



Newsletter

SPRING 2016

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

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51st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

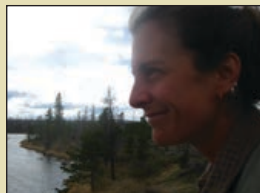
Preservation of Species and Habitat – A Focus on Wolves

with special guest presenters



CRAIG PETTITT, British Columbian Environmental Specialist and Advocate from the Valhalla Society

SADIE PARR,
executive director
of Wolf Awareness



AGENDA

- ✓ Election of Directors
- ✓ Financial Report
- ✓ State of the Society
- ✓ Honoring Pioneers

CENTRE STAGE THEATRE
in the Summerland Secondary School on Main St.

Friday, April 1, 2016 • 7pm

ALL WELCOME Refreshments NO CHARGE Donations Welcome

EDITORIAL

It is our unfortunate duty to have to report that parks and protected areas of our province are under attack. No it is not the Pine Beetle, the Spruce Budworm or, even necessarily, inadequate ministry budgets and resources this time around. It is rather some of our citizen's and visitor's desire to get out into 'nature'. The problem is that they wish to meet nature on their terms rather than nature's terms.

While the desire to get out and be active is laudable it is important that the value of our wilderness is recognized. Just because a machine or piece of equipment enables you to travel far, or swiftly, or to formerly inaccessible areas, it does not mean that you should. The value of our wilderness, held in common by all citizens must be respected.

Over the last few years, and especially in recent months the owners of motorized off road vehicles and the clubs that they belong to have been clamoring for more trails, more access and more power. Their mantra appears to be "Let's all share the trails and the outdoors."

Ordinarily one would think "Well, why not?" Unfortunately not all habitats can stand up to the rigorous use that these machines put the terrain to. Critical habitat that is home to endangered or at risk flora, fauna or both should not be subjected to the spinning tires of motorbikes, quads or, for goodness sake, side-by-sides. The ecological values inherent in these habitats be they parks,

Continued on next page...

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

protected areas or not, must be recognized and respected. They just take away too long to recover once the damage is done. The riders are usually not content to remain in a particular area once the thrill of it has gone.

Even two wheel bicycles must be regulated in the wilderness. There are some wonderful forest rides in the South Okanagan, the experience and exercise is exhilarating for the cyclists. The problem occurs when the riders or their clubs begin riding and cutting trails through an area without considering the consequences of their actions. For example, questioning whether or not wildlife is being impacted by their presence. Rutting, mating, birthing and weaning conducted by ungulates in our area can be easily disrupted by disturbances at particular times of the year in particular locations. Once these disruptions occur entire cycles can be altered with negative consequences for the wildlife and the communities and humans around them. Think in terms of the young deer or elk being driven down off of the hillsides to end up in surrounding orchards. They then become habituated to the fruit and decide to stick

around and venture further into town to explore other properties and browse.

It is fair that both bicyclists and motorized vehicle users do get to practice their sports in places designated for them. However, the "Let's all share..." does not allow for the biological values of our region to be respected. Not everywhere is able to be harmlessly used by hikers, skiers, bicyclists or horses, let alone a machine. There are costs to any incursions. One great example of this is the use of the TransCanada Trail west of Summerland where tire tracks chew up the gravel and leave pot holes in the trail. This section of trail was monetarily expensive to construct to its present standard and just as expensive to maintain. It has been recognized as a trail that does not impinge on critical biological habitat. Horses and bicycles do enough damage on this trail. It is not a place that motorized Off Road Vehicles should be.

There are many resources being utilized by the many Off Road Vehicle clubs and organizations in the region. Many of these resources are the ones that all societies and clubs employ, organizers, lobbying of local, provincial and federal governors and meet-

ings, bulletins or newsletters, such as this one. However the one resource that is strongly supporting their quest for expanded land use is the manufacture's support. These machines are big business and freedom from restriction leads to a larger market, which for this industry is worth getting behind with resources.

