

OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

November 2006

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EDITORIAL: WATER ESSENTIALS

Heavy rains; swollen rivers; floods; drought in the north; community water shortages; landslides onto highways; contaminated municipal water systems; all these have made headlines recently.

Water is becoming an increasingly worrisome concern - both in quality, quantity. Water is essential to all life. It is necessary for food, energy, recreation and transport.

Because water supplies come from watersheds, we must look to the care and protection of each watershed in every community.

Logging goes on apace under greater relaxed environmental regulations and little supervision. Mining also disturbs land and waterways. ATV traffic can - and sometimes

does - play havoc with stream crossings, furrowed hillsides and trail gouging.

Landslides with their load of forest debris and mud often do not occur until 8-10 years after the actual logging. When the roots are so aged they lose their soil holding ability and slides mess up the downslopes and waterways. Check the recent Chilliwack River troubles.

We hope all OSPS members - and friends - will note the condition of the hillsides as they hike through them, and/or will speak to those in charge as to observations made of the watershed areas.

This is as valuable a contribution as one can make: helping to protect a watershed.

Director Sheila White

Why Can't Lodges be Built Just Outside Parks?

The problem is that once you begin constructing lodges and cabins and the various facilities needed to support them, you no longer have a wilderness park.

Paving the West Coast Trail and creating little lodges along the way would make it more accessible. It would also destroy it.

But the best policy would be to recognize the importance of preservation and the responsibility to keep parks whole.

That doesn't mean that parks have to be exclusively for the fit and able-bodied.

If greater access is the goal - and if there is consumer demand - then development could be encouraged

just outside parks, in communities that would be glad of the economic activities and additional tax base. Instead of plunking a lodge down inside a park, services could be provided just outside the park boundaries and steps taken to improve access for visitors.

If developers want a shot at operating a true wilderness lodge, there are thousands of square kilometres of Crown and private land available outside parks. Negotiate a lease and build away.



Fintry Provincial Park just off Westside Road is one of the parks that could see lodge development.

November 29, 2006 (Vancouver, BC)

Yesterday the British Columbia government acknowledged they have accepted a proposal from a private developer to build a fly-in fishing lodge in picturesque Maxhamish Lake Provincial Park. The 27,000 hectare park, located 125 kilometres north of Fort Nelson, is known for its tremendous fishing opportunities including lake whitefish, walleye and northern pike.

Gwen Barlee

*Western Canada Wilderness Committee:
(250) 683-8220; (6040) 202-0322*

AGM ALERT: MARK MARCH 9, 2007

"Canoeing on the Coppermine" Dr. Ken Hall's pictures and account of his trips there. More details later.

Donations are appreciated anytime - tax receipt will be issued. OSPS appreciates your continued support in our attempts to save OUR parks. 2006 memberships at \$10.00 individual, \$15.00 family, \$20.00 organization have been rolling in. THANKS! **Form - Page 6**

Doreen Tait, Violet Gibbard

We note with sadness the passing of two long time supporters - both also enthusiastic members of the South Okanagan Naturalists.

Doreen was a continuing donor to OSPS. She spent her entire later life volunteering for several nature and historical organizations.

Vi lived up Arawana Rd. in Naramata where she and Les made a bird sanctuary and a wonderful garden - especially noted for the many varieties of daffodils in spring.

National Park is a Gift to Future Generations

In all the pros and cons regarding the national park reserve proposal for the South Okanagan-Similkameen, one seldom-stated point is that this is a park for the future. Contrary to vociferous anti-park statements from some members of the older generation, things ain't gonna change a whole lot in our active lifetimes - unfortunately, to some.

The acquisition of the core of the park and the beginnings of management through Parks Canada rather than the present melange will likely be the only major part of this long process in the next decade or two; the creation of an ecologically viable and economically significant park will be a work in progress over many years. To me, this greatly affects, or should affect, people's attitudes to the proposed park.

So, what is the younger people's vision? Are teenagers and people in their 20s and 30s aware of the vulnerable and

degraded ecological state of these valleys' few remaining wild areas?

