



Newsletter

FALL 2019

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Forests Are More Than Fibre

BY IAN GRAHAM, OSPS



Midway – a small sawmill in the boundary country. Note that the sign designates it as a Fibre mill. Trees have way more value than as simply fibre.

It appears that for many people around our province, country and even, our continent, trees are believed to have one purpose: as a source of fiber. The logging industry, many of their employees, our government ministries and many of their employees and businesses and communities that believe that they rely on logging consider trees to be strictly a source of fiber. And in this view, fiber is, considered to be the only source of money and jobs.

However, our forests are so much more than a slowly renewing source of raw logs, lumber, chips or pellets. Unfortunately, in keeping with the forecast made over two decades

ago, it appears that they are also reaching a level of sustainability and depletion that will soon render the commercial logging industry impractical and obsolete if the current methods and standards continue.

While we all surely have empathy for the plight of loggers and timber mill workers the recent spate of mill closures and shutdowns must be seen as evidence that the tree fiber industry must change. This does not mean that the already undervalued, 'stumpage fees' need to be reduced but rather that the true costs of extracting wood fiber to the

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Editorial

It has been a very interesting summer for the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society. While, likely as the result of the heavier than usual rainfall, there were fewer wildfires (save the one that threatened Gallagher Lake and parts of Oliver) and very little flooding. This however should not be taken as the norm since recent summers have all produced their fair share of both issues along with eventual droughts. Once again, as this is being written, California is experiencing wildfire disasters resulting in evacuations and loss of life. We need to get a handle on this!

Meanwhile in other news and of very important interest is the celebration of one of our director's ninety fifth birthday. Sheila White, who has been very active in the society, almost since its inception in the 1960's, was honoured with a large party attended by family and her many friends, on the B.C. Day long weekend.

Starting back in June a couple of the society's directors conducted a forest inventory session with a group of Peachland citizens instructing on efficient and effective ways in which to monitor the 'work' taking place in their watershed and around their greater community. Some information on the struggles to protect community watersheds in locals, like Peachland, around our province, is included in this issue.

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

Directors representing the OSPS met with George Heyman, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change in July. As one of three or four groups meeting (some representatives were linked to more than one organization) our directors were able to address a number of regional issues of interest to the ministry. One important concern was the completion of projects and decisions left still out-standing from the Land Resources Management Plan process conducted over 15 years ago. Among these concerns were the actual protection of areas that were deemed to require it in the plan and the direction to ministry personnel to adhere to the agreement.

Also, in July some OSPS directors and other members joined with, and as a part of, the South Okanagan Similkameen National Park coalition to listen to provincial, federal and first nations governors as they agreed in principle to move forward with the planning and negotiations required for the establishment of the National Park in the South Okanagan Similkameen. In the face of false accusations

and questionable tactics perpetrated by some park-opponents the prospects for the SOS National Park are very positive. This is true in no small part to the leadership of the coalition team. They deserved to celebrate the announcement.

Later in the summer the OSPS signed a letter that was sent to British Columbia's Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. The letter was to express concern, and protest, Imperial Metals Corporation application for permits to drill for mineral deposits (gold and copper) in the area where the Skagit River begins, in the Canadian portion of the Cascade Range.

According to Imperial Metals' permit application, exploratory mining would involve building roads, helicopter landing sites, air strips, boat ramps and settling ponds as well as doing surface drilling. The company expects those activities to impact about 0.9 of an acre. Individuals and groups opposed to the proposal say that mining in this location would put the river and everything that relies on it at risk. The Skagit provides water

for drinking, irrigation, fishing, recreation and habitat stabilization as it passes through Washington State's Whatcom and Skagit counties, and ecologically valuable habitat and forests.

The letter was signed by officials and non-profit groups and societies. Among those signing were state Sen. Liz Lovelett, (D-Anacortes), the nine Seattle City Council members and representatives of national groups such as American Rivers and Defenders of Wildlife. Local groups that signed include the Skagit Watershed Council and Skagit Land Trust and the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society. More information concerning this issue is included in this newsletter.

The OSPS has been active on causes and issues that concern you. Should you wish to renew a membership, become a member or a director, or just receive more information, please see the contact information and membership application elsewhere in this issue.