Nature and wildlife is wonderful for the human spirit. The OSPS encourages people to get out there. We endorse learning about particular habitats and ecosystems, what their flora and fauna consists of and how we as a society can protect it and enhance it. Sometimes that means not conducting certain activities in parts of it or at certain times of the year. Remember we all want to healthily share the outdoors.

CHANGE IN EMAIL ADDRESS: The Angler is No More

The Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society has changed our email address. We can now be reached at bremmer@mtkobau.bc.ca We look forward to hearing from you. If you are from a publication please note this change on your subscription list.

AGM Presenters

The Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society is very fortunate to have two eminent presenters for our fifty-first Annual General Meeting. This year's presentation will revolve around the state of the B.C. Wolf and its habitat. Craig Pettitt, a charter director of the Valhalla Wilderness Society and a forestry technician will speak on the "Wolf Hunt". Sadie Parr, the executive director of Wolf Awareness, will speak on the current condition of the wolf. Timely for us, Sadie is currently involved in a wolf feeding ecology study in BC's Chilcotin region, and is about to begin a similar project in northeastern Alberta where bounties are underway



Their campaigns, in conjunction with first nations' governments and other environmentally conscious groups, have impacted in excess of 1.25 million acres of British Columbia's important lands. The society conducts their business using scientific

research, proven conservation design approaches and community outreach. Much more information on the Valhalla Wilderness Society can be found at www.vws.org.

Wolf Awareness, a non-profit organization established in 1987, that focuses on wolf conservation through research and education. More information on Wolf Awareness can be found at www.WolfAwarenessInc.org. Parr, and her organization, incorporate outreach and education about methods of coexistence in every project that they are involved in, using informed advocacy to help people better understand

wolf behaviour and ecology. She previously tracked wolves for Yoho National Park, helping to identify where highway overpass structures may reduce ongoing collisions among wolves and vehicles.

Parr, a 1999 graduate of the University of Guelph, holds a specialized honours degree in Biomedical Science. After moving to BC upon graduation, she began to learn more about the perils even "protected" wildlife face in Canada. In fact, she worked for several years with captive wolves at an education centre, learning about the wide range of individual wolf personalities up close and first-hand. Sadie has also pursued further studies at the post-graduate level in conservation biology and molecular genetics through the University of Victoria.

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Rugged Rocks

The author Roland Gebauer wrote about one of the early victories for the OSPS in his 2007 book *Hiking for Health and Pleasure in the Okanagan*, published by The OK Naturalists Club. We include an excerpt here:

Rugged Rocks

Like the mythical Phoenix, Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park flora has risen out of the ashes of the devastating fire of 2003. At first glance the black skeletons of fire-charred trees look somewhat austere. However, on closer inspection, one sees that nature has staged an amazing comeback. Signs of rejuvenation are everywhere. Yet, cliffs and crevices, hidden by dense underbrush before the fire, are still exposed. Views of Okanagan Lake, as well as the higher ridges, now make orienteering a snap and invite exploration. I must admit, I'm partial to the new look.

Okanagan Mountain Park was designated as a Class A park in 1973, thanks to the efforts of the Okanagan-Similkameen Parks Society. It includes 10,580 hectares of typical Okanagan wilderness, from undeveloped lake foreshore to the 1,572 metre summit of Okanagan Mountain. The terrain is strongly sculpted by rugged ridges and deep canyons, and includes a variety of ecosystems at different elevations. The park is home to mule deer, elk, mountain goats and black bears. Early in 2007, a small herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep was released in the park.

Over time, the park has provided sustenance and challenge to a variety of people. The Interior Salish natives were followed by pioneers, missionaries, fur traders, cattlemen and miners in the early 1800s. Today, as a provincial wilderness park, it is the exclusive haunt of outdoor enthusiasts.

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Perhaps the most unique use of the park was attempted by *Okanagan Llama Expeditions*, as indicated in a 1993 ad (see sidebar). It goes without saying, that no red-blooded hiker will surrender his backpack to a llama.

