

OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

Fall
2010

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What Has The O.S.P.S. Been Up To?

At the end of June, Orville Dyer (BC MoE) and Mike Miller (consulting botanist), conducted a Rare Plant Survey on Oliver Mountain. There is currently a proposal to make this mountain a protected Area. The survey recorded three new locations for three red-listed plants on the site.

The Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society sponsored the plant survey and will be also sponsoring work to be done on snakes and invertebrates to be done at the same site in the fall of 2010. The two surveys will be used as part of the research for a report from the B.C. Ministry of the Environment documenting the plant and wildlife 'values' of the Oliver Mountain area. Your contributions have assisted with this valuable work that assists with the sustainability and conservation of our natural region.

The input of the society has been sought with regard to bicycle and roller-blade paths with the construction of new highways. Our 'expertise' in and commitment to such paths have led to the consultation with regard to the highway work south of Oliver. In the



Currants in our National Parks

Please use the enclosed membership form on the back page to help us carry out our mission.

future, safe non-motorized pathway links could be joined to form a continuous route from Summerland south to Osoyoos. Your society will endeavor to continue to be one of the leading forces behind such a vision.

A little further to the north, in Summerland, the OSPS has helped to ensure that the historical aspects of a couple of parks will be explained and celebrated through informational signage. The 19th century Fur Brigade Trail will be advertised, recalled and explained to locals and tourists alike through the use of researched and documented information and vignettes on the sturdy signs. The society is proud to have assisted with getting the project off to a start and hope for many more agencies to take part so that the history of our region can be appreciated along with the natural flora and fauna.

SPECIAL THANKS

We are of course always grateful to the contributors to the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society. Sometimes these contributors are members and sometimes they are not. This fall we would like to recognize the contribution to the society from Allegra Penticton, the printers of this newsletter. The society acknowledges the layout, printing and administrative services that Allegra has provided to us at discounted rates. They have not just had a business relationship with us but truly they have assisted in bringing the message of conservation, protection and sustainability to our quest to provide parks for our grandchildren's grandchildren in the southern interior of British Columbia.

It's Your World

BY BOB HARRINGTON

In spite of all talk to the contrary, a conservation ethic is a long way from becoming a reality. We may be an enlightened race, but as long as the dollar ethic is more important than a conservation ethic little will be changed.

Unfortunately, the question of worth must become attached to all our deeds. That is one of the reasons why many conservation-oriented people have questioned the political and economic philosophy of our time, and asked whether it is committed to the long-term success of the race or only to expediency.

We are so busy pursuing the illusion of accomplishment that we fail to see ourselves in the world of nature. The symbols we substitute for more honest ones are measured in meaningless digits called dollars. By the number of these we can stack alongside ourselves, we measure our worth. The choice of the dollar as a measure of our value as humans, rather than a symbol of nobler merit is unfortunate; and perhaps depicts the yet primitive nature of the human beast. Dollars in the bank or bones in the cave are valued because the mind must measure in concrete terms and seems incapable of abstraction. It easily follows that a dead grizzly bear represents x number of dollars spent in its chase, while a live one has incalculable value because it is harder for statisticians to pin down cash value in an aesthetic framework.

Unlike those who believe that freedom is license to turn all ends to their own gain, a conservation ethic involves sacrifice of present gain for future good. It involves a restriction of freedom.

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Harold King, OSPS President

ELTON ANDERSON AWARD

Harold has lived in the South Okanagan for 80 years, during which time he has made knowledge and protection of nature a way of life. He has willingly passed on his knowledge to others.

Harold has been a member of the Oliver-Osoyoos Naturalist Club since 1978, serving in various capacities as director, vice president, president and corresponding secretary. He was awarded a FBCN club service award in 2000 and since that time has continued his tireless work on behalf of our environment. Harold and his late wife Joan coordinated the Christmas Bird Count for more than 10 years and Harold still provides homemade soup for the after-count feast. He has also found time to run the family orchard and is an active member of his church and community. Harold credits Joan with providing the support that has made his conservation work possible.

From the BC Nature perspective, Harold has served as board director for more than 20 years. In that capacity, he has faithfully attended regional meetings and also the

BC Nature spring and fall general meetings where his contributions have guided a strong course for naturalists. Harold has contributed his expertise on many issues, both at meetings and through email discussions on conservation matters, where his unique CAPITALIZED words certainly add emphasis! Harold was a member of BC Nature's subcommittee on the future direction of the foundation and was a big help in keeping the foundation on track with its original purpose.

Harold served as BC Nature's rep at the Okanagan Shuswap Land Resource Management Plan as well as the follow-up monitoring committee and has done so for the past 13 years. As such, he has taken an active role in hundreds of hours of meetings.

Along with furthering the aims of BC Nature, Harold has been active in many organizations including acting as director of the Okanagan Similkameen Parks society for 20 years, a volun-



teer warden of Haynes Lease Ecological Reserve since 1980, an environmental representative on the West Kootenay Power Committee form transmission lines and a director and interpretive guide for the Osoyoos Desert Society. Harold has also been involved with the Smart Growth Community planning movement, with scouting and with a restoration oxbow project near Road 22 on the Okanagan River.