Are they interested in being able to visit and take their children to peaceful natural areas where birds and other creatures live untroubled by human intrusion? Do they want to live where natural areas attract tourists just by their presence (which they do)? From responses at displays on the park, the answer to the latter two is overwhelmingly 'Yes'.

Or do they want a valley where housing, agriculture, roads and industrial development cover all but the few, inevitable overused and degraded, fragments of provincial parks and private conservation lands? Do they want their heritage to be a once-unique natural area known for its human inhabitants' negligence in protecting a national treasure?

Surveys such as the one carried out recently through the former Okanagan University College argue strongly for a 'No' answer to these questions.

Many, if not most, non-native people here came to avoid mass urbanization elsewhere; they may not all appreciate the details of protecting the large, connected areas and variety of habitats wildlife need, but they say that more land should be protected.

The national park reserve is our last, best opportunity for what the overwhelming majority of people say they want: viable wildlands with healthy wildlife populations protected for their own sake and for people's enjoyment and economic benefit.

The LRMP Table members on the conservation side did a great job under the terms of that process; however, and especially with climate change, a more centralized and strongly eco-centred management of larger protected areas is critical if the relatively common as well as rare and endangered species are to survive.

*Eva Durance, Penticton
Western News, June 11, 2006*

Liability Insurance

First, from the province, was a request to sign our formal five year Provincial Stewardship Agreement, allowing the society to work within the John Dean Provincial park boundaries. The Agreement gives specific instructions on how volunteer work programs are to be planned, approved and then implemented. The Province insures that safety is a key feature when working in the park. Under this agreement in the event that an accident might occur, limited Accident and Liability Insurances are provided for by the Provincial Government.

On reviewing the proposed Draft Agreement the Societies Executive determined that the Public Liability clause provided insufficient financial coverage, especially in regard to Third Party Liability. This liability clause provided payment of \$2M per incident. Given that any additional costs could be charged to the society as a whole and specifically to the Executive, it was determined that a significant increase in this amount, should be requested from the Province, prior to the executive signing the Agreement.

Continued on page 4

GE TREES - Taking Root in the Forest Industry

Today, nearly 100 years since these memorable words were penned, the genetic sanctity and survival of our planet's trees are at risk. Several countries around the world, including our own Canada, have embarked upon a biotechnological journey that may be leading us down the path of genetic devastation for our natural forests and trees.

Surfing the Canadian Forest Service (GFS) website (www.nrcan.gcc.ca/cfs), it is disconcerting to find evidence that the federal agency entrusted with the safe keeping of our nations forests has become an enthusiastic supporter and promoter of genetically engineered trees.

The forest industry's keen interest in and promotion of genetically altered trees hinges upon the quest for significant monetary benefits.

Seven Reasons GE Trees are Dangerous to the Health and Eco Culture of our Forests

1. Uncontrollable cross-pollination

The Threat of GE trees interbreeding with wild trees is extreme. Tree pollen can be blown by the wind and drift on air currents for hundreds, possibly thousands, of kilometres from its source. This can lead to unintentional but irreversible cross-pollination and the spread of genes from trans-genic trees to unmodified trees, native, wild and cultivated alike.

2. Ecosystem disruption

Trees which have been genetically modified for plantation planting to produce specific commercially advantageous traits could prove devastating to natural tree populations. Subsequent offspring from cross-breeding could alter the way trees cycle nutrients and water. Genetically modified plantation trees developed for high growth rates absorb more nutrients and moisture than traditional varieties. This depletion creates a threat to the productivity of the land. Low lignin GE trees (or their hybrid offspring) would also decompose far more quickly, which would alter soil structure, ecology and fertility.

3. Toxic properties

Novel traits such as insect and fungal resistance and low lignin content produced through genetic engineering could harm natural tree species.

4. "Super pests"

Trees bred with biopesticide properties are of particular concern to the health of the many beneficial insects living in our forests. This genetically engineered trait allows for greater tolerance to toxic pesticide use and also has the potential to lead to the creation of pesticide-resistant "super pests" that would be especially harmful to unprotected, natural plants.