Boulder Trail, Goode's Basin and Wild Horse Canyon trails are well marked and provide safe access to this unique wilderness area.



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"With a vista that stretches both ways for miles, you sit down to a table beautifully set with linen napkins, silverware, wine glasses...

You start with a refreshing soda and lemon. Today the chefs have settled on serving an appetizer of warmed pita bread and tzatziki, followed by salad and then a succulent dinner of freshly prepared seafood pasta. With the early afternoon sun spicing the repast, you take the first tasty bite of a chocolate swirl cheesecake, chased by a sip of fresh-brewed coffee.

A quick glance over at the rough-hewn corral, and you see your llama is enjoying his lunch of alpine grass as much as you are enjoying your meal... it was the docile, friendly-faced llama who packed all the food and cooking gear for the morning, while you enjoyed the hike, unencumbered by knapsack."

Okanagan Sunline, July 11, 1993

She has since committed herself to raising awareness about the need for improved wolf conservation across Canada, home to 1/5 of the worlds remaining wilderness.

The OSPS AGM takes place on Friday, April 1, 2016 in Summerland's Centre Stage Theatre at 7:00. As well as this excellent presentation, including a Q and A session, the society will conduct its business meeting and celebrate two of our early pioneer directors. Everyone is welcome. Come out and enjoy the evening.



Close calls for the wild wolf population?
PHOTO: Peter Dettling

The Homeward Wolf

In keeping with the theme of the AGM and our presenters we have included the following excerpt from *The Homeward Wolf* by Kevin Van Tighem and published by Rocky Mountain Books in 2013. Enjoy:

THE HOMEWARD WOLF

Kevin Van Tighem



Not Enough Wolves

Dead Trees, Dry Ponds

The willows are getting tall again along the Vermilion Lakes. It may not be long until the beavers are back too. That would be good; it's been a while.

At the age of fifty-five, and with a bum leg, Hubert Green wasn't able to go to war as so many other Canadian men were doing in 1940. Instead, he hired on with the Dominion Parks Service as a special wildlife warden in Banff National Park. There, he became responsible for compiling reports on the status of various kinds of park wildlife, offering biological advice on their management, and educating the public about them.

Before arriving in Banff, Green had gotten to know legendary English-born conservationist Grey Owl at Riding Mountain National Park. Having seen how popular Grey Owl's half-tamed

beavers were with visiting tourists, Green was soon advertising evening beaver shows at the Vermilion Lakes, just west of the national park townsite.

All three lakes had active beaver lodges, and there were dams along the small stream channels joining them. So many beavers lived in the lower Bow valley that locals complained that the beaver ponds were making it impossible to enjoy the place because of the mosquitoes they produced. In response, park wardens destroyed 235 beaver dams in the lower Bow River valley in 1943 alone. Even so, each summer evening, beavers continued to appear along the edges of the Vermilion Lakes, where they cut willows and aspen stems, sinking them in underwater food caches or using them to repair leaky dams. As often as not, Hubert Green would be there waiting with a group of fascinated tourists, ready to explain the ways of beavers and how their wetland-building activities affected the natural history of the park.

By 1944, Green was cutting aspen tops close to town and taking them to the popular beaver viewing locations. Supplies were getting sparse along the lakeshore itself. Beavers have a habit of eating themselves out of house and home, but the growing

abundance of elk didn't help either. Each winter, when beavers were feeding from their sunken stashes beneath the blanketing ice and snow, hundreds of elk gathered in the low-elevation Bow valley to escape the deep snows at higher elevations. There, the growing herds browsed the new growth from aspens, willows and other deciduous shrubs. When snows grew deep or browse got sparse, they stripped green bark from the trees.

Prior to the area becoming Canada's first national park, elk had been rare in the Bow valley. Elk were among the easiest of prey for resident Aboriginal hunters and the wolves and other predators that ranged the Rocky Mountain Front Ranges. Archaeological digs have proven that elk were already scarce even before market hunters eradicated the last of them in the late 1800s.