Harold exemplifies a profound degree of dedication, devotion and energy worthy of this award.

BCNature – Summer 2010

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It involves recognition of the fact that the accumulation of wealth at the expense of ravaging the Earth is not justifiable. However, soothsayers of the modern age will have their way. They will avoid truth by citing half truths. The wrecking of some portion of the Earth for monetary gain or political capital will be smoothed over with neat packets of figures indicating how many people will be employed, how much a region will increase its net worth, or how much it will increase its tourist potential. The only answer to this kind of oratorical banditry is the adoption of a binding ethic – that immediate gain will not be justifiable when long range ecological damage may occur.

“Heresy!” will be the cry in the market place. Stupidly idealistic, the destroyers will chant. The canned answers are all available to be opened and thrown at anyone who proposes that something less than an ideal situation exists. “Look at the Gross National Product”

will be the shout. How can we exist if we don't continue the upward trend of the GNP?

The answer ...better that the market collapse but the world still be able to exist. Better that the trees continue to grow on the slopes than that money stack up in the vaults of the already wealthy. Better that the birds return with the spring and that the people be poor than the Earth be saturated with pollutants and the people be dead! Better that we live a life of principle than that the rivers be great sewers. Better that we enjoy the awesome wonders of nature than proving that we know how to produce and export, while we wear gas masks in the smog.

In North America's relatively short history of settlement, many species of living things have passed over the Great Divide and are now forever gone from the Earth. The passenger pigeons will no longer bow the branches beneath the weight of their flocks. The great auk, the Carolina parakeet, the giant sea

mink, the heath hen, the Labrador duck and other species will never be seen again alive on Earth. Sadly enough, North America has lost more species in the last 100 years than Europe has in the last one thousand years.

Yes, it has also been suggested that another species be added to the list of endangered animals – this one is a bit more personal – for it is us – the species *Homo sapiens*.

Do we need a conservation ethic? – only as we need life. It's Your World!

Bob Harrington lives at Galena Bay, B.C. His latest book: *Testimony for Earth* and a new edition of *The Soul Solution* with a foreword by Dr. David Suzuki are now available at www.hancockhouse.com or telephone 250.369.2281 for autographed copies \$23.pp

North of 50° Local Latitude, Global Attitude – July 2010 vol 8, issue 7

Group Renews Push for National Park

BY JORDEN DIXON, PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS – JUNE 9, 2010

Seven years ago the idea of a national park in the South Okanagan surfaced, and the tug of war between supporters and opponents continues as they use the federal government as their rope.

Recently a poll that was organized by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, and conducted by McAllister Opinion Research showed no major revolts to the idea of the national park. Of the random 405 South Okanagan-Similkameen residents surveyed, 63 per cent said they were in favour of protecting a portion of the South Okanagan-Similkameen through a national park.

A total of 95 per cent of those polled also said it's important to protect the ecosystem in the South Okanagan, and put it above the economy in issues that are of concern in the region.

The proposed park area, running south from Oliver and west to Keremeos and beyond, is Canada's only "pocket desert" and is said to be the home of birds, mammals and plants that can be found nowhere else in Canada, with

over one-third of them on British Columbia's threatened and endangered lists.

"It's the most deserving place for a national park," biologist Dick Cannings said. "It has this combination of diversity, richness and rarity, it's very sensitive habitat. These grasslands especially, it's just spectacular."

The area also has a rich heritage when it comes to the people who have inhabited the area over the years and used the landscape to make a living. Ranching, mining, agriculture, logging, the fur trade and First Nations have all contributed to the area's legacy, and it seems the battle between those at either end of the rope has come down to whether or not to preserve its story or continue to let it write itself.

"If we don't protect it, in 20 years we are going to wake up and say 'oh my God, why didn't we do the right thing,'" said Gwen Barlee, Wilderness Committee policy director. "It's frustrating because you keep hoping that in the next six months the federal government is going to make a positive decision."

Depending on who you are talking to, the criteria of a positive decision surrounding the conflict has its differences.

"As far as we are concerned it's a dead issue," said Greg Norton of the Grassland Park Review Coalition. "We're just waiting for Parks Canada to wake up and kill the thing."

The proposed park area encompasses some already protected areas under the Land Resource Management Plan, which Norton feels is more than adequate, and anything further will just hinder business and recreation opportunities.

"What the LRMP manage to do is reflect the community activities both historically and for the future," Norton said. "Parks Canada is just straight exclusion, and the vast majority of us will be thrown out."

Co-ordinator for the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Network Doreen

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Meadowlark More Popular Than Ever

BY STEVE KIDD, PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS – MAY 26, 2010

After 13 years of operation, you might think the Meadowlark Festival had reached its peak, but if you look at the success of this year's festival, it appears it's still growing.

"We've still go to evaluate – the festival only finished yesterday – but early signs are that ticket sales are up from last year, which is fantastic," said Antia Dunford, the Meadowlark Festival Coordinator for the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance.