FORESTS ARE MORE... continued

exclusion of other values must be addressed. Competing uses for our forests need to be recognized and explored. For instance, forms of selective, labour intensive fiber collection (logging) such as those practiced in some areas of Scandinavia, would result in less collateral waste, healthier stock, and sustainable harvests for the long-term.

Coupling the concepts of value-added use of the wood in British Columbia and the end of raw log exportation would provide a market for the harvested wood and the employment for the citizens of local communities. With government policies to ensure fair and adequate compensation levels for the population working in the woods and in the factories located around B.C. the communities would not need to rely on a single, take it or leave it, industry. A diversified local and provincial economy would greatly assist in

eliminating the roller coaster style boom or bust ride that many smaller communities find themselves on.

However, as was stated earlier, there are other values implicit in our forests to consider. Habitat for indigenous flora and fauna, whether thriving, at risk or endangered should be a prime consideration in forestry use and management. A second value, rising in importance virtually daily, is the role that our forests play as watersheds, particularly in areas where communities rely on local watersheds for potable water or where streams, rivers or lakes are home to important fish species. Forests also act as banks or holding tanks for sequestered carbon-dioxide, the compound that is greatly contributing to the warming of our planet. Human beings enjoy engaging in all sorts of different recreational activities in B.C.'s forests, often contributing to the recreation and tourism industries. And, lest it be forgotten, consider the value inher-

ent in a stroll or a run along a forest path in terms of both mental and physical health.

If such a form of forest stewardship were implemented the employment spin-off would be many. Foresters could actually plan and implement cutting edge 'best practices' in the forests that they work in and not simply look for the best way to enhance 'the numbers' for the next quarter. Some of the harvesters could be re-deployed to maintain infrastructure and aspects of the forests themselves. Animal and plant habitat preservation and restoration programs could be established and the ecological values recognized. Forest could be set aside as carbon sinks and wildlife corridors. Wildfire management plans could reflect long-term planning and mitigation, while at the same time reflecting and acknowledging the concerns of encroachment of communities into the hinterlands, the frequency of fires, vulnerable forest types and the overall effects of climate change.

Salmon & Mining

B.C. First Nation leaders say the provincial government must reform mineral tenure laws that have allowed Imperial Metals to obtain mineral rights in a sensitive watershed without consideration of Aboriginal claims.

First Nations' concerns have become heightened after the Vancouver-based company, known for the collapse of its Mount Polley mine tailings dam in the B.C. Interior in 2014, applied to the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines for an exploration permit to carry out work in the so-called "donut hole" area in the B.C. Interior where it holds mining tenures.

Nearly 15 times the size of Stanley Park, the donut area is sandwiched between Skagit Valley and Manning provincial parks, about 200 kilometres east of Vancouver, just north of the Canada-U.S. border.

Imperial Metals' mining permit is opposed by First Nations on both sides of the border, including by the Neskonlith and Upper Similkameen in B.C. and the Lummi, Sauk-Suiattle, Swinomish and Upper Skagit tribes in Washington State. More than 120 others, including environmental and recreation groups, private companies such as Patagonia, and U.S. senators, are opposed.

First Nations say they are concerned any degradation of the watershed will affect salmon on the Skagit River and their culture that relies on salmon, as well as the orcas that feed on them. They are also concerned about effects on habitat and wildlife in the area and the protection of Aboriginal rights.

"We need deep reform of the Mineral Tenure Act that allows companies to get rights to areas of unceded First Nation territory without consultation or consent, or notice," said Robert Phillips, one of three executive members of the First Nations Summit, a political organization that represents more than 100 First Nations involved in the treaty process in B.C.

Phillips, who is also a member of the B.C. First Nations Energy and Mining Council, noted that transfer of tenure rights between companies also does not trigger a require-

ment for First Nation notice or consultation, another concern.

In response to questions from Postmedia, B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines officials said the province is examining changes to the Mineral Tenure Act but would not provide any details of its inquiry. There is no timeline or proposed changes, mines ministry spokeswoman Meghan McRae said in a written statement.

"The (ministry) has undertaken and plans to continue engagement with First Nations, industry and environmental organizations on these issues," she said.

Phillips said the B.C. government also must enshrine in legislation the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that requires "free, prior and informed consent" from Aboriginal people before projects affecting their lands or resources are approved.