By Green's time, the Stoney Nakoda First Nation had been excluded from its traditional hunting grounds for almost half a century. Wolves and cougars, too, were scarce in those mid-twentieth-century years, much to Green's disapproval. His reports recommended an end to the established practice of predator-killing by park wardens. Being ahead of his time, he was ignored.

Park authorities set free an initial thirty-two elk in 1916 to restore the park herds. They imported about two hundred more from Yellowstone over the next three years. The ungrazed vegetation was lush and predators were few; within two decades, elk numbered in the thousands. Just like Yellowstone, Banff eventually had to start culling its elk herd to reduce range damage. Park wardens conducted the first elk slaughter in 1941, the year that Green began his beaver talks at Vermilion Lakes. The largest slaughter – 352 elk – was in 1946. By then, beavers were already beginning to decline for lack of food. Elk were eating it before beavers could.

The controversial elk culls didn't stop the growth of the herds. Through the late twentieth century, Banff National Park's Bow valley – like Yellowstone – became a poor and deteriorating place. Most of the surviving aspens were old and unhealthy, their trunks black and scarred as high as an elk could reach – the result of hungry elk tearing the bark away with their incisors to eat the green inner bark. Aspen stands had virtually no shrubby understory and no young aspen sprouts at all. Adjacent grasslands were grazed down to

stubble. Beaver and moose, out-competed for forage, became rare. Without beaver dams, wetlands dried or shrank. Ground-nesting birds became increasingly scarce because the sparse vegetation cover left by hungry elk was not enough to hide their nests from predators. Other species that rely on tall willows for habitat, like the song sparrow, Wilson's warbler and willow flycatcher, also became scarce, because the only surviving willows were stunted sprouts that elk browsed back each year.

There were just too many elk. It was the same story all across the mountain west.

Biologist Cristina Eisenberg has no doubt that western ecosystems are regulated from the top down. She has studied trophic cascades in Banff, Yellowstone and other western national parks, as well as private lands in Utah, Colorado and elsewhere. Her book *The Wolf's Tooth* chronicles several examples of landscapes whose ecological diversity went into a tailspin during the twentieth century as ungulate populations, freed of effective predation, climbed to all-time highs.

Cristina points out that it is not just the number of elk, deer or other grazing animals in

the landscape that matters; it's how they behave. Ungulates that live with predators occupy what she describes as a "landscape of fear." They move frequently, often adopting seasonal migration strategies to escape predation, whereas wolves are tied to their dens by young pups that aren't yet as mobile as the adult pack members. Ungulates that don't need to dodge predators can become lazy and sedentary, parking themselves in the most productive parts of the landscape, where they overgraze the available forage until their preferred food plants begin to die.

With the return of wolves to Banff and, a couple decades later, to Yellowstone, the dumbing-down of national park ecosystems appears to have been reversed. Banff's elk population has dropped from several thousand to only a few hundred. They move frequently. Vegetation is recovering. Grass species like rough fescue, once not even known to occur in the park, have become unexpectedly common.

Yellowstone's herds were vastly larger than Banff's and have dropped somewhat less precipitously. Even so, young aspens are reappearing along the edges of that national park's aging,

decadent groves, as they are in Banff. Willows are rising above wet sedge meadows where they were once only a fading memory. Savannah sparrows are successfully raising broods of young again, sheltered by uneaten grass clumps, while aspen-loving songbird species again greet the mountain dawn from unbrowsed twigs nearby.

That's in the places with wolves. Other western landscapes continue to deteriorate. There are still no wolf tracks on the trails of Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. Its hyper-abundant elk – now infected with chronic wasting disease – continue to devour the last surviving aspen and willow stands in the park even as more northerly parks recover.