5. "Super weeds"

Another novel trait manipulated in the production of some GE trees is herbicide tolerance. There are concerns that this trait would allow for and actually encourage the greater use of toxic herbicides in the growing of plantation trees.

6. Patented monopolies

Smaller wood lot managers and timber producers will be faced with the same economic risks and outcomes as those associated with growing genetically engineered agricultural crops such as corn and soy. Transgenic trees, like their bioengineered food crop counterparts, will be patented, which could quickly lead to a monopoly of large timber corporations controlling the industry.

7. Silent forests, unlivable habitat

When trees are grown purely for the sake of commercial traits, natural reproduction through seed dispersal from pine cones and similar structures is potentially eliminated. Without seeds to eat, many forest creatures have no food source.

*Watershed Sentinel
November-December 2006*

Continued from page 2

The initial request for additional insurance was rejected by the Province. With no agreement the executive became a watch, wait and see group.

The Society's Executive advises its members not to participate in any park activities; under the auspices of

the society; until the insurance amount is satisfactory and the Agreement is officially signed by the Province and the executive. Thus, we will not be active in the park during the fall season of 2006/2007.

*Friends of John Dean Provincial Park Society Newsletter,
October, 2006*



Geoff Solly, vice president of the Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society, shows the newly installed safety fencing along the Summerland to Faulder portion of the Spirit of 2010 Trans Canada Trail. The South Okanagan Community Foundation and the Okanagan-Similkameen Parks Society helped with the cost of the 55 metres of fencing. Both groups, along with other donors, have been helpful with the trail project in the past.

Summerland Review, July 27, 2006

"Trail Talk"

The Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society, which is a member of OSPS, has been battling an on-going issue: No provincial legislation to keep dirt bikes and ATVs off certain trails; no licensing for these vehicles either so that we can spot the bad actors.

This is a very serious issue. Next August, the Summerland ATV Club intends on having the provincial ATV Annual General Meeting and rally in Summerland. That means that on the weekend of August 15th, 1,500 ATVs will descend upon Summerland. Their meeting place will be at the Summerland Rodeo Grounds and they fully intend on using the Trans Canada Trail for their rally. Dale MacDonald, our recreation director, has said "no" to the rally using the part of the trail within Summerland's boundary, but as things stand now, there is no legislation to keep them off the trail from Faulder to Osprey Lake. Having a large rally on this stretch will dig deeper ruts and set a precedent for many ATV activists to return to this trail.

Please write a letter to Minister Stan Hagen, and the Mayor and council members of Summerland. You can find the e-mail addresses of the Mayor and councillors on the Summerland website: Summerland.bc.ca

A Better Way to Run Round Tables

"For the last ten years, Juergen and Marilyn Hansen have been working hard to develop a faster and more functional round table format and dialogue process. Their experience in the BC Round Table for Environment and Economy and in several LRMPs convinced them that there must be "a better way" to run such exercises and to negotiate environmental agreements

through collaboration instead of confrontation. They'll describe their new trade-marked and facilitated "dynamic round table" dialogue process in our next newsletter. If you are interested, feel free to request an advance summary from commonsproject@vip.net or by calling (250) 494-9265.

Selfish, short-term interests should be set aside for the long-term benefit of the land we all say we love and of the people who will inherit depending on decisions made now.

*Eva Durance, Penticton
Western News, June 11, 2006*

Climate change will be the Third World War

The Third World War has begun.

This war will encompass the entire globe. This time it will not be over in a few years. It will cause more deaths than all that died in the two Great Wars, the Korean and the Vietnam conflicts and all the politically and religiously induced strife in the 20th Century.

There will be death and destruction at every level of society. Particularly, it will decimate the poor of the world.

Africa is already on the verge of losing this war because none of the richer nations are stepping in to give the kind of aid needed to halt the spread of disease and malnutrition there.

Although the United Nations bemoans what is happening, the rich nations are too preoccupied in fighting a losing battle to preserve what little petroleum is left in the Middle East. It is estimated it has cost the Americans between \$400 and \$500 billion so far. So many of Africa's problems could have been solved, had even a tenth of this money been put to those uses.