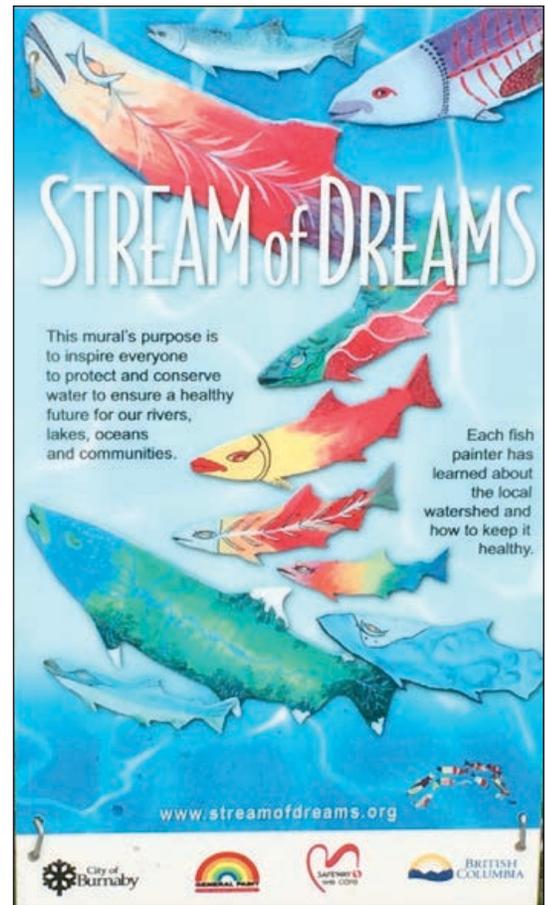
B.C. Premier John Horgan, whose NDP government came to power in 2017 after 16 years of B.C. Liberal rule, has promised to do just that, but details have been scarce.

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation spokeswoman Sarah Plank said legislation to establish the UN declaration as the legislative framework for reconciliation between the provincial government and Aboriginal people is being drafted for introduction this fall.

"Bringing all provincial laws into harmony with the UN declaration won't happen overnight — it will be a process that will happen over time," Plank said in a written statement.

If changes are implemented to the Mineral Tenure Act requested by First Nations and the UN declaration is implemented, it could be a game changer for companies who wish to develop natural resources in B.C.

In Imperial Metals' provincial mine exploration permit application in response to a question on whether the company had



Poster found on the fence at one of the Boundary schools. It is never too soon to talk about our need for clean unpolluted waterways. B.C. depends on all of its resources, this includes our fish and wildlife.

shared information and engaged with First Nations in the area of the proposed activity, it responded: "No."

Imperial Metals did not respond to Postmedia's request for comment.

The Imperial Metals' exploration permit is also opposed by the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission, which gets funding from the City of Seattle and Province of British Columbia under the treaty that established the commission in 1984.

Under the treaty, the City of Seattle agreed not to raise the Ross Dam, which would have flooded more land in B.C., while B.C. agreed to provide electricity to Seattle at least until 2065.

The commission is trying to purchase the mineral rights from Imperial Metals.

ghoekstra@postmedia.com

Letters to the editor...

Unlimited Growth Will Kill

There are many strong supporters of growth who believe that it will improve everyone's lifestyle in the Okanagan Valley and therefore everything must be done to enhance growth.

To have blind faith in unlimited growth is not only illusionary but dangerous. The reality is that Planet Earth is finite, or limited. Therefore, unlimited growth by humans is an impossibility, because to have endless growth is to eventually have extinction. Since, Planet Earth cannot sustain unlimited growth, then, contrary to the belief of the growth proponents, the Okanagan cannot survive endless growth.

The most important factor in the equation of growth is carrying capacity. It is the balance point or equilibrium in maintaining life-sustaining, air, water, flora and fauna everywhere.

Growth may appear to be a positive thing before it reaches carrying capacity. However, as growth exceeds carrying capacity or tipping point, there is a resulting diminished quality of existence, with huge increasing costs and catastrophic consequences. Indeed, the unrestrained damage by growth and economic plunder of the environment could become so widespread that no amount of money or effort would restore our life-sustaining air, water, flora and fauna.

Therefore, for every decision regarding growth, carrying capacity must always be the most important factor, above all else. And, should municipal, provincial and federal governments fail to adhere to this reality, without having an action plan to apply the brakes on growth to preserve carrying capacity, then, they are negligent and should be voted out.