In the early twenty-first century, the US Forest Service began sounding alarms about a phenomenon for which foresters coined the term "Sudden Aspen Decline." Aspen stands all across the west were dying back. In 2008 alone, according to the Forest Service, more than 17 per cent of all the aspen stands in Colorado were affected by the sudden loss of their foliage and increased tree mortality.

Excerpt from the Transcanada Trail Spring Newsletter

THE SITUATION WITH THE RAIL-TRAILS FROM HOPE TO NELSON – A SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS!

The following rail-trails were announced by the Province at different times, accepting them for the TCT and as the Spirit of 2010 Trail, a rail trail network, for non-motorized use: (also check out this)

- Juliet to Castlegar (KVR/Columbia & Western) – 565 km of almost continuous rail-trail registered as the TCT.
- Hope to Juliet 26 km of rail-trail sections (Othello, Jessica, and Coquihalla Summit) registered as the TCT.
- Salmo to Nelson, a separate rail-trail 40 km registered as the TCT
- Brodie to Kingsvale – 12 km not registered as the TCT

Added to this is the 50-km Slocan non-motorized rail-trail that is expected to become a spur in the TCT network, a great addition and destination.

Approximately 550 km of these rail-trails that were registered with the TCT or designated for non-motorized use is, at this time, largely being accessed by motorized recreation. The exceptions are when the rail-

trail passes through Provincial Parks (i.e. Othello Tunnels, Myra Canyon) and urbanized centers such as Princeton, Summerland, Penticton-Naramata, and between Grand Forks and Christina Lake along with a few other minor sections resulting in a total of approximately 80 km of unconnected destination trails on the TCT route. Cyclists were designated to be the main users of these trails but much of this network cannot legitimately be publicized for their use as a true tourist destination because motorized use causes the trail to be rutted, sandy, and peppered with loose rock, washboard, dips, and potholes. As it turns out, most cyclists feel they are better served on roads than on these rail-trails. Furthermore, they reduce the quality experience sought by non-motorized users who head for trails to escape from vehicle impact on their lives. Much of these rail-trails has turned into unattractive destinations and defeat attempts to publicize them for non-motorized users as a quality experience. What is the sense of publicizing a connected TCT when such a huge portion rail-trail largely doesn't truly serve its intended users? In this regard, our Provincial Government is failing in its commitment to the TCT and to the

non-motorized trail users of this Province, not to mention the many landowners along its route that had agreed to a solely non-motorized trail.

Last summer and fall the Thompson Okanagan-Tourism Association (TOTA) conducted a study with an objective to market the trail as a tourist attraction. Indications are that it will conclude, due to the conditions of the rail-trails, only certain destinations along the trail are presently marketable. The final report should be coming out soon following a review by the stakeholders that participated in the study.

THE GOOD NEWS...

Fortunately, the KVR rail-trail route between Penticton and Osoyoos is fast being established and promises to be a great cycling destination. Also, a new 50-km rail-trail is on the books between Kelowna and Vernon. Neither of these trails is part of the TCT system but will offer great destinations off the TCT for non-motorized users. Of note, the Slocan rail-trail is operated as a non-motorized trail as per the Spirit of 2010 Trail announcement.

Director Resigns

The Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society wishes to recognize the service of Director Mary Trainer. Mary resigned from the board of directors in January after seven years of participation. A Summerland resident and active in a number of nonprofit organizations Mary is a devoted conservationist. She has coauthored a number of books and articles on the history of B.C. She has contributed articles and suggestions to our newsletter.

Mary was active as a board representa-

tive on the Okanagan Trails Association and was in charge of our ever improving website. She is an advocate for access to parks and protected areas for common citizens and tourists. She believes that the outdoors are there for everyone and need to be protected and promoted as such.

The board of directors will miss Mary's input and energy. We are sorry to see her resign and wish her, and her husband Neil, luck in all future endeavors. The province is your oyster Mary.

