage

A few years ago, I wrote that I had never seen an ugly river.

“Any river, left to itself, is beautiful,” I wrote, “whether it’s a black canyon carved through basalt with waters white and raging, or a muddy meander through the flat prairie. Left to itself, every river is beautiful.”

I take that back. There are more and more ugly rivers. I don’t mean just because we have destroyed their beauty by crowding warehouses and industries along their shores, or dumped toxins into their waters, or spilled debris into their currents.

Increasingly, rivers are ugly because they’re empty.

Canada contains about 25 per cent of the world’s supply in our lakes and rivers, but three-quarters of that is in the Great Lakes – in storage, essentially – where international treaties limit use.

Currently, we fuss about oil supplies. We ought to be fussing about water. Global consumption doubles every 20 years. By 2025, says one estimate, the demand for water will be 50 per cent higher than present supplies. Two-thirds of the world will suffer serious shortages.

Don’t kid yourself that only poor nations will suffer. About 90 per cent of the world’s fresh water is used for agricultural and industrial purposes. It takes 1,000 tonnes of water to grow a tonne of wheat; twice that for rice; eight times as much for a tonne of beef.

Europe and America will be most affected. Does anyone seriously expect them to let their economies shrivel so that they can honour international treaties?

Jim Taylor

Okanagan Sunday - March 19, 2006

Five reasons not to commodify Canadian water

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has failed to clarify his government’s position on bulk water exports, and the Conservative Party platform did nothing to address growing concerns about the stability and quality of Canada’s water supply.

Here are five reasons why Canada should turn off the taps on commodification and bulk water exports:

1. The free market doesn’t guarantee access to water. Treating water as a commodity will widen the gap between the “haves” and have nots”, opening the door to the pricing of water that will unfairly impact the poor. We should not build an economic barrier to clean water.
2. Bulk exports could open the floodgates to trade challenges. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) defines water as a “service” and an “investment”, leaving Canadian water vulnerable to thirsty foreign investors. Once Canada allows water to be diverted outside our borders for large-scale industrial purposes, foreign investors must be given the same “national treatment” as Canadian companies.
3. Canada’s water supply is limited. The perception that Canada has an unlimited supply of water is a myth and ignores the fact that more than one-quarter of municipalities have faced shortages in recent years. One-third of Canadians rely on groundwater for their daily needs, but we have no understanding of how long this supply will last. Only one per cent of the water in the Great Lakes is renewable and climate change poses a major threat to the lakes, causing longer drought periods and unstable precipitation.
4. Public water is safer, cleaner and more affordable. Allowing corporate interests to control public water resources will weaken the central role of the government as the guardian of our water supply. When for-profit companies control drinking water, public health and safety are compromised.
5. Water is essential for people and nature. There is no replacement for fresh water to meet the needs of human health and livelihoods. Water cannot be treated like oil, a tradable commodity. Life is possible without oil, but we cannot live without water.

Susan Howatt is the National Water Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.

The 9th Annual MEADOWLARK FESTIVAL

Immerse yourself in the unique diversity of the South Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys.

It's hard to believe that we are already into our 9th year with the Meadowlark Festival, but here we are! The Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance is pleased to announce the annual Meadowlark Festival, which will be held from May 18th to May 22nd, 2006. Our team of organizers, tour leaders and our volunteers have dedicated their time to ensure that this year will be as adventurous as ever.

Every May long weekend, The Meadowlark Festival brings nature explorers to the flowery grasslands, pine scented forests and rocky features that are unique to the South Okanagan and Similkameen. Guided by our knowledgeable tour leaders, come learn about and meet some of the valley's intriguing inhabitants - such as singing meadowlarks, soaring hawks, or the occasional wary gopher snake. These experiences remind us of how precious and wonderful this landscape is to everyone.

To date, the annual Meadowlark Festival has reached out to over 12,000 participants, reflecting the important role of teachers, researchers, artists and naturalists in our community. We would like to thank these educators who provide valuable information and encourage respect and conservation of wildlife and natural spaces.

This year, we welcome feature wildlife artist and festival guest Lex Hedley. His painting, "Under an Okanagan Sky", makes a delightful image for this year's festival posters, brochures and T-shirts. Don't miss his wildlife drawing workshop or his presentation at the banquet.

Stop by and see our new festival office at 233 Main Street in Penticton, within the Okanagan Bookstore. The event listings are expected to appear in mid-March and tickets will go on sale by mid-April. We hope that you enjoy this year's festival as you explore, discover and experience the natural South Okanagan and Similkameen valleys.

Judy Brock, Chair - Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance



There are 86 events, many of them tours of South Okanagan sites. Once again Director Bill Johnston will conduct the Conkle Mountain hike on Sunday, May 21st starting at 1:30 pm

Province creates four new parks

Legislation has been introduced to four new class A provincial parks, the highest level of protection in the B.C. parks system. The areas named were selected by participants of the Land Resource Management Plan process.

This NDP program enabled all user groups to discuss and make recommendations including creation of new park land. These new areas will now have full protection as legislated Class A Parks.

Enderby Cliffs Park occupies 2,246 hectares in the North Okanagan. Sikanni Chief Canyon Park, the largest at 4,641 hectares, is north of Fort St. John. Klin-se-za Park at 2,689 hectares and Kiskatinaw River Park, 154 hectares, are also in the Peace River region.

The legislation also adds 27 hectares to Indian Arm Park in the Lower Mainland, 2,499 hectares to Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park in the Skeena region, 40 hectares to Strathcona Park near Campbell River and 32 hectares to Ambrose Lake Ecological Reserve on the Sunshine Coast. The five-hectare Sudeten Park near Pouce Coupe is being transferred to local government for park purposes and the 55 hectare Barkerville Park is being taken over by the tourism ministry.

It is good to see the valuable work of one government being completed by another.

Penticton Western - March 31, 2006