It is destructive to the environment that the champions of growth such as the self-centered corporate business leaders remain obsessed and drunk on growth, profit and exploitive market system values. And, it is

highly irresponsible for them to lead and propel the public on a growth trip faster and faster toward the barrier of carrying capacity, without having an action plan to apply the brakes on their growth binge before we all collide with reality.

Citizens, we must act now to ensure that uncontrolled growth doesn't exceed carrying capacity and push us beyond the point of no return. Let it never be forgotten- that if you live for uncontrolled growth then you or your children could suffer and even die from it.

ROBERT CICHOCKI
Kelowna BC, October 6, 2019

Forestry Crisis was Predictable and Preventable

As a long-time forest activist who once worked in the forest industry, my message to the province regarding the closure of sawmills and loss of jobs is, "the future we warned about has arrived." For decades we have cautioned that the province's forests are being overcut and the result will be degraded ecosystems, loss of species, damage to fresh water supplies and the loss of jobs. The industry is the architect of their own demise and while forest workers are but pawns in this travesty, the forest companies have taken their well-subsidized profits and invested the money into sawmills in the U.S. where tree plantations grow many times faster than they do here. British Columbia's forests have been ravaged and while B.C. citizens are left with the mess, the corporations will continue to profit south of the border. While mill closures and job losses are depressing, today's crisis was so predictable and was so preventable.

So much more could be said - e.g. - Is spending \$69-million of tax-payer dollar to address the problem a wise investment? Is there any

hope that the situation will change for the good? Add climate change to the issue and the future looks even bleaker. How many millions of dollars of timber profits have exited this province? If forestry carries on with business as usual, how many years are left before most mills close?

JIM COOPERMAN
President, Shuswap Environmental Action Society

Washington Ceremony

I was inspired and encouraged last week, to attend a ceremony in Winthrop Washington, for the establishment of a city park that would honor the First Nations who formerly inhabited the sight. This park is open to the public and has access to the Methow river and its trail system. A number of beautiful metal sculptures depicting life in a traditional Native village were donated to the park as well as dwellings. The land was purchase by individual community members and amenities and displays were also donated.

The ceremony, conducted by a local Native resident, honored both Native and non-native ancestors of the area, and seeks to bring together both cultures in a united effort to preserve and enhance the natural values of the area.

This ceremony and dedication strikes me as an excellent model for all of us to emulate. Our entire country is located in Aboriginal territory, once inhabited by one or more of hundreds of Native tribes. As relative newcomers to this land it is only fair and honorable to acknowledge the original inhabitants and work with those of like mind to protect and restore the land and water, fish and wildlife that we all love and need.

JOE KLEIN
OSPS Director

Opposition to Mining in the Skagit Headwaters

AUGUST 13, 2019 GOSKAGIT.COM

Twenty-nine conservation, recreation, wildlife organizations and businesses voiced their opposition Tuesday to proposed exploratory mining for gold and copper in the headwaters of the Skagit River in British Columbia.

Together, they signed a letter sent to the chief inspector of mines for British Columbia's Ministry of Energy Mines & Petroleum Resources.

"We ask you to deny Imperial Metals' proposed mining permit and focus your attention on working with the international Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission to secure lasting permanent protection for this important watershed from logging and mining," they said in the letter.

The letter by the Canadian and Alaska groups comes several months after others expressed opposition.

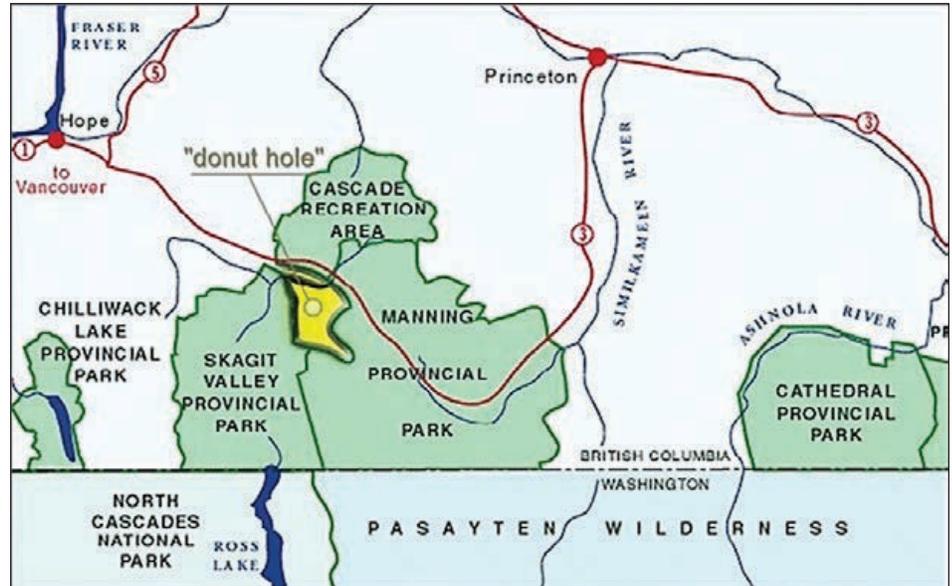
In May, the Democratic members of the state's congressional delegation sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo voicing opposition, and a group of government officials and nonprofits from the region sent a letter to the Ministry of Energy Mines & Petroleum Resources.