Where Climate Rhetoric Meets Climate Reality

March 2, 2016

Today's First Ministers' meeting in Vancouver is a make-or-break opportunity for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and 13 provincial/territorial premiers to put some substance behind the conversations we've been hearing about ambitious, far-reaching climate solutions.

It's an opportunity because all the elements are in place for a solid outcome, if only First Ministers agree to go the next step.

Provinces representing the overwhelming majority of Canada's population are already on the road to the coal phaseouts and carbon pricing programs we need. And senior federal spokespeople have repeatedly stressed that energy development (in this case, they mean fossil fuel or pipeline projects) can only go ahead within a robust climate plan.

It's a make-or-break moment because none of the rhetoric or programs we've seen to date go far enough, fast enough to match the commitment to a 1.5°C limit on average global warming that Canada helped broker at the 2015 UN climate summit in Paris. Not nearly.

That won't change today, not in a single day of high-stakes negotiations. But if the Vancouver meeting succeeds, it will be because First Ministers agreed to get moving on a comprehensive toolkit of climate solutions, from energy efficiency in our buildings, vehicles, and equipment, to public transit, smart grids, electric vehicle development, and a quick end to fossil fuel subsidies.

WHAT FIRST MINISTERS SHOULD AGREE ON

Media coverage so far has focused on the areas where premiers diverge, with Saskatchewan's Brad Wall, in particular, speaking out against a federal or provincial carbon price.

But in his opening address to the GLOBE clean technology conference yesterday morning, the Prime Minister said politicians of all stripes want a strong economy and a healthy environment.

Provincial premiers "have led the push to phase out coal power in Ontario and Alberta and put a price on carbon in Quebec and here in British Columbia," he told participants. "These are politicians of different stripes and different beliefs. But they come together on this issue."

Except when they don't. Weeks before the First Ministers' meeting, Wall was already staking out his position against Canada-wide carbon pricing. "This is not right for Saskatchewan, and may I say, I don't think it's right for the country right now," he told CBC. "The last thing we need right now is a tax increase or a new federal carbon tax or, frankly, a provincial carbon levy. Now's not the right time for any of those things."

Which means the premiers will succeed to the extent that they can come together on two key points that Canada's climate and energy community has been hammering away at in the lead-up to the Vancouver meeting: The urgency of climate change, and the powerful potential to build a prosperous, 21st-century economy by translating climate action into jobs.

A SENSE OF URGENCY

On the immediate need for far-reaching climate action, the numbers tell the story.

2015 was the warmest year in recorded history, according to the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). 2014 was the second-warmest.

From Arctic ice loss to ocean acidification, from coastal flooding to crippling droughts, climate impacts aren't just showing up around the world. The impacts are getting more serious, and the pace of change is accelerating. The Paris agreement was a first step toward solutions that work—but only if every country, including Canada, does its part.

But Canada is far behind in its efforts to implement its paltry Paris target, a 30% reduction in carbon pollution by 2030. Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna has declared that target

a floor, not a ceiling. But first, First Ministers will have to close the gap between the target and their climate action to date.

A MILLION CLIMATE JOBS

Even more important than recognizing the urgency of climate action, it's time for First Ministers to look at climate solutions as a matter of opportunity and gain, not loss and pain.

Clean energy already created more direct jobs in Canada than the tar sands/oil sands in 2014, before the oil price crash began producing massive layoffs. And at the Paris conference, the Canadian Labour Congress and Climate Action Network Canada co-hosted a workshop that pointed to the million person-years of climate employment the country could create over the next five years.

The answers are out there, and several of the First Ministers already know it. Now it's time for all 13 federal and provincial jurisdictions to agree to a bold, practical plan of action.

Look no farther than Wall's and Alberta Premier Rachel Notley's deep concern about job loss in the fossil fuel sector for proof that the plan will only work if it provides for a just job transition for people caught on the wrong side of an historic energy transformation. If we really mean it that a low-carbon future must leave no one behind—and we'd better—we have to be as concerned about oil patch workers in Fort McMurray as we are about small island states and climate refugees.

