

**STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING FINAL MINUTES**

**October 3, 2008 6 PM – 10 PM**

**BC PARKS BOARDROOM, RATHREVOR BEACH PARK**

**SPPAC MEMBERS:** Barb Baker, Peggy Carswell, Tawney Lem (Acting Chair), Philip Stone, Dave Campbell, Dave Vincent, Nick Page, Warrick Whitehead.

**BC Parks:** Ron Quilter, Andy Smith, Sharon Erickson

**Presenters:** Don Doyle

**Recorder:** John Milne

**Absent:** Gary Schaan (Chair), Paul Erickson

**Public:** Don Doyle, Peter Rothermel

**1. Opening Remarks - Tawney Lem (Acting Chair)**

Gary is having knee surgery so Tawney is replacing him for today.

Introductions – Everyone present introduced themselves.

**2. Confirm Previous Minutes**

**All**

June 13<sup>th</sup> minutes accepted as circulated.

**Action – Andy is to arrange to have June 13<sup>th</sup> minutes posted on BC Parks website.**

**3. NVI Mine Update (in person or report) - Andy reported. NVI has provided him with a report.**

**Action – Andy will send out NVI report as an attachment to SPPAC members.**

**4. Marmot Program update - Don Doyle**

Don gave a power point presentation – The Marmot Recovery Team’s goal is to achieve a population of 400 - 600 marmots in three meta populations of about 200 each. Don showed a map illustrating the approximate location of sites

The captive population of marmots is now up to about 175. 59 marmots were released this year, with plans to release about 70 next year. This is considered a success.

The program has been accelerated due to this success. More males than females have been released. Males sometimes disperse after release.

The Team also experimented with older aged marmots and family groups. There have been 38 different release groups. Marmots are matched so as to encourage breeding in the wild. The wild population now up to over 150. There were 11 litters in the wild this year.

The offspring of captive bred marmots are now breeding. The main concentration of marmots is in the southern core area. The mortality of marmots is due to both hibernation difficulties and predation. Those dying in hibernation are found to be emaciated. There is still a ways to go to reach the goal. The strategy is to swamp predators by releasing large numbers. 20 marmots were lost this year to predation, but this was more than compensated for by breeding in the wild and by releases.

Some marmots were introduced at the Mount Cain ski hill.

It takes a few years for released marmots to breed. Those dying in hibernation are doing so because of low fat reserves upon entering hibernation. 21 percent die in their first hibernation, and after that they don't die in hibernation. 9 percent of those having their feed supplemented die in their first hibernation, and 18 percent of those not fed die in their first hibernation. It is unclear how much food each marmot gets, since some are more dominant.

In Strathcona Park, Greig's Ridge turned out to be an excellent site for marmots. The plan is to expand to other suitable areas of park. In 2008 two more groups were released, 19 total. 8 remain in place, 6 moved elsewhere, 1 missing, and 4 are dead. One pair on Greig's Ridge turned out to be dominant and should breed first. No wolf or cougar activity was seen on Greig's Ridge. Some golden eagles were seen infrequently. The practice is to establish a breeding pair and supplement them.

Next year the Team needs to release more into the wild because there is no room in the facilities for captives. 3 – 5 groups are to be released in Park next year. 12 – 15 groups in total will be released on Vancouver Island.

They will supplement the Greig's Ridge groups, and establish second site north of Greig's Ridge.

There will be no more permanent camps, and crews will stay for 3-5 days and do periodic inventories.

Possible other areas are Mount Alexandra, the above mentioned sites, Flower Ridge and the Upper Drinkwater valley. They could also move into the Beaufort Mountain Range. Marmots to be released next year have been moved to Mount Washington for the winter to become acclimatized. The schedule is for releases to be done by May.

Questions – Warrick is pleased with these results. He pointed out this program was to be finished in park, but is now to be continued. The use of helicopters in the park is a problem. Now there are plans to move elsewhere in the park without this coming before SPPAC. SPPAC has not received the information they needed to make a recommendation before. Don said in 2006 he did not say they would be done in 2008, but would re-evaluate the camp after 2 years. Don thinks Warrick is misinterpreting his previous statements. Don says there have been no impact, and no conflicts with the public. They did hike out as they said. Public feedback has been good, and the impact of helicopters is minimal. He did admit plans are going well, so there will be more groups than originally planned for. Warrick said SPPAC has not received the information it requested, specifically about how many helicopter flights have been made. Gary Schaan added at a later date that he had circulated periodic reports supplied by Don, and that they were general descriptions of activities.

Nick asked when would new plans be made for next year. Don said December. Nick asked for details to be available at the next SPPAC meeting. Don said that could be done, but will have to be flexible depending on survival.

Warrick wants SPPAC to have more input, not be told what has already happened. Nick thinks more information could satisfy Warrick's concerns. Warrick is concerned about expansion into other parts of the Park without SPPAC having input. Don sent periodic updates to Gary which should have been circulated, and that flights were outlined there.

There were 20 flights total.

They will continue to try to limit flights as before.  
Plans for next year are subject to input.