Leaders of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs expressed alarm over the proposal in an opinion piece published May 12 in *The Seattle Times*.

Imperial Metals Corporation applied in March for permits to drill for mineral deposits for up to five years, the Associated Press reported. The company wants to search for gold and copper in the area where the Skagit River begins, in the Canadian portion of the Cascade Range.

Those opposed to the exploratory mining proposal say it would put the river and everything that relies on it at risk.

"These mining projects have real impacts on



The headwaters of the Skagit River are 'under attack' from mining speculation. Parks require protection – and so do our sources of water.

downstream watershed values such as clean water, salmon habitat and recreational and economic benefits to local communities," stated the letter sent Tuesday.

Opposition to proposed mineral exploratory work in the Manning Park "donut hole" continues to grow while the provincial government considers the application from Imperial Metals to probe the area for copper and gold.

Thirty B.C. organizations, including the Guide Outfitters Association of B.C., B.C. Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association, Backcountry B.C. among others have penned a new letter to the province, urging the government to reject the plans.

"The opposition to the proposed mine permit in the Skagit Headwaters continues to grow as we await a decision by the BC Government. This latest push is highlighted by British Columbia organizations, outdoor industry leaders and local businesses that would be impacted economically by new mining in this incredible area," said Tom Uniack, Executive Director for Washington Wild.

The 5,800-hectare "donut hole" between Skagit Valley and Manning Provincial Parks was left unprotected when Skagit Valley

became a provincial park in 1996, due to mineral claims dating back to the 30s.

The area is within the headwaters of the Skagit River and is protected somewhat by the 1984 Canada-U.S. High Ross Treaty. The treaty ended decades of negotiations sparked by the Seattle electricity utility's plan to raise the water level behind Ross Dam, which would have flooded 5,000 acres of B.C. farmland and recreation space in the process.

Under the treaty, Seattle agreed to not raise the dam for 80 years in exchange for purchasing power from B.C. at a discount. The treaty also formed the creation of a commission, which is co-chaired by an American and a Canadian, in an effort to protect wildlife habitat and integrity of the watershed.

The B.C. Union of Indian Chiefs has also come out opposed to the work.

"The proposed mining in the Skagit headwaters poses a significant and devastating threat to our inherent Indigenous Title and Rights and the fish, wildlife and natural and cultural resources on which our existence is based," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

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Off-Road Vehicles in the Okanagan

A COMPLEX EQUATION

Penticton Herald – Friday, April 8, 2011

The recent charge of a Kaleden man for mud bogging in Oliver serves as a reminder that finding a solution to off-road vehicle (or ORV) use in the Okanagan is a complex equation. ORVs include mountain bikes, off-road motorbikes, ATVs and 4X4s.

The man was charged under forestry laws that make it illegal to damage Crown land ecosystems. If charged individuals can be subject to fines ranging up to \$100,000, up to one year in jail, or both. In this case, the man admitted his wrongdoing and accepted the \$575.00 ticket.

Regular followers of this column are aware that there are many sensitive ecosystems in the Okanagan, which include but are not limited to, alpine, grasslands, and wetlands and waterways. Our hot, dry climate makes it tough for plants to grow over even the

slightest tire marks.

Off-roading in wetlands changes the soil structure by removing air and nutrients needed for plant growth. The activity can also kill fish, birds and amphibians. The damaged ecosystems may affect many generations of wildlife because of lack of clean water and damage to their habitat.