"I think there is potential for the festival to grow even further, it's certainly not losing any momentum in terms of its popularity from the people that want to visit," she continued.

Dunford said support from the community is an essential factor in the festival's success. Margaret Kitson has been making her

Naramata property available to the festival for the last three years as a lunch stopover on one of the birding tours after naturalist Dick Cannings asked her to join in.

"The awareness of this history and the wildlife here combined with Dick's expertise just makes it a great time," she said, adding that she believes in the goals of the OSCA. "It's important to keep this space natural, as you can see by looking at our property."

Without volunteers like Kitson, the tour guides, sponsors and other contributors, Dunford added, the festival couldn't happen.

The Meadowlark Festival is held each May, with the money raised through the annual festival helping OSCA continue with its environmental education and outreach programs.

Dunford said word continues to spread about the South Okanagan celebration, which offered 85 events over five days this year.

People are still recommending the festival to friends and family and even farther a field, she said, with people even flying in from Mexico and other countries to take part.

"It is one of our key objectives is to increase its popularity outside the area as well, which in turn will help tourism and the local economy by bringing in more visitors," she said, emphasizing that they are working hard to promote awareness of the festival across Canada.

"The word is still spreading and the festival is looking like it's going to grow, which is fantastic for the area."

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY DIRECTORS

Mary Trainer - Director

Summerland, B.C.

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BACKGROUND: I have been an OSPS member for more than 10 years, and am enthusiastic about my new position as a director. I have a deep love of the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys. Born and raised in Summerland, I returned here after a career in communications at SFU and later at the Greater Vancouver Regional District, where I worked in the Parks and Corporate Communications Departments. I was fortunate to have worked for an organization that valued preserving parkland, and over a 20-year period saw firsthand how board members, staff, the public and various levels of government could work together to acquire and manage significant amounts of land – which today is a magnificent system of regional parks in the Lower Mainland.

I am also a big fan of B.C. history and have written *Slumach's Gold* (with co-authors Rick Antonson and Brian Antonson; Heritage House 2007) and *The Edge of the Centre* (history of Naramata Centre) published by Wood Lake Books in 2009. I continue to work as a consultant and volunteer for several organizations.

AREA OF INTEREST: I'm supporting the OSPS by using my communications skills to revitalize the society's website. The society's significant accomplishments over its 40+ year history, ongoing projects, dedicated members and dedication to preserving parkland in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys require an enhanced presence on the Internet.

My other areas of interest are supporting the proposed national park, preserving and promoting historical and recreational lands, and setting aside trails for walking and biking between municipalities.

WISHES FOR THE SOCIETY: I hope that an invigorated website will help to attract increased awareness about the society and potential new members, especially younger people in the Okanagan who are enrolled in environmental/land use planning courses. We look forward to hearing their perspectives and welcome their involvement!

WORDS OF ADVICE: Three of my favourite words are "Someday is here." They remind me that time goes by quickly, and to act now on what's important, rather than waiting for some vague time in the future or for someone else to act on my behalf.

John Bremmer - Director

South Okanagan

Oliver, B.C.



BACKGROUND: John has been involved in the B.C. Wine industry in the Okanagan Valley in many different capacities since 1966. He was winemaker, production manager and general manager for Andres Wines over 12 years, a viticulture consultant for St. Michelle Wines for 2 years and production manager for Brights Wines for 10 years. He has served on the viticulture committee for the Association of Grape Growers and was a technical advisor for wine research to the Summerland Research Station. John presently owns and operates a 2 hectare vineyard in Oliver and is a partner with Lynn Bremmer in Mount Kobau Wine Services supplying field sampling, teaching and viticultural services to the B.C. Wine industry.

John has a degree in Agriculture Science from UBC and a Pesticide Applicators License as well as numerous courses in viticulture and wine production. He has traveled extensively touring wine areas of Germany, France, Argentina, Chile, California and Washington and aiding wine businesses in Slovakia, Romania, Moldova, Armenia, Serbia and the Caribbean.

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS:

- Past President of Oliver Rotary Club
- Past President of International Bicycling & Hiking Society
- Director for Okanagan/Similkameen Parks Society
- Member of South Okanagan-Trail Corridor B.C. government consultative committee
- Past director for Oliver Recreation Commission

AREA OF INTEREST: Development of walking and bicycle paths between communities in

the South Okanagan.

WISHES FOR THE SOCIETY: To continue to have a reputation for leading interested parties in establishing protected land areas and encouraging the use of the wonders of B.C.

Michael Meheriuk - Director

Summerland, B.C.



BACKGROUND: Michael was a researcher for Agriculture Canada at Summerland for 30 years. He is now happily retired.

AREA OF INTEREST: Michael is concerned with historical structures and wetlands.

WISHES FOR THE SOCIETY: That The Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society can continue the work done so far.

Ian Graham - Director

Summerland, B.C.