Failure of governments to take action is being felt in even richer countries. It is estimated that one Australia farmer is committing suicide every four days because of the ongoing problem of drought. Australia's government is denying the possibility of climate change.

Make no mistake about it. This will be a war against climate change. This is a war that will eventually affect all of us - because we who live in North America are more to blame for the causes than anybody else in the world.

If there is a history that follows this war it will look on the George W. Bushes, the Stephen Harpers and the Ralph Kleins of our countries as the people most responsible in not taking the steps necessary to minimize the polluting emissions caused by the burning of fossil fuels in our vehicles, our homes, our factories and, in our desperate search for more petroleum, so that we can continue our affluent lifestyle.

Sir Nicholas Stern of Great Britain, former chief economist of the World Bank has issued a severe rebuke for governments, politicians, and industrialists because of their reluctance to enter more forcefully into this battle of our lives. His report, "The Economics of Climate

Change," predicts a catastrophic depression as a result of both higher temperatures and increasing population that will require more food from less and less cultivable land - land that is being consumed by spreading urbanization and sprawl.

Problems of adequate water supplies for agriculture and human consumption, which are already being felt in Africa, China, India and most recently in Australia, will be magnified by climate change. Melting of ice fields and glaciers will raise sea levels, inundate coastal farmlands and cause a massive flight of people to higher, more habitable lands.

What action can we take towards a combative approach in this war of all wars? As Dr. David Suzuki says, "economic costs, not just the environmental costs, of inaction are actually much higher than adequately dealing with the problem now.

"We can't stop global warming in its tracks, but we can avoid the worst of it... stop posturing and (don't be) stupid."

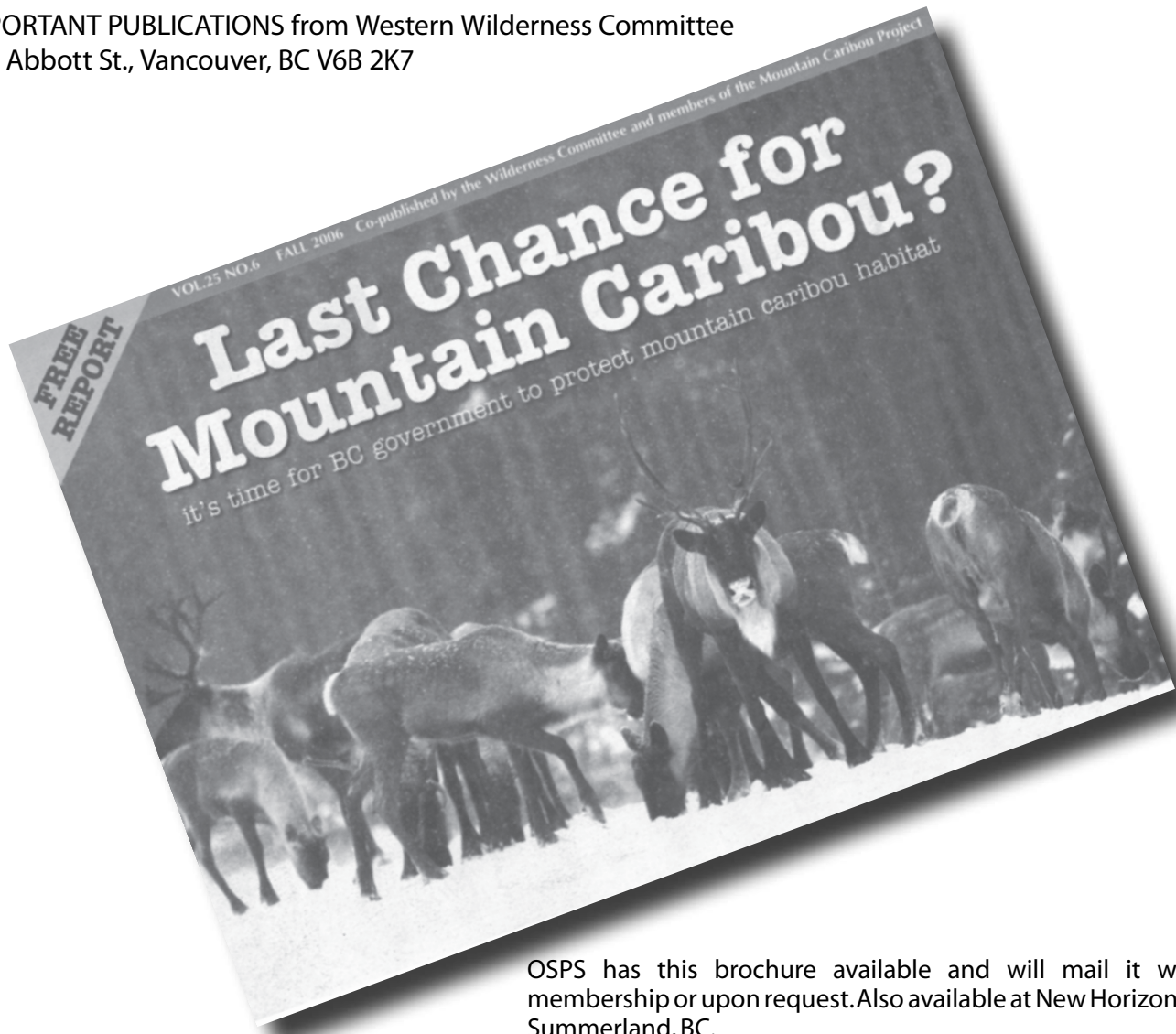
Britain's Tony Blair said, "there is nothing more serious, more urgent, more demanding than leadership ... Should we fail to rise to this challenge I don't believe we will be able to explain ourselves to future generations that we have let down." We cannot afford to wait until 2050 for Harper's clean air solution to begin. Start by educating yourselves on the facts.