Prime Minister Trudeau is right that none of this should be controversial. These are all issues on which the vast majority of Canadians should be able to find common ground. But time is short. Let's see what the First Ministers can get done today.

Sincerely,

DIANE BECKETT
*Interim Executive Director
Sierra Club Canada Foundation*

SPRING 2007

National Park Proposal For The South Okanagan

This project is ongoing. I believe that it is a GOOD project worthy of your support! Your society has been very involved with projects to preserve some of this land, so that future generations may see what it is to walk quietly and peacefully.

Many people have been working on this project, NOT I might add, in an effort to CHANGE people's minds, but rather to make certain that people understand all the implications, all the Pros as well as the Cons. Much information has been misleading. Much effort has been put into correcting that, as far as possible.

Studies done, here in the Valley, would indicate that a large majority of people, over seventy per cent (70%) believe that a growing population needs more land set aside for Recreation. Our aim is JUST that! We are in need of support in the form of letters to our MP who says that he is NOT hearing from his constituents!

Your input will be VERY valuable.

Harold King, Director OSPS & Naturalists

Ministry protecting goats while widening highway

Protection of a local mountain goat herd must be balanced with safety and traffic concerns as work progresses on the Highway 97 widening project north of Summerland, say Ministry of Transportation officials. The project, which is underway, will involve considerable blasting along a seven-kilometre section of the highway from Bentley Road in Summerland to Okanagan Lake Provincial Park. An estimated 1.5 mil-

lion cubic metres of rock and earth will be removed by the time the project is substantially completed in the summer of 2009.

One of the key areas where blasting will occur is at Goat Bluff, just north of Summerland. When blasting is complete, a rock face 70 metres high will be crested on the west side of the highway. Goat Bluff is also a key habitat area for a herd of up to 19 mountain goats. Some environmentalists fear the goats will be negatively affected by blasting, especially during their critical spring birthing period.

Brent Persello, regional manager of environmental services with the Ministry of Transportation, said environmental monitoring of the area has been ongoing since 2005, and a close watch is being kept on the goats while construction proceeds. Persello said a bluffer zone will be created above the blasting area to ensure no animals are too close. We're going to be using foot patrols or temporary fencing – measures like that to keep them above the buffer line," he said. "There's not going to be a situation where a piece of fly-rock is going to hit a goat, because they're going to be hundreds of metres away." However, Persello wouldn't speculate on what type of measures may be taken if the goats are still deemed to be at risk. Dulay noted previous public input called for the ministry to "hit the project Hard" and complete it over two years instead of three to minimize the impact on motorists. Drilling, blasting hauling work is scheduled to continue until May 2009.

John Moorhouse, Penticton Herald - Feb. 27, 2008

Limit Growth To Our WATER CARRYING LIMITS

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

population by 2050. Despite this, Wilson states the typical pro-growth position that we shouldn't politically limit growth and we won't because we have the ability to vastly improve sustainability without pulling up drawbridges. If the city can't sustain water to 2050, how is it going to ensure water is sustained beyond 2050 for future generations?

Unfortunately, in accommodating growth, Kelowna City Hall's strategies of reducing house-hold and yard water use, and it's so-called smart growth high rise densification are futile short-term band-aids. Indeed, whatever water saved is consumed by increasing population, leaving a net water deficit. The reality is, clean water supplies are finite, where-as growth increases exponentially. This means, the faster the growth, the greater depletion, pollution and drought.