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BACKGROUND: My wife Donna and I have been OSPS members for the past decade and a half. At the last annual general meeting of the society I let my name stand for election as a director and was fortunate enough to be trusted with a position on the board of directors. Born and raised in B.C.'s lower mainland my career as an educator has taken me to many areas of the province including the North Coast, the Chilcotin Plateau, Fort Nelson and, for the past nineteen years, the Okanagan Valley.

With an education degree from S.F.U. and an MEd. From U.B.C. I earned my Professional teaching certificate and was a teacher or a public school administrator for 33 years prior to retiring a year ago. Today I continue to work as an educator, instructing part time at Okanagan College.

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I have lived and worked in many areas of the province and have a deep respect and appreciation of the natural world. My belief is that we need to examine the relationship that we, and future generations, have, or will have, with the ecosystem. Whether living through the Pine Beetles' first infestation around Riske Creek in the early 1980's or interacting with the trappers in the northern fringe of the province later in that decade, or worrying about interface fires and water quality here in the Okanagan, I have seen the natural catastrophes. I feel it is up to us to broadcast the need for humans to stop and consider their role in the relationship with nature. This is another educational challenge that I am ready to take part in.

AREA OF INTEREST: Since joining the OSPS board I have been assisting with the editing of the Newsletter. We hope to use the newsletter to keep you up to date with issues and occurrences that are related to our mandate in the southern interior region of British Columbia. I am most gracious to Sheila White, who edited the newsletter for many years, for all of the patience that she has shown while I get up to speed with the job.

WISHES FOR THE SOCIETY: I hope that we can continue with the stellar work that has been done by the society over the past 40 years or so. We need to honour the past, work in the present and dream about the future of our parks, be they municipal, regional, provincial or federal. Parks are something that we can all share.

Words of Advice: Find your passion and become active. It does as much for you as it does for the Cause.

Forest-protection Agency Set Up

PENTICTON HERALD – MAY 23, 2010

OSLO, NORWAY (AP)

A multinational deforestation conference will set up an agency Thursday to monitor aid for helping poor nations protect their forests – a major move delegates hope will build momentum for progress at U.N. climate talks this year in Mexico.

The program – called REDD Plus, for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation – will encourage rich nations to voluntarily finance forest-protecting projects while co-ordinating that aid to avoid waste and ensure transparency.

“Forest are worth more dead than alive. Today we commit to change that equation,” Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said in opening the Oslo conference, attended leaders and representatives from 52 countries.

By curbing deforestation, Stoltenberg said the world can achieve the “largest, fastest and cheapest cuts in global emissions” of greenhouse gases thought to be causing the Earth's average temperatures to rise.

Protecting the forests could account for one-third of emissions cuts needed to keep temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels by 2020 – which scientist say could trigger a climate catastrophe.

A political agreement brokered by President Barack Obama at the last U.N. climate summit in December in Copenhagen, Denmark, called for warming to be kept below that 2-degree mark. But the Copenhagen conference disappointed many in failing to produce a legally binding deal for countries to limit emissions.

Deforestation, from logging, crop-growing and cattle grazing, is thought to account for up to 20 per cent of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere – as much as is emitted by all the world's cars, trucks, trains, planes and ships combined.

Success in setting up a n agency to monitor forest-protection programs could help encourage progress at the next U.N. climate summit at the end of the year in Cancun, Mexico, by creating good will and co-operation between rich and poor nations, Oslo conference delegates said.

Thursday's meeting was the last on REDD Plus planned before Cancun, with work now starting on establishing the agency's infrastructure.

The agency should foster transparency that will “decrease a trust deficit” that has stymied progress in wider climate talks, as wealthy countries express concern about how aid money is used in poor nations, said Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who is co-chairing the summit with Stoltenberg.

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Olson said there has been a lot of misinformation surrounding the park.

“Those who are opposed are admittedly opposed, and they come with their reasons,” Olson said. “Some of them are valid and some of them are just outrageous because they aren't the facts.”

With the creation of a national park in the South Okanagan some things that go on in the area now would have to be limited or eliminated. Livestock grazing would have to be reduced in order to meet objectives for ecological integrity, and hunting, mining and off-road motorized

recreation are activities that would come to an end if the national park is formed.

However, access and most self-propelled activities would be allowed under the rule of a national park. Horseback riding, backpacking, fishing, biking, swimming and boating are some of the activities that are encouraged within park boundaries.

“I think some people think the land is going to get expropriated or everything is going to be taken away,” said Chloe O'Loughlin, executive director of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's B.C. chapter. “But that's not true at all.”

“It's one of the most endangered ecosystems in all of Canada,” she added. “And we think (the federal government) has all the information they need to announce they are moving forward to the next step of park establishment.”