If you see someone damaging ecosystems on Crown land, there's no need to confront them. You can act by getting their licence and reporting them on the Report a Poacher or Polluter (R.A.P.P.) hotline 1-877-952-7277.

But really, no one who likes the outdoors willingly wants to damage the wilderness they enjoy. Many ORV clubs encourage and train their members to ride in environmentally responsible ways. Yet as gentle as we think we are riding, we are still damaging many Okanagan ecosystems. So it is important that we carefully select where we ride.

Many times mountain bikes and motorbikes are attracted to the challenge or riding game trails. Next ATVs use and widen the bike trails. Then 4X4s use and widen the ATV trails. Within a few years a narrow game trail

can become a major thoroughfare. These trails may be unstable and at risk of erosion and slope failure.

In next week's column, I'll add provincial government policy and legislation, and multiple stakeholder needs to the equation. I'll also discuss the pros and cons of a model that is being showcased as a possible solution.

Help local endangered species: If you have ever wanted to help local endangered species, now is your chance! Join conservation biologist Michael Bezener and other friends of Okanagan wildlife to help vital habitat in our communities for local species including the endangered Western Screech-Owl and Yellow-breasted Chat. Learn what these species at-risk need to survive and thrive, and plant native trees and shrubs to restore their stream-side habitats. For details contact Michael Bezener (250492-4422 or amb.aic@telus.net)

Chandra Wong works for OSCA, the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, one of 50 organizations in the South Okanagan Similkameen conservation Program.

Opposition to Mining... continued

"We call on the British Columbia government to honour their obligation to our people and preserve benefits for all of us who call British Columbia home, and exercise their authority to deny this permit."

The company behind the proposed work, Imperial Metals, was responsible for the 2014 Mount Polley disaster, further stoking fears held by environmental groups.

"The B.C. government let Imperial Metals off the hook," said Kai Nagata, communications director at Dogwood. "To add insult to injury, taxpayers spent \$40M on cleanup and it still looks like a moonscape. We can't let them do it all over again in the Skagit headwaters."

This isn't the first time resource extraction in the donut hole has sparked controversy.

Last year, the mayor of Seattle wrote to Premier John Horgan requesting BC Timber Sales halt logging plans in the area, saying they were "inconsistent with the spirit" of the High Ross Treaty.

Since then, the B.C. government has said all future logging plans in the area are on hold.

Public consultation on the mining work closed in May. There is no indication as to when the province will announce its decision.



A close-up of one of the residents of the Southern Okanagan. While bears can be pests we must remember that their kind were in the valley long before us.

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

News Release: Copy By Friends of the Stikine Society – Wednesday, March 24, 2010

The Kettle River and a remote northern 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”, said 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.

Work Completed On Passing Lanes

Western News Staff, August 9, 2011

The \$9 million passing lane and hike and bike trail on Highway 97 between Oliver and Osoyoos is complete. “It’s easy to see the benefits of this project for the South Okanagan communities, families and our visitors — safer travel between Oliver and Osoyoos on Highway 97 and a great new opportunity to hike and bike our beautiful region,” said John Slater, MLA for Boundary Similkameen.

Passing lanes were added on Highway 97 north of Osoyoos to provide assured passing opportunities between Oliver and Osoyoos. The length of the new passing lanes (four-lane section) is approximately two kilometres.

The three-metre wide gravel surface hike and bike trail runs parallel to the highway between 204th Road and Road 22. The trail will add approximately two kilometres to the hike and bike trail between the communities of Osoyoos and Oliver.

“This important project demonstrates our government’s commitment to providing safer, more efficient travel opportunities for Okanagan residents and their families,” said Okanagan Coquihalla MP Dan Albas, on behalf of Denis Lebel, minister of transport, infrastructure and communities.

The \$8 million passing lanes project was funded under the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund and cost-shared between the federal and provincial governments. The hike and bike trail parallel to the Highway 97 improvements is a \$1 million project funded solely by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Almost 60 jobs were generated over the life of the two projects.



One of the art installations in Washington’s Methow Valley. Depicted is a drying shelter used for food preparation.



One of the sculptures in Winthrop Washington park depicting one of the early inhabitants drying salmon for later use.

Water Should be Treated as Sacred

SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

I stepped out the front door of the theatre last Saturday night just as the first drop of rain fell. The drops felt as big as marbles.

I ran for my car.