There will be three films shown soon in our area. Look out for them, see them, learn from them and talk about them with your friends and neighbours. They are: "An Inconvenient Truth", "The End of Suburbia", and "The Power of Community". We hope to have knowledgeable speakers there to answer your questions.

We can win this war, but it will take the concerted efforts of all of us. Expect to lower your standard of living. Those who lived through the Second World War will remember the rationing of food and gasoline, of having to do with the vehicles you drove at the start of the war.

Expect the rich and the very rich to be the last to suffer, but even they will have to experience misfortune. Unfortunately, they are the major cause of the war we will have to wage.

*OSPS Member Frank Martens, Summerland
Penticton Herald, November 15, 2006*



OSPS has this brochure available and will mail it with your membership or upon request. Also available at New Horizon Printing, Summerland, BC.

Please request if other brochures are desired, e.g. BC Parks - 2006 Update Park Facts; One Ranger and Interpretive Program, check website www.wildernesscommittee.org also South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park.

Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society
Box 787, Summerland, B.C. V0H 1Z0
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Postal Code: _____

Individual (\$10.00) _____ Family (\$15.00) _____ Organization (\$20.00) _____

Donation: _____ (Income Tax Deductible)

Please help support our continuing programs

This is the letter I sent to Stan Hagen, Minister of Tourism, Sports & the Arts. Feel free to nudge him. His address is TSA.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Motorized vs. Non-motorized trail use

Dear Minister Stan Hagen:

We had a good meeting with Minister Rick Thorpe recently regarding motorized vs. non-motorized trail use in BC. We found him to be a thoughtful, careful listener, who made many good points. Since our discussion has a strong connection to your ministry, we thought that we should write you about our discussion. We not only discussed trail use, recreation and tourism in BC, but also the following issue.

We discussed having ATVs and dirt bikes being required to have licenses. Many of the ATV Clubs desire this. Club members do not like irresponsible riders giving them a bad reputation. We believe that since ATVs and dirt bikes are becoming more prevalent on logging roads and trails, it's important to require some training system along with the licensing... or at least the licensing system that has been worked out with input from various outdoors groups, including the ATV association.

Since BC is becoming ever more populated, it's high time for the licensing issue to be addressed. That's probably not your department's concern, but perhaps you'll have input on this. Here is a summary of the rest of the conversation with the points we consider important, which do directly need a decision from your department.