In order to reduce mailing costs, the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society would like to send the newsletter by e-mail. If you have an e-mail address, please contact Michael Meheriuk at this address; anglerem@telus.net

BC Parks

A JEWEL IN THE CROWN, ALBEIT SOMEWHAT CHIPPED

BY MAGGIE PAQUET

My introduction to BC Parks came about one sweltering summer afternoon about 35 years ago. Acting on a rumour, I drove to the campground at Goldstream Provincial Park. Getting directions from park staff, I hiked up a trail to an innocent-looking side branch and went carefully down the steep slope to the river. Amazement greeted me! A waterfall plunged into a deep green bowl lined with shrubs, flowers, and ferns, and towered over by huge Douglas-firs and red cedars. The water was cold and sublimely refreshing. There were a few people there, but it was peaceful. I went back to the swimming hole on hot days throughout that summer and the next. I explored the rest of that remarkable park on Victoria's doorstep, including attend-



Elkhart Lake

ing some of the evening 'naturalist talks' in the park's amphitheatre. I did some research on its history. I wanted to know how and why this precious place came to be dedicated to the public. Ultimately, I was inspired to look into this BC Parks thing."

What I learned motivated me to go exploring around the province at every opportunity. Over the years, I visited other family camping parks – Alice Lake near Squamish, Cultus Lake near Chilliwack, Wasa Lake near Cranbrook, Charlie Lake near Fort St. John, and Lakelse Lake near Terrace. I combed incredible ocean beach parks, such as Rath Trevor near Parksville, and French Beach west of Sooke. I went to parks that offered both front country camping and incredible back country experiences, such as Manning, off Hwy 3 past Hope and Golden Ears, in the Coast Mountains north of the

Fraser River. I enjoyed tiny peaceful oases no larger than a few picnic tables and a fire grate, such as Memory Island in the middle of Shawnigan Lake. I wandered through parks that celebrate settlement history, such as Fort Steele in the East Kootenay, and Cottonwood River and Barkerville in the Cariboo. I marvelled at magnificent waterfalls, such as the 137-metre-high Helmcken Falls in Wells Gray, and danced in the spray on the big rocks over which the Bijoux Falls tumble in the Pine Pass northeast of Prince George. I fished for steelhead (and caught one!) along the banks of the Quinsam River in the campground park of Elk Falls park near Campbell River. Eventually, I even made it into two spectacular wilderness parks: the Stikine river RA (now a class A park) in BC's rugged and remote northwest, and Strathcona – BC's very first provincial park – in the north-central part of Vancouver Island.

Years later, while researching my books on BC Parks, I discovered even more about provincial parks that convinced me we had something special. For example:

- The massive Lloyd George Icefield in the heart of Kwadacha, southwest of Fort Nelson and east of the Rocky Mountain Trench, is the largest icefield in the Rockies north of the 54th parallel.
- Spatsizi and the newer Muskwa-Kechika area parks protect habitat for Stone's sheep, nearly all of the world's population of which occur in northern BC.
- Volcanics are a major feature of some parks, including Wells Gray, Mt. Edziza, Mt. Seymour, and Garibaldi.
- Khutzeymateen is Canada's only grizzly bear sanctuary and is home to about 50 grizzlies.
- Liard River Hot Springs are ranked in the top five of all North America hot springs.
- Strathcona Park contains the 440m Della Falls, Canada's highest and one of the ten highest falls in the world.
- Inside the 116-km parallelogram-shaped

chain of lakes, river, creeks, and portages in Bowron Lake Park are sedimentary rocks that contain fossil trilobites and primitive corals.

What all this says is that British Columbia, as a jurisdiction, has one of the largest and, along with ecological reserves, most ecologically varied park systems in the world. It is definitely something of which we can all be very proud. But, like liberty, the price of all this grandeur and diversity is eternal vigilance (and we're lucky to have a lot of "park patriots" in our province). Before I get into that topic, however, let's have a brief history of how we got this still great park systems.

BC PARKS HISTORY

There have been three primary waves of incentives to establish BC's parks. The earliest was to provide mountain wilderness parks largely



Campsite clearcut at Elkhart Lake

visited by adventurers and wealthy tourists with time and money to spare. Concurrent with commercial tourism promotion was an expansionist desire by governments to entice settlers into new areas. To facilitate this, national and provincial governments ceded long tracts of Crown lands to accommodate building railroads.

In BC, the first park was Strathcona and the railway was the E & N. On March 1st 1911, Strathcona Provincial Park was legislated with passage of the Strathcona Park Act. While the original Act clearly intended to protect the park from mining, logging, and similar industrial development, both mining claims and timber holdings had been granted prior to the park's establishment, and existing rights and interests were exempted from the Act. In 1918, the Act was amended to open the park to the "location, acquisition and occupation of mineral claims under the Mineral Act."

And so it began – from the very earliest days of our provincial parks system – this seesaw behaviour of government, shifting back and forth from protecting lands for recreation and conservation on one hand, to allowing – encouraging even – industrial uses on the other.

Strathcona was soon followed in 1913, when BC's second park was established with the Mount Robson Park Act. Both Strathcona and Mt. Robson were adjacent to railway land grants. Mt Assiniboine in the Rockies and Kokanee Glacier in the Selkirks were both established in 1922, and Garibaldi in 1927. By 1930, 13 provincial parks had been created, and at least another 50 areas had been reserved "for the pleasure and recreation of the public".