Ron Quilter indicated SPPAC has had considerable input to date. Parks wrote the Recovery Team to lay out the parameters put forward by SPPAC. Warrick says we are one year behind in hearing what was asked for. Tawney asked for members to forward concerns.

Phillip spoke about his experience meeting one of the team's helicopters. He noted Greig Ridge is remote, but a short flight. Flower Ridge is more accessible. Will marmots there be a draw for people? He questions the balance between remoteness and accessibility, and says this needs to be discussed. Don said if they go to Flower Ridge, there will only be two flights, and this location is accessible by hiking. Don thinks it is positive for people to visit the habitat and see marmots in the wild. Don says they try to avoid interaction between helicopters and hikers.

Nick asked for information in advance of the next meeting so this issue can be discussed at that time. Don would like to receive input and concerns by end of November. Send to both Andy and Don. Warrick would like an answer to his letter.

**Action – Send input and concerns about the Marmot program to Andy Smith and Don Doyle.**

**5. NVI Mine update from above**

Andy read the North Vancouver Island Mine report . It is to be added to the minutes later.

**Main points** – Power issues will come to SPPAC with options later. They will send parameters of the scoping options to Andy.

A second diversion ditch has been started.

Damage occurred to the Tennant Lake trail bridge.

Seismic upgrade to the tailing facility planting trees has occurred.

The new gate hasn't been working, and sign is to be put up informing the public of access.

The annual SPPAC/NVI Mine meeting will be scheduled around Paul's schedule.

**6. Bedwell Environmental Impact Assessment Update - Andy**

There is not much to say. Parks just received the first draft report. A medical problem delayed completing the report. Parks are reviewing it now.

Tawney noted the June minutes asked for questions to be forwarded. This did not happen. Email Andy questions. The Level 2 information has to go to Bufo Consultants for its process of amending the Master Plan.

**Action – Email questions regarding the Level 2 Assessment to Andy.**

Peggy noted that information should go to SPPAC for input before the process is finalized. How is SPPAC's interest to be met? Andy said there has been no signoff on the report yet, but BC Parks will determine if the contract has been fulfilled. There will be revisions to the first draft. Question: Will the final report be brought back to SPPAC? Ron said they want to receive what they asked for, not to change the report. A decision will not be made until it comes back to SPPAC. The Master Plan has to be amended, or not amended, before a decision is made on Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's Park Use Permit. This report is sensitive, and needs to be on the table to be evaluated. Tawney asked if it will be available at a particular time. The report is expected to be ready before the next regular SPPAC meeting.

**7. Master Plan Review Update - Sharon Erickson**

Information from public input is on BC Parks' website. The L2 report will be reviewed, and submitted for a headquarters policy review, then sent to the Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) (this is a process for determining the public information process and works from Victoria). Phillip is concerned about this part of the process. He was supported by others. All communications from civil servants have to be cleared by this board. PAB will review these documents. The Draft Master Plan review will be brought to SPPAC for

feedback. The L2 assessment informs the permit process and is separate from the Master Plan review.

SPPAC should see the L2 assessment and the Master Plan Amendment before the next meeting. Will it be in advance of meeting, or at next meeting? SPPAC wants to receive it as soon as possible.

Region is required to keep Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) informed.

Tawney asked about discussing this at the next meeting, or a separate meeting. The consensus is to discuss this at the next meeting.

**Action: SPPAC recommends the L2 Assessment and the Draft Master Plan Amendment will be sent out to SPPAC as soon as possible.**

## **8. BC Parks Park Updates - Andy**

**Paradise Meadows trailhead building** – The building is under construction, with a targeted cost of \$150,000, \$75,000 in cash and \$75,000 in matching grants. Andy passed photos of the building around. 6 local Rotary Clubs donated to the cause. Ron complimented Andy for his work.

**Capital Funds** – Boardwalks in the Battleship Lake, Helen McKenzie area have been upgraded. Only the worst spots were done. BC Parks did not complete adding bark mulch where needed due to lack of funds. \$1.2 million total was allocated for the Region, the highest priority is upgrading water systems due to a change in regulations. Backcountry trails need a ton of work, and are now in deficit. There are limited funds from government, and the need for business plans makes it hard to get funding for backcountry projects. Phil noted the high use this summer in the Park. He said this is how to justify a business case. Completing the loop in Paradise Meadows would cost \$75,000. It won't happen for awhile. Peggy is a member of a Rotary Club and sees them as a source of support. Andy could bring a list of projects with priorities to SPPAC for input. Few projects are completed. Andy will send out for comments via email.

**Action: Andy will send out a list of projects and priorities to SPPAC for input.**

Warrick asked about **volunteer work**. Ron explained fewer staff are available to support a project and supervise volunteers than before. All volunteers require safety processes to be in place which excludes some volunteers without ranger support. Only 2 rangers are available for the entire park. Phil found 2 new trails being clipped out in the park this last summer.

The **Bedwell Lakes trail** needs work. It is eroded and there is damage to bridges and boardwalks. Some money spent on the essentials. Most railings on the metal stairs are bent by snow load.

The Crest Mountain bridge has been condemned and can not be used. Access depends on water flows.