There has been a considerable controversy over motorized versus non-motorized use of the "Spirit of 2010 Trail", part of the Trans Canada Trail across BC. Let's look at the big picture before addressing this controversy.

The idea of the Trans Canada Trail was conceived in 1992 by the Federal government and the Trans Canada Trail Foundation for building the longest recreational trail in the world, a legacy project, almost 18,000 km. long across this great country from Newfoundland to the coast of BC and up to Tuktoyaktuk and Iqaluit in the Arctic. Five core uses were designated for this trail: hiking, cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling where permitted by local trail stewards and municipalities.

B.C. has about 1,800 km. of this "big picture". A section of the BC portion of the Trans Canada Trail is a rails-to-trails project from the old dismantled Kettle Valley Railroad. It's called the "Spirit of 2010 Trail" and is 700 km. long.

- 1) In his Penticton speech in 2004, Premier Campbell announced that the "Spirit of 2010 Trail" was to become "world class". Instead, the trail is becoming a motorized thruway for all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and motorized dirt bikes.
- 2) Across all of Canada, huge fund-raising efforts have been made to build a trail supporting the five core uses.
- 3) All our donors, corporate and private, understood that we were establishing a non-motorized trail (except for maintenance and emergencies when motorized vehicles need to be used).
- 4) Enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers understood that they were working for a non-motorized trail.
- 5) Cities, municipalities, and Regional Districts have joined in investing in the trail project, believing in the non-motorized concept as a recreational, fitness, and tourist draw.
- 6) Land owners who have granted access across their property agreed only on the condition that the trail would be non-motorized (except when they needed to move farm equipment or access their own property).
- 7) With a 100,000 miles of logging roads in BC for ATV and dirt bike use, it should be possible to have a "Spirit of 2010 Trail" of only 700 km. be non-motorized, and the whole Trans Canada Trail of 1,800 km. across BC be non-motorized. ATV and dirt bikers do not "need" everything, as some of them insist.
- 8) ATVs and dirt bikes invalidate our insurance that we must carry as trail stewards. Our insurance is for non-motorized use only except for maintenance and emergencies.
- 9) Shared use (motorized & non-motorized) use requires a double insurance payment, reflecting a higher accident rate: several fatalities with ATVs and other users across Canada, two near fatalities in Summerland, BC.

- 10) A mixed use trail is dangerous.
- 11) Some ATV Clubs have posted a recommended speed limit of 30 km. on the “Spirit of 2010 Trail”, but that is not a safe speed when other users are on the trail. A cyclist on the flat would be hard-pressed to keep up a steady speed of 30 km. per hour.
- 12) Many motorized users pay no attention to any speed signs whatsoever.
- 13) About 3,000 new ATVs are being sold each year. A delayed decision will be much more difficult in the future.
- 14) ATVs and dirt bikes cause ruts, erosion, dust, emit high decibel noise and air pollution, scare animals, and ruin the trail experience for the majority of outdoor enthusiasts. Watch the Honda ads to see ATVs roar through fishing streams and across sensitive grasslands. Come to Summerland, BC, and see the erosion problems they and dirt bikers have caused. It could be argued that ATVs and dirt bikes are not environmentally friendly and sometimes pose a significant danger.
- 15.) ATV and dirt bike users are not allowed on public roadways. Therefore, they must always transport these vehicles to a logging road access. Logging roads, with few exceptions, are accessible from public highways because that’s how timber was hauled out. All people who use these logging roads for fishing or hunting must leave their transport vehicle unguarded somewhere. That’s no excuse for using recreational vehicles from one town to another.
- 16.) Some ATV and dirt bike users do not seem able to understand that other outdoor recreationists enjoy bird and animal observation without the loud noise of motors. Enjoying the outdoors is a spiritual experience for many. Remember, also, we are urged by doctors to become more fit and lose some “bacon”.

A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE IS: ATVs and dirt bikes should have licenses with large numbers so that bad actors can be recognized. When is this going to happen?