Not all early parks catered to wilderness enthusiasts. John Dean Park on Mt. Newton in Central Saanich was established in 1921 as a day use park and to protect a small bit of old-growth Douglas-fir and Garry oak-wildflower meadow. Unlike previous parks, this was the first donation of private land for the specific purpose of park designation.

Up until the Depression, parks were added and managed haphazardly. A forest Service public works program was created in 1929. For nearly the next three decades, parks were the responsibility of the Forest Service. In 1957, the Department of Recreation and Conservation was created, including an independent Parks Branch. A philosophy of establishing, operating, and managing provincial parks became more clearly defined.

The next wave peaked in the 1950s and '60s. This was a time of road-building to meet the greater mobility of post-war peregrinations; matching it was a major expansion of the provincial park system. Destination campground parks to serve the newly mobile middle and working classes cropped up along equally newly built roads all across the province. These parks featured family-oriented campgrounds, expanded facilities, such as picnic tables, potable water, outhouses (even showers and flush toilets in some), fire grates and the provision of firewood, and – what became hugely popular – BC Parks' famous interpretation programmes. The big parks had wardens and on-site staff to assist visitors...oh, and collect camping fees.

A revised Park Act was passed in 1965. It

provided a detailed classification of provincial parks, management guidelines, and increased protection, including restrictions on land uses and resource extraction. Conservation, while a partial rationale for a few earlier parks, was becoming an important reason for many of the newer parks.

Setting aside large areas for conservation and to manage parks for ecological integrity and wilderness preservation was becoming an important goal, both for the public and BC Parks managers, and represents the third wave.

Parks were starting to be seen as something other than simply places for the public to visit for sport and refreshment, or places to take the kids so they could blow off steam and maybe learn something about "nature." Rather, parks were beginning to be recognized as sanctuaries for biological diversity, as gene pools, as sources for pure water, as places of beauty in their own right, and as



Elkhart Lake campsite

a source for something intangible that is increasingly required, but equally increasingly difficult to obtain, in our crowded and cluttered lives: solitude, spiritual renewal. During the 1970s, large remote wilderness parks were established, including Cape Scott, Naikoon, Spatsizi Wilderness, Mt. Edziza, Purcell Wilderness, and Desolation sound.

Throughout the 1980s and '90s, a number of public consultation processes took place over nearly every corner of the province, including the Wilderness Advisory Committee, Protected Areas Strategy, Commission on Resources and Environment, and numerous Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) processes. One of the most important recommendations of the Wilderness Advisory Committee was its advice to government stressing the need for a clear and consistent wilderness policy with explicit

management guidelines.

There were some highly controversial goings on during these times, including confrontations with logging and mining interests, such as what occurred in Clayoquot Sound, which resulted in the largest mass arrests in BC history. Nonetheless, these very public processes resulted in significant additions to the parks system, such as Vahalla, Akamina-Kishinena, Kakwa, Carmanah-Walbran, Tatshenshini-Elsek, Stikine River. These were followed in the next decade by large protected areas, often co-managed with First Nations, like those in the Muskwa-Kechika and the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary.

The reality of First Nations aboriginal and territorial rights and ongoing treaty negotiations asserted itself into the designation and management of new and existing parks and conservancies. The Nuuchah-nulth Tribal council and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation declared Meares Island in Clayoquot Sound to be a Tribal Park. In the Stein Valley, the Lytton and Mt. Currie First Nations put the BC government on notice that there would be no industrial activity and no compromises in the Stein. Many of the newer protected areas and conservancies, including the Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage, Ts'il-os, and Anluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'asanskwhl Nisga'a (Memorial Lava Bed), as well as the Great Bear Rainforest, have come into being as a direct result of negotiations with First Nations communities for co-management and other opportunities, as well as protections for traditional livelihoods and values.

Information about endangered spaces and endangered species was hitting the news on a regular basis. Climate change, and its effects on future conditions both in and out of parks, was also becoming a concern.

The Park Amendment Act 1995 increased the total minimum area of the province to be designated as protected park land from 2,550,000 hectares to 7,300,000 hectares, which was to be further increased to 10,000,000 hectares by January 1, 2000. As of 2010, BC had 989 parks and protected areas in over 13 million hectares, accounting for over 14% of British Columbia's land base.

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DISTURBING TRENDS & CONDITIONS

While all these additions were generally welcomed by the public, we shouldn't fall into the trap of confusing quantity for quality. While public consultations had helped establish better rationales for parks and park boundaries, and added many important areas to the system, I think most would agree that the quality of management and programmes has declined in recent years. Many of the new parks (and a lot of older ones) do not have management plans. There have been severe cutbacks in both office and field staff throughout the system. One of the biggest losses in the "institutional memory" of many of the former public servants who ensured the high standards BC Parks was once famous for.

As BC Parks entered the new millennium, it was becoming apparent that the comparatively rational days of yesteryear had morphed into the days of nickel-and-dime every aspect of park creation and management, including the unpopular move to increase the size of parking lots at the expense of park lands and install parking meters in a number of parks.