**Elk River** – No work has been done, and work is needed.

**Weaton Hut** – Shawnigan Lake School rebuilt the floor, put in new piles and anchored the building.

### **9. Della Falls Trail - Andy**

Last winter a bridge was washed out and there were 800 windfalls. A First Nations team did the work of clearing windfalls, but there is still more to be done. The creek can be forded at low water. There is no money to replace the large, missing bridge.

Andy wants to meet with stakeholders in this area to discuss how to help restore the damage.

### **10. Wood Mountain Park Developments / Mount Becher - Andy**

The party and ATV problems have extended into park. Enough evidence was collected on one person to lay a fine. Some other reports have led to finding two other people, but Parks did not have enough evidence to ticket them. Andy will follow up with media coverage. Warrick mentioned efforts to have numbers on these kinds of vehicles. In Alberta number plates are required. Forbidden Plateau Resort keeps Andy informed. Rangers have been in the area, and will be again to enforce regulations. Peggy suggested Citizens on Patrol could be used to monitor the situation, or maybe other community groups could be used. Ron mentioned the Park Watch Group from 1990's, and the lack of staff to make this work now. Maybe they could use Wilderness Watch type programs. Some signage may help.

**Action: Peggy will contact Citizens on Patrol to see if they can help.**

**Action: Andy will place an article in local media.**

### **11. SPPAC's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary update - Ron**

Crown Mountain is the birthplace of BC Parks system. Strathcona is front and center on the provincial committee to celebrate this birthday. There are a large number of ideas to be prioritized. Ron read a letter from Paul Erickson to the Minister asking for a major capital project for Strathcona Park. BC's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday party has been active this summer, which provided some ideas for the park celebration. Other ideas are coffee table books, re-creation trip (Ellison expedition), Phil has researched the original expedition of 23 people. Which SPPAC members and which others would correspond to original members of the Price Expedition, and maybe extend an invitation to the Minister. The scale of the trip is yet to be determined. Headquarters has given the go ahead. It is only 1 ½ years away. Parks are looking for a sponsor, maybe a magazine. MEC is also interested.

There would be a lead up and Parks Day would be the official celebration. Ron sees SPPAC as having a major role. Ron would like ideas to be sent to him on what SPPAC would like to be involved in. SPPAC suggests this is an opportunity for the government

to show a major financial commitment, maybe a major park addition. Volunteer trail work could be a community focus, (adopt a trail), and could be a seed for a beginning, then leveraged for something larger. A project could coordinate with other programs like the Conservation Core. Barb mentioned Port Alberni has a crew of volunteers certified with BC Parks already.

**Action: All to send ideas to Ron for the centenary of BC Parks system.**

### **12. Vancouver Island spine trail - Peggy**

Gil is looking for information on the trail Peggy would like people to pass on contact information to her to pass on for him. Phil mentioned WCWC book by Phil. Phil has maps and has hiked much of it. A route is more realistic than an actual trail which would cost millions. Phil's route avoided the Park as much as possible. Some routes would not be possible either physically or through park zoning. Dave Campbell mentioned his vision is similar to the Pacific Crest Trail.

### **13. Mount Washington effect on Paradise Meadows - Nick**

Andy said the water in Paradise Meadows area is monitored visually to check impacts. Mount Washington has given Andy their policies about impacts on the Park from their developments, and it says all the right things. The Ministry responds to complaints, but doesn't do regular inspections. Andy has contacted a water quality government staff member doing research on water quality. Andy is trying to get him to add Paradise Meadows to his study to get base line data. The cost is \$700 for 3 years. Nick says Mount Washington should pay for the assessment on their operations' impacts. They should monitor their runoff.

**Action: SPPAC recommends Parks approach Mount Washington Resort for this. Peggy mentioned Camosun College looks for opportunities for students to do water quality testing.**

**Action: Andy – BC Parks contact to talk to Don Sharpe - Mount Washington about concerns with water quality and quantity of water flowing into park.**

### **14. Park Use Permit (PUP) process - Nick**

The CWR permit proposal has brought to light the question of whether or not other permits should be reviewed. Nick asked when is it appropriate to refer a PUP to SPPAC? Ron explained that while SPPAC's Terms of Reference indicates that they will provide advice on Park Use Permits, the current high volume and staff capacity makes it very difficult to refer all permits to SPPAC. However, as per the Master Plan which directs all Park Use Permits involving land tenure be reviewed in a public forum, BC Parks will continue to bring such permit proposals to SPPAC.

There was a question about whether fees, commercial use, or ecological factors should generate a referral? SPPAC must understand that there are time constraints regarding permits. A list of permits can be supplied to SPPAC and should there be any questions.,

BC Parks staff can address them. Any Land Use permit proposal generally requires it to follow the BC Parks impact assessment process and therefore address potential impact concerns..

Do guiding permits require discussion? Answer: They were pre-existing. As for Commercial Use of the Park, this has gone on for a long time – there are many permits for commercial use in most BC Parks.

All permits are now referred to First Nations which requires 45 days which buys some time to consider applications.

**15. Public Question Period**  
none

**Next Meeting: February 13/2009**