

## **STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

(March 26th, 2024 – MS Teams Call 7:00PM)

**SPPAC MEMBERS present:** (Chair) Hardolph Wasteneys, Jessie Moore, Ryan Wanner, Jennifer Pass, Bill Phipps, Ryan Stuart, Catrin Brown

**REGRETS:** Phil Stone

**Recorder:** Ryan Yardley (BC Parks)

### **Guests**

Nicole Pesonen (Myra Falls Mine)

### **Public**

- 2 Members of the public joined the call via members

### **Agenda**

1. Previous minutes
2. Myra Falls status and plans Nicole
3. Strathcona Update Jessie
4. Setting a schedule for 2 meetings a year (Spring - Fall)
5. other items

## **MEETING SUMMARY**

Jessie sent the minutes from the June 5, 2023 SPPAC meeting to members for review shortly before this meeting. Capturing meeting notes and compiling does take time and all agreed continuing with meeting summary notes is sufficient. No further comments on previous meeting summary until members have had a chance to review.

### **Myra Falls Update**

Nicole provided update that Myra Falls Mine is in Care and Maintenance and under creditor protection on December 18, 2023. Nicole confirmed that all funding remains in place to continue with regulatory monitoring (environmental) and operating as status quo for environmental monitoring and management, however, with no extraction or milling. Nicole provided information that this mine is currently for sale, some potential interest, but none move forward to non-disclosure agreement. Staffing levels went from 400 down to 45 (30 remain at site). The site is being put to bed in a way that it can be started back up relatively quickly. Discussion about if the mine could reopen or close permanently  
Response - All options are still on the table, including a complete shutdown.

Concerns were raised about the continuation of road maintenance and access to trailheads. Response was that road maintenance is part of the Park Use Permit legal requirement and will continue to be accessible, although potential response times may be slightly delayed with fewer people at site.

Nicole provided information that the mine is still operating under the 2021 5 year closure plan. Water Treatment plant to be designed to be more than double what is needed during closure – SPPAC will be engaged on design. Other pending tasks related to permitting in the coming months include: CRAB expansion – still in progress, tailings design to be more functional. Park Use Permit amendment is anticipated to be submitted in September. Also, working with Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Low Carbon Innovation on “permitting clean up”. *Mines Act* permit is comprised of an old permit (1997) and new permit with 57 amendments. Work is being undertaken to amalgamate the permits and eliminate confusion.

Nicole provided information about the investigation underway for a violation under the *Fisheries Act* related to the December 26 pump failure.

There was a question brought forward about how the Impact Benefits Agreement (IBA) with First Nations has been affected by the mine shutdown. The IBA is with 2 of the 4 First Nations who have traditional territory that cover the site. The IBA sets the relationship “rules of engagement” for how the mine and First Nations operate. The affected First Nations are up to date on the current events at the mine. The IBA does not impact the mine operations all permitting and regulatory requirements remain unchanged.

#### Strathcona Update

Jessie reviewed the update she had provided previously via email to the Committee and discussed key initiatives that had had been completed or were to be completed this year. Low snow levels and early melt will be different than in past years and may require rangers to be in the park earlier than in past year (e.g. paradise meadows on the May long weekend) as well as opportunities to get Strathcona open both in the frontcountry and the backcountry earlier in the season.

Park Operator – “43K Wilderness Solutions” is entering their 10th season, of a 10-year contract (ends October 2025). 43k has had some staffing changes over the winter but have now hired all their staff for the season and will be providing full services in the backcountry operating areas starting June 15th. From what we are observing, snow conditions over the winter resulted in negligible damage to facilities and infrastructure. Under Park Operator Agreement, planning to covert 2 Elk River Trail toilets to UD, which will make all toilets in the operating area UD.

In Strathcona this season, the Student Rangers assisted park rangers with the installation of safety markers on the Albert Edward trail and worked alongside the CDMC to restore areas around Battleship Lake. This season, they will be helping with repair and maintenance at the SWI center and moving the Arnica Lake Toilet. We are also planning on having the Student Rangers out in the park to assess the trails for winter damage and blowdown earlier in the season including upper Myra Falls, Arnica Lake, and Crest Mountain as well as enhancing public relations in busy areas including Forbidden Plateau where they will be reminding visitors on dog on leash, backcountry ethics and safety.

Moat Lake area – The bridge across the Moat Lake outflow on the Castle Crag route was replaced this season with park rangers and CDMC volunteers. It was a very big undertaking and completed successfully. This was a highlight for most staff this season.

#### BACKCOUNTRY Projects

Della Falls – Focusing efforts on clearing this trail once in the spring has been effective in managing the blowdown to a reasonable level from year to year. We confirmed that the toilets and food caches on the trail are full/reaching the end of their life span.

Bedwell Lakes Trail –New toilet (z-best) and food cache installed at Cream Lake in September. Proposal received from FOSP to flag and complete some minor work on lower Bedwell trail this summer.

Arnica Lake – Inspection revealed that z-best toilet is reaching capacity. Planning underway to replace the toilet, potentially looking at options to replace with a mouldering style. At very least, toilet will be moved through a Student Ranger Project.

Crest Mountain Trail – No significant work or changes planned. Monitoring of the Long Term Ecological Monitoring plot (Forest Productivity) occurred in August and September. SWI is hosting an adventure race (August?), details are still being confirmed.

Kings Peak Trail – Park Rangers installed a new Z-best toilet and food cache at the meadows camping area in September. Hopefully this should help to alleviate the growing human waste problem that has been a topic of concern over the past few years.

Marble Meadows – Windfall will likely be needing to be cleared from the trail. Zee best toilet was installed at the meadows campsite (Globeflower Lake). Signage is being developed to be installed this season for this area.

Hwy 28 Corridor Bridge Work – upgrade of the Cervus Creek bridge (Lady Falls Parking lot/trailhead) is currently underway by MoTI contractors with a planned completion of October 2024. Lady Falls parking lot will remain closed through the season as access to the parking area is contained within the right of way where work is occurring.

Tree theft along King's Peak Road over the winter.

Crest Crags – Volunteer Trail days planned for this coordinated by Bill Phipps and volunteers. BC Parks will supply materials and supplies and Park Ranger staff.

Wildfire Season – We had another active wildfire season in the park. We had 1 human caused fire in Buttle Campground on July 1st. Several lightning caused fires in other areas of the – around Tennent Lake, Bedwell, Lady Falls, and Wolf River. The Lady Falls fire was actioned by BCWS, others were mostly monitored and were burning high up slopes in inaccessible terrain. The Wolf River fires started as a complex of 3 separate fires and over the September long weekend grew and crossed the river. We closed the Wolf River Marine site for most of September and October.

Interpretive Sign Design/Replacement in Buttle and Gold River Corridors – Replacing interpretive signage in both corridors has been on the list for years. This year, a sign package was developed using the compensation funding from Myra Falls Mine. Signs are developed and mostly fabricated. Installation will occur throughout the season at information shelters through out the park.

Planning Future meetings

- Discussion of in person vs online meetings.
- In person allows for the public to participate.
- Ideal to pick a week have it annually. Not adjacent to long weekends
  - o **BC Parks Action:** pick a send Tuesday in May and October/November for Face to face. Being mindful of long weekends and stat holidays.
  - o Food is not a high priority for SPPAC members.
  - o Time: agreed that SPPAC meeting should be between 1.5 to 2 hours.

Meeting adjourned! 9:00 PM