Logically, the way to sustain water to 2050 and beyond for future generations, is to limit growth to the carrying capacity of tipping point of water. We face two main choices. Carry on with chasing endless growth and blindly speeding along using conservation Band-Aids believing all is well, until we collide with nature's barrier of carrying capacity. When carrying capacity is exceeded, supreme nature, restores its equilibrium of balance by lifting its deadly drawbridges of depletion

and drought to terminate the growth plague and to paralyse Kelowna. Or, we can voluntarily slow growth, by lifting our drawbridges just enough to limit growth to ensure it doesn't exceed the barrier of nature's carrying capacity, in perpetuity. One method is to simply have moratoriums or quotas on building permits tied to vital water supplies. In conclusion, endless uncontrolled growth is one of the main causes of water shortages, pollution and drought. Therefore, survival depends on controlling and limiting growth. So, the obvious question is, why is Kelowna City Hall and Okanagan Partnership malinger in properly putting the brakes on growth today to prevent disastrous drought being here before 2050 or after.

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

Biodiversity

The Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society has been promoting the idea, and value, of biodiversity for some time. The concept is important to the society because it has been shown to be one of the major factors influencing the health of natural environments. Healthy, functioning biomes and habitats contribute to the existence of spaces and places for animals, plants and people. The preservation of such environments was one of the founding goals of the O.S.P.S.

A stumbling block in the protection of flora and fauna contributing to biodiversity is the lack of an appreciation for the true value these plants and animals and the lands on which they exist. Since Canada, and the Okanagan in our instance, has so much 'natural' wilderness it is often erroneously assumed that using or changing a bit of it will not be a problem, after all, "everybody should share". What is often left out of the equation used to 'value' the environment is the manner in which rich biodiversity leads to strong networks and systems which are part of how our world, or local habitats, works.

The true actual value of one indigenous species or a particular group of plants may be very hard to determine. We do not wish to commodify our natural surroundings but if they ever were the value would be much more than what is usually considered to be 'free

land'. We protect our environment for animals, plants, children and grandchildren, but we must also realize that we protect it for ourselves. Lack of indigenous biodiversity can have effects on the local or regional biomes. This can result in a changed habitat through such alterations as soil loss, vegetation transformation and other such occurrences. With enough alteration, weather patterns, natural water retention capabilities and climate can be affected.

Hence it is extremely important that the value of our public lands, animals and plant life be understood to be high. The value of forests are often calculated according to the wholesale price of wood but we need to come to an understanding that the true value is not in the price of the wood but also in the other services that the forests provide (think oxygen and breathing at least). A couple of hours of fun is all that someone one a machine is after but the question must be asked, "Are the tires destroying an area that will take generations to return?". The machines are expensive in and of themselves but the true costs of the habitat must be considered. There are some places that can be afforded to provide a place for forestry harvest and motocross or all-terraining but we need to consider the value of the location in all manners before deciding. There are some habitats that are too valuable to allow horses, bicycles or hikers to encroach.

Before the OSPS representatives took part in the Land Resource Management Plan process for the Okanagan Shuswap area, the society was touting the ideas of protecting indigenous plants and animals. During this process in the 1990s it was the society's intent to recognize indigenous species, of both flora and fauna, at risk, and strive to negotiate terms that would protect them. While all areas are important the areas that house such species are probably the most precious of all, due to their rarity. Once such habitats and their inhabitants are gone they seldom come back.

While we understand that nature's systems, networks and processes are based on diverse factors we generally do not understand how they interact and work. We do know that they are interdependent and require all aspects to be functioning in order to operate at the optimum level required to keep our planet healthy. The biodiversity of our environment is important but what the elimination of one Louise's Woodpecker or one Northern Leopard Frog will do, can only be estimated based on its rarity and the prospects for its species to thrive. We must value all life and consider it prior to making our changes, regardless of how large or small we assume them to be.



Northern Leopard Frog: The endangered Rocky Mountain Population of this frog exists only in southeastern B.C.

*Louise's
Woodpecker:
Critical habitat
nesting areas
located in the
Goal 2 area of
Oliver Mountain*



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Western Stickseed - Typical habitat of Western Stickseed at Oliver Mt.



Cougar – Shot during the night, somewhere in the South Okanagan, a cougar patrols the boundary between the human and wildlife domains.



Eye Tree – In our fast paced world even nature is going technological—behold the 'Eye-tree'