Then the rain came pounding down. Too much, too fast, for windshield wipers to keep up.

Driving home, I counted the gaps between flashes of lightning. Three to five seconds. Once, I got to 10 seconds before the next flash.

Water coursed down the gutters. Tree branches, bent under the weight of water running off their leaves, thrashed in gust of wind.

And I was not in the Bahamas where Hurricane Dorian had wreaked utter havoc earlier that week.

Tourist destinations usually think of water as benign. Lakes and oceans are for recreation. Rivers are for running. Waterfalls are for viewing.

But water isn't always benign. That night, while thunderstorms pelted the Okanagan, Dorian rumbled up the U.S. coast and on into Nova Scotia.

But water itself is not the villain. Certainly, water's extremes are life-threatening. Whether the waters rise – as storm surges raise sea levels, or bring massive waves – or fall from the skies as rain or snow, too much water can kill.

But so can too little water. I've been in the searing heat of deserts, where dehydration can also bring death.

It's the extremes that are dangerous.

Between those extremes, water is so essential for life that I sometimes wonder why we don't worship it rather than some distant deity in the sky.

Water makes up three-quarters of the planet's

surface. Without it, earth would not be the "small blue marble floating in space" seen in astronauts' photos.

Water also makes up about three-quarter of the average human body. That small urn of ashes is all that's left after cremation removes the water.

Because of its exceptional ability to store heat, water stabilizes the earth's climate.

Water is the only chemical compound that can exist in three physical states at the same time. It can be a solid, as ice. It can be a liquid. And it can be a gas, as water vapour.

Through the process of photosynthesis – too complicated to describe in detail – plants convert water into the oxygen that we need to breathe.

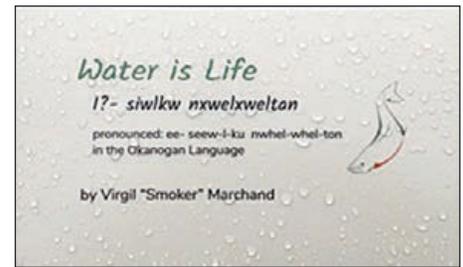
As a liquid, water is the world's universal solvent. That's why we use it for washing. Water will dissolve almost anything, given enough time. Even metals.

And so it can leach trace elements from deep within rock formations. The late Dr. Harry Warren, a geologist and a mentor of mine, developed ways of locating valuable minerals underground by analyzing plant cells. Far more efficient than whacking rocks with a hammer, he claimed.

Dr. Warren also told me about a study where he could predict (within statistical limits) the incidence of cancers in a British city that had three distinct sources of drinking water – a river, wells and streams running off the moors.

Religions fumble around the edges of acknowledging the crucial role of water. Hinduism has its sacred river Ganges. The Torah – foundational for three world religions – opens with the spirit of God moving over primordial waters. The Christian Bible end with the river of life. Jesus called himself "living water".

Despite all this evidence, we – including me – tend to take water for granted. It keeps my grass green and my tomatoes plump. I turn on a tap, and it's there.



An important message regarding water is the title of an art installation celebrating early inhabitants to the area of Winthrop, Washington. OSPS director Joe Klein attended the dedication ceremony for the park in which they are located.

Our industries both use and abuse water. We use it to cool the fires of fossil fuels in internal combustion engines. We heat it into high-pressure steam for turbines and generators. We flush away the wastes of our industrial processes. We dump human sewage into it.

And we hope that enough water will dilute our pollutants to render them harmless.

Which is why Japan plans to dump a million tonnes of radioactive water from its tsunami-struck Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean.

Political boundaries ignore water. The headwaters of Pakistan's Indus river all rise in territory controlled by India.

And here in the Okanagan, municipal boundaries subdivide local lakes. If one city pumps out extra water for drinking or agriculture, it has to steal from its neighbours' share.

Water does not belong to anyone. Rather, we belong to water. It is our mother.

Churches recognize that truth, metaphorically, when they baptize – whether the water represents the waters of the womb or the ocean from which all terrestrial life came.

But it's not good enough.

Water need to be treated as sacred – a gift, and a holy responsibility.

Jim Taylor is an Okanagan Centre author and freelance journalist. He can be reached at rewrite@shaw.ca



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

July 30, 2019

Ministry of Health, PHO need to do more to ensure safety of drinking water

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a report: *The Protection of Drinking Water: An Independent Audit*.