Gone are the days of widespread public consultations on park establishment. Gone are adequate numbers of park wardens to assist visitors and protect park resources. Gone too are the outstanding naturalist programmes, which provided an important public education service not available anywhere else. Contracting out most park services – and stretching them beyond effectiveness – has not resulted in an improved level of service to the public.

A highly disturbing trend has been changing parks and protected areas legislation over established areas to remove land a re-draw boundaries to allow for industrial uses, often with little or no public consultation. Many hard-fought battles involving all sectors of society over many years, such as through LRMP processes, have been turned around with no recourse and little respect for the previous work. The effects of increased roads, pipelines, and transmission lines on wildlife and habitats to allow for industrial developments in and adjacent to protected areas are a major concern. Just a few examples of this include:



- removal of over 1,000 ha from Graham-Laurier Park in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area to allow for 11 kms of a road or pipeline through the park;
- legislative changes to allow for resort development and directional drilling for oil and gas immediately adjacent to parks;
- reduction of 20% of South Chilcotin Mountains (Spruce Lake) park to allow for mining and tourism in the areas removed;
- removal (allegedly temporary) of lands in Mt. Robson park to run an oil pipeline through it;
- the massive number of IPPs and "run-of-river" projects that will affect conditions inside parks and fish and wildlife outside parks.

TIME TO RE-ORGANIZE & RE-FOCUS?

Environmental groups like Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, The Sierra Club, and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee have remained focused on issues to do with parks, but likely the rest of us haven't; not so much, anyway. It may be time to have a close look at BC Parks to see what's needed to ensure the system can deliver the promise that many of us felt 20-30 years ago. Maybe it has been a case of "out of sight, out of mind" for much of the public that has allowed some of the reversals in recent years. It's never wise to take anything for granted. The time may be ripe for "parks patriots" to regroup.

Maggie Paquet, biologist, writer, and editor, is the author of *Parks of British Columbia & the Yukon*, *The BC Parks Explorer*, and numerous articles about wilderness, parks and the BC environment.

Watershed Sentinel – Summer 2010

Okanagan Trail

RAVINE EDGE, NEAR VERNON

Instead of climbing up for a view, this easy (but lengthy) eight kilometre loop will have you perched on a rim overlooking Kalamalka Lake, Vernon and the Coldstream Valley. From Vernon, drive east on Highway 6, over the railway tracks and past Coldstream Ranch to King Edward Lake forest service road. Turn right. An active route, watch for logging trucks, ATV's and dirt bikes. Continue on this well maintained gravel and road keeping right at about the four and eight kilometre junctions. Around the nine-kilometre mark turn right and proceed over a small creek (trailhead) and park in the clearing down the road. The trail, which is marked and maintained by the Vernon Outdoors Club, follows a ravine and starts with views of Coldstream Valley and Silver Star Mountain to the north. At the clear-cut take the right fork down the embankment and continue along the edge. Yes, you're going to have to climb later, but the views are worth the effort. In spring, wildflower addicts will want to keep a watch out for shooting star, Indian paintbrush, blue clematis, fairy slipper orchid and even chocolate lily. The trail leads to a lovely rest spot overlooking Kalamalka Lake and beyond – so don't forget your camera. You'll want to fuel up here because further along the trail becomes steep. Once you hit the old logging road you have a choice. Make a scenic detour (two rights) to the old hang-glider take-off ramp or turn left and keep an eye out for the mountain bike trail on your right, which will lead you back to the clear-cut and the trailhead. Allow four hours for this one. Hiking boots a must. Poles will come in handy.

KAREN SLIVAR
Okanagan Life June 2010

Wood v. Water

BY CHIEF FABIAN ALEXIS, OKANAGAN INDIAN BAND

The Okanagan Nation has blocked a major logging road. Why? It's not just a matter of asserting our Aboriginal Title and Rights, although that is certainly part of it. It's because Tolko intends to log the watershed that supplies the majority of the 1,800 residents of the Okanagan Indian Band with our drinking water.

You would think in this day and age in Canada that the protection of drinking water would be well established. Up until 1962 it was. But back in the early 1960s, the province of British Columbia decided to open up many of these protected watersheds to commercial logging.

Of course most municipalities quickly moved to protect their drinking water supplies. But despite its fiduciary obligation to those citizens it placed on reserves, Canada did absolutely nothing to protect the drinking water

supplies for indigenous communities.

With the forestry company Tolko about to start logging, the Okanagan Indian Band set up an information picket on Westside Road, a paved road which runs through our reserve. High up in the hills we have also established a camp and full blockade of a logging road near Bouleau Lake.

As Chief of the Okanagan Indian Band, I have spent many days and nights both at the information picket line and up at the blockade site, as have many of our band members. The Okanagan Nation Alliance, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and the Assembly of First Nations have been very supportive of our efforts along with the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and the B.C. Tap Water Alliance.

The solution is obvious, Tolko should go log



Wildflowers in the Okanagan

elsewhere and wither be compensated in dollars or in wood by the Government of British Columbia for the loss of what amounts to about a three-day supply of fibre for their mill in Armstrong.