So what’s it going to be? Are we going to have a world class trail in the sense of the best trails in the U.S. and in Europe? A trail that will truly be a tourist drawing card throughout the world now and in the future? Just imagine the Olympic flame going across Canada on the Trans Canada Trail and the TV showcase we can have as the flame passes through BC. Or are we going to have just another motorized thruway, no tourist drawing card at all for supposedly “Super Natural BC? A lot of dedication, energy, money and commitment has been put into this trail project. Is this effort going to be wasted?

If it’s going to be just another motorized thruway, forget about attracting volunteers. Our group will disband and we’ll all find something else that engages us. We hope that a decision will be made soon because all of us across BC working hard on this Trans Canada Trail dream are getting tired of the motorized versus non-motorized battle with no decision being made.

We want to thank you for caring and for listening!

*Writing in hopes for a positive outcome soon,
Marilyn Hansen, pres., Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society,
7611 Oak Avenue, Summerland, BC, V0H 1Z9 Ph. 250 494-9265
e-mail: marilynhansen@vip.net*

Please, also, if you want to help us improve the trail’s surface and finish our last bridge (3 finished, 1 left), we would be very happy for donations. You can give a donation for a Christmas gift: \$40 will put the name you select on our donors’ board, give you a handsome certificate and a charity receipt. \$200 will give you a larger donors’ plaque on which you can put several names, plus a handsome certificate and charity receipt. The Summerland Credit Union front desk can accept donations and give you the receipt and certificate. You will be helping with the “National Dream”!

RDOS opposes Crown selloff

RDOS will participate in planning study looking into selling lands and watershed management around upper reservoir lakes

A provincial government proposal to sell Crown lands now being leased to cabin owners and other recreational users at some high elevation lakes in the Okanagan doesn't swim with regional district directors.

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen board agreed Thursday to participate in a planning study into the possible sale of Crown lands now being leased to private residents at upper reservoir lakes.

However, many RDOS directors strongly opposed the idea of increased private development, which they fear

could lead to environmental and other problems around such lakes.

Kevin Dickenson of the province's Integrated Land Management Bureau told the RDOS board the study in the South Okanagan will deal mainly with Headwaters Lake west of Summerland and Chute Lake above Naramata. Other lakes in the Central and North Okanagan are also being reviewed.

Discussions will focus on water quality, the level of lake reservoirs, the impact of septic disposal and other issues. Dickenson said while the process will continue until the middle of next year, there are no time constraints or pressure to get the lots sold. An earlier government study was temporarily abandoned in 2002.

RDOS directors agreed to let regional district planning staff sit in on the meetings, but not without expressing strong reservations on the idea of these Crown lands being sold to the private sector.

Summerland council has already voiced its objections to the sale of any Crown lots around Headwaters Lake. Coun. Lorraine Bennest said instead of considering the sale of the lots, the government should be looking to gradually reacquiring more public access by allowing the leases to expire over the next several years.

*John Moorhouse
Penticton Herald, August 18, 2006*

Technology used by electrical generating plant is archaic, say opponents

Keremeos - A proposed coal and wood waste-burning electrical generating plant near Princeton could affect air quality right through to the Okanagan, claim opponents to the proposed facility.

The group Friends of the Similkameen hosted a public meeting at Victory Hall in Keremeos Thursday night into plans by Compliance Energy Corp. of Vancouver to develop a 56-megawatt facility on the former Similco Mines site southwest of Princeton.

Commenting beforehand, spokesperson Lee McFadyen said the plant could send emissions right through to the Okanagan. She pointed to satellite images of smoke from September's massive forest fire near Manning Park, which showed how it funneled down the Similkameen Valley to Princeton and then east to Summerland.

McFayden said the environmental study associated with the compliance application will only look at emission levels within a 30-kilometre radius of the plant site.

McFayden emphasized opponents aren't against any type of generating facility near Princeton, but only this particular plant's technology.

"It's an archaic technology that is being proposed," she said. "With a different technology they may have a good idea, but this particular plant is not going to be good for the Valley."

"Compliance Energy couldn't do it, if it didn't have the provincial government's blessing," she said. "The provincial government has literally gutted the environmental protection process."

However, John Tapics, president and CEO of Compliance Energy, said Thursday the proposed plant includes the latest technology.