The office concluded that the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) are not sufficiently protecting drinking water for all British Columbians.

“We undertook this audit because of the considerable importance of safe drinking water, and because the risks to drinking water are increasing”, said Carol Bellringer, auditor general.

Climate change, industrial activity and a growing population all have an impact on B.C.’s drinking water.

“We found that overall, the Ministry of Health and the PHO’s accountability to ensure drinking water was protected is concerning.” Bellringer said.

The oversight of drinking water is complex, it involves many ministries, agencies, and pieces of legislation. To ensure clear accountability, government stated that the Ministry of Health would provide leadership and coordination, and the PHO would oversee government and those delivering drinking water to all British Columbians.

While the ministry has taken some action to mitigate risks to drinking water, more needs to be done. Specifically, the ministry does not know which water systems are at risk and has not developed a strategy to address them.

The risks of contamination are intensified in small water systems where some communities may struggle to afford sufficient water protection systems and find staff who are qualified in water treatment. The ministry’s actions to address issues in small water systems, which are generally found in rural areas, has been limited. There are approximately 4,800 known drinking water systems in B.C. About 90% of these systems are small water systems that collectively serve approximately 480,000 people.

Overall, the Ministry of Health did not demonstrate leadership in ensuring continuous improvement to the protection of drinking water. The various ministries and agencies have not implemented many of the recommendations from the PHO’s past reports that could have led to further progress. Lastly, both the Ministry of Health and the PHO have not kept government sufficiently apprised of the ongoing risks to drinking water.

“Thankfully, B.C. has not had a known outbreak of water borne illness since 2004, but just a single event that contaminates a drinking water system can cause serious health impacts for numerous people,” said Bellringer.

The office made eight recommendations in the report. Of these, five are to the Ministry of Health and include providing leadership to co-ordinate the ministries, undertaking a legislative review, identifying risks and developing a strategic plan, and reporting out to the public. The other three recommendations are to the PHO. They include taking action to improve its oversight, reviewing legislation, monitoring progress and trends, and reporting out on a timely basis.

The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.bcauditor.com.

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Parks Network Meeting – Members of the South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Network are still engaged in education, fact checking and supporting efforts of the three governments currently negotiating the possible establishment of a National Park in the South Okanagan Similkameen. Such a park would go far toward protecting very special forms of desert life that exists in this region. The OSPS is proud to be a member organization of this network.



CBC: Electric Bikes in Parks

Electric bicycles are growing so popular that B.C. Parks has had to implement a new policy regarding their use to protect sensitive ecosystems.

The authority says e-bikes allow more riders to use trails and reach areas that were previously limited to a few visitors, leading to increased pressure on habitats.

North Shore Mountain Bike Association president Cooper Quinn said community advocates aren't surprised by the B.C. Parks e-bike policy because a similar one was put in place by Recreation Sites and Trails BC earlier this year. Quinn said e-bikes allow people with accessibility issues to use trails they may not have been able to use before.

"They're a great tool for different people to get out and enjoy the forest in different ways," he said over the phone.

With potentially more e-bike users on the trails, Quinn said people could go further

in the same amount of time or do more laps of the trails.

"If it's the same users able to do more riding, that potentially means more impact on the trails," he said.

The different e-bike classifications: The policy says that those with Class 1 e-bikes can ride on any B.C. Parks trail where mountain bikes or other cycling is already allowed, but those with Class 2 and 3 e-bikes can only ride on trails and roads designated for motorized vehicles.

Class 1 e-bikes are not considered motor vehicles under the Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area (PCRA) regulations. These e-bikes have motors that only work when the rider is pedalling, and have a maximum output of 500 watts.

The motors of Class 2 and 3 e-bikes are capable of providing partial or full assistance by throttle.

Both are considered motorized vehicles under PCRA regulations.

Regulation for electric bikes may forever change B.C. mountain trails: B.C. Parks says its primary goal is to educate the public on the new policy to generate voluntary compliance. If riders are not willing to comply, tickets up to \$575 may be issued.

But, Quinn said it's up to the government to also put more funding into park management and maintenance to keep the trails from damage and degradation.

"We need to make sure that the trails stay within their own carrying capacity and our environment stays within its carrying capacity so that we don't ruin our supernatural British Columbia," he said.

The policy goes into effect immediately.

With files from Ashley Moliere & Matt Meuse