Tolko is not the enemy in this situation, government mismanagement and indifference is. The only thing that will change that is if the politicians in Ottawa and Victoria see that there are actually enough people who care about the issue of safe drinking water to make them resolve this conflict.

Water Canada – May/June 2010

Eating Our Way Back to the Future: Low Greenhouse Gas Agriculture

BY JOYCE NELSON

Peak oil may soon give us peak food. As we run out of fossil fuels, food will get increasingly expensive not only to produce, but to import and export. Changes to this system can also be good news, however, since globally, agriculture and our industrial food system account for almost one-third of all greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to climate change. Changing how we farm our food can literally change the fate of the world.

Switching to organic farming methods can reduce carbon dioxide emissions from soil by up to 92%.

Watershed Sentinel – Summer 2010

Saying No to Genetically-Engineered Alfalfa

BY JOYCE NELSON

Opponents of genetically-engineered (GE) crops and foods are urging Canadians to oppose the introduction of GE alfalfa. The Harper government has already approved Monsanto's GE alfalfa, but Monsanto has not yet applied for "variety registration" – the next step before the crop can be commercially grown in Canada.

Patrick Connor, a Toronto member of the Non-GMO Project, told me, "If genetically-modified alfalfa is introduced into Canada, it would decimate organic farmers" by easily contaminating their alfalfa crops. Alfalfa is widely used as a cover crop and as a high protein livestock feed. If their alfalfa is contaminated by GE seeds, organic farmers could lose their markets for organic meats and dairy.

Flax farmers in Canada are now paying a heavy price because of GE contamination. Late last year, Canadian flax exports were discovered to be contaminated with a GE flax that is not approved in Europe, and farmers lost their

export markets in 28 countries. They are also having to pay for costly testing and cleanup.

Lucy Sharratt, Co-ordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (www.cban.ca) is urging Canadian citizens to voice their support for Bill C-474, a private member's bill introduced in Parliament by Alex Atamanenko, the NDP Agriculture Critic and MP for BC's Southern Interior. The Bill would require "an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted" in Canada.

Bill C-474 passed second reading in the House of Commons on April 15 and moved to committee for further study, especially throughout June. This is the first time a bill to change the rules on GMOs has passed second reading. Sharratt says "We can't allow Monsanto's GE seeds to destroy the livelihoods of farmers and jeopardize the future of organic farming."

Watershed Sentinel – Summer 2010

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Kettle River and “Sacred Headwaters” jointly top BC’s Most Endangered Rivers List for 2010

NEED FOR WATER POLICY REFORM AND PROTECTION OF NORTHERN RIVERS HIGHLIGHTED

(Copy by Friend of the Stikine Society)
Wednesday, March 24, 2010

The Kettle River and a remote northern area widely known as the “sacred headwaters” have tied for top spot on British Columbia’s most endangered rivers list for 2010.

The Kettle River runs through BC’s southern interior near the towns of Midway, Rock Creek and Grand Forks. This river, already suffering from seasonal low flows and high water temperatures, is threatened by significant new water extraction proposals near its source. Unless greater efforts are made to address this issue, the fate of this beautiful interior stream and its fish stocks may well foreshadow what many other streams in the region will confront in the face of ongoing climate change. “Most importantly, the issues unfolding on the Kettle highlight the urgency of updating BC’s outdated Water Act so as to ensure the needs of fish and river ecosystems are adequately considered before making decisions on water extraction for various industrial uses,” says Mark Angelo, Rivers Chair of the Outdoor Recreation Council and an Order of Canada recipient. The province is currently seeking public input on Water Act reform.

Okanagan Odyssey: Journeys through Terrain, Terroir & Culture

Rocky Mountain Books, Calgary
A new book by Don Gayton

South Okanagan-Similkameen
Conservation Program Newsletter
– June 2010

“Okanagan Odyssey is a quirky and lyrical examination of BC’s Okanagan Valley. Sticking to the backroads and byways, Gayton gently pokes and prods local ecosystems, histories, vineyards and people. The author revels in the biological and social diversity while sampling local wines and fruit along the way. In his unique version of wine paring, Gayton matches up local books and landscapes with local vintages, giving terroir a whole new meaning. Gayton deftly negotiates the tension between the Okanagan that is home to many endangered species and ecosystems, and the Okanagan that is a mecca for developers and urban refugees. Okanagan Odyssey is not a travel guide, but represents travel writing at its idiosyncratic best.”

Public Opinion Survey shows South Okanagan Similkameen residents in favour of establishing a National Park.

Gwen Barlee of The Wilderness Committee (FORMERLY Western Canada Wilderness Committee), was in Penticton June 3 coordinating a tour, for local and provincial media, of the proposed South Okanagan – Lower Similkameen National Park. WC announced the results of a telephone poll of 405 residents in the South Okanagan and Similkameen on establishing a national park. 63% of those polled were in favour of the park while 26% were opposed. A further breakdown indicated 7% of those polled were very opposed, while 42% were very in favour of the park. Watch for further media coverage of the poll results and media tour.

South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program – Newsletter – June 2010



Trout Creek