"This is the most advanced combustion technology for a plant of this size that we could employ," he said in a telephone interview from Vancouver.

He confirmed the plant will use about 3,000 litres of water per minute, mainly to help cool the electrical generating facility. The water would be then released as steam into the air.

*John Moorhouse
Penticton Herald, November 3, 2006*

Funds Still Needed to Restore River

Plans to restore a stretch of the Okanagan River north of Oliver to a more natural state have gained moral support from the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen.

However, funding for the \$4-million project must still be obtained before any restoration work can proceed.

Chris Bull, project co-ordinator for the Okanagan River Restoration Initiative, told RDOS directors only a 2.8-kilometre section of the river remains in its original natural condition, with a further 2.1 kilometres diked but not channelled.

The remaining 30.4 kilometres, or 84 per cent of the B.C. portion of the waterway, has been confined by dikes and a straight channel since major flood control engineering works were carried out in the early 1950s from Penticton south to Osoyoos Lake.

Plans call for the one-kilometre section of the river immediately north of Oliver to be restored by relocating the dike up to 100 metres westward. A portion of the popular walking and biking path along the channel will also have to be moved.

“The restoration work is expected to double sockeye eggs-to-fry survival, provide complex rearing habitat for steelhead and rainbow trout, and provide six spawning sites for chinook salmon,” Bull stated in a report to the RDOS board.

“When the channel is restored, it will reconnect with 3.9 hectares of revegetated floodplain, which will benefit a wide range of wildlife and birds, many of which are listed as rare or endangered.”

Bull noted about \$1 million has been spent on the project.

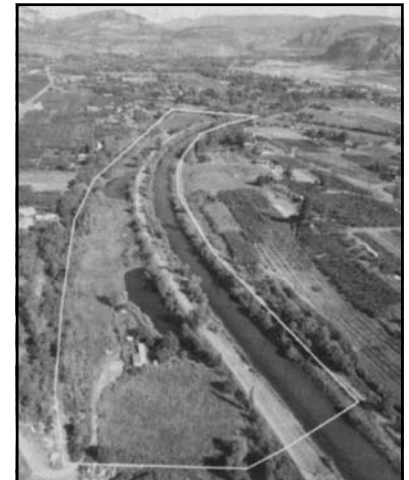
Last year, the provincial government purchased two adjoining properties to allow for the river restoration. Additional funding for an engineering study was obtained from utilities in Washington state for salmon-spawning enhancement work to mitigate the impact of the series of dams on the Columbia River.

This fall, an estimated 13,000 sockeye along with a few dozen chinook spawned in the Okanagan River, which is the farthest upstream tributary accessible by salmon in the Columbia River system.

Although no funding to complete the project has yet been secured, Bull said the purchase of the adjoining properties is a huge hurdle that has already been cleared.

Bull said the project committee is looking for a number of funding sources for the restoration initiative, including the U.S. utilities and Canadian sources. One RDOS director suggested the South Okanagan Real Estate Board be approached to see if local developers might be willing to contribute.

Pending local and provincial government approvals - and funding in place - it's hoped the project will be able to proceed in 2008.



One Wild Earth Photography

Uranium mining poses big risk

It's got to be frustrating for the government. The geologists in the Mines Ministry are pretty sure there are no viable uranium deposits in B.C.

But a few mining companies are out there raising money and talking enthusiastically about the potential - even drilling.

That sends communities into panicky protest mode. No one wants a uranium mine as a neighbour. Many people don't want one anywhere in the province.

Nuclear is back, and that means uranium prices are soaring and companies are looking at reserves all over the world, including B.C. The current projects may have a small chance of going ahead, but if prices stay high,

companies are going to keep looking.

The government doesn't think they'll be successful. In their eagerness to calm fears, the usually boisterous Liberals have taken to bad-mouthing B.C.'s uranium potential.

Trust us, they effectively say. There's no need for a ban because no mines are going to be worth developing.

The government's position might work if companies lose interest in B.C. quickly, but if any of them press on seriously, there will be trouble ahead. Public pressure for a ban would be enormous and likely successful.

Paul Willcocks

The Okanagan Saturday, July 28, 2006