

# Friends of Strathcona Park Newsletter - Summer 2022

Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5  
[www.friendsofstrathconapark.org](http://www.friendsofstrathconapark.org)

## Change at Strathcona Park

Last December Andy Smith retired as Strathcona Park Supervisor after a long career with B.C. Parks. FOSP would like to thank Andy for his service to our parks and wish him well in his retirement. His job has been filled by Jessie Moore who was previously supervisor at Cape Scott Park. We look forward to working with her in the future.

FOSP asked for a meeting with Jessie to introduce ourselves and develop a new working relationship. On May 26th Ken Van deBurgt, Quentin Dodd, Tom Ireland, Jennifer Pass, John Milne and Marlene Smith from the Friends met over zoom with Jessie Moore and Aaron Miller (Regional Supervisor).

The meeting began with Marlene Smith talking about the beginnings of the FOSP, how FOSP founded the Strathcona Wilderness Institute and why, and some of the many issues that have caused concern in the Park over the last decades,

Current issues were discussed. Last year's access survey results were presented and how we plan on proceeding over the next season. The state of the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC) was raised. It has been mostly inactive over the span of Covid and Jessie assured us plans for future meetings are being made.

Ken spoke about activity around the mine. A new power line is proposed along the Jim

Mitchell Lake Road to supply the mine site. An official proposal hasn't been presented to B.C. Park yet, and Aaron said the route should stick to the road and the proposal should be brought before SPPAC soon.

Aaron and Jessie were given an opportunity to speak and brought us up to date with what's happening in the Park. Jessie told us there was a new full time ranger and a part time ranger hired to work in the park. There has been significant blowdown especially on the Elk River and Crest Mountain trails. As the snow melts we're sure more damage will be revealed. Capital projects include work on the Della Falls trail head, repairs on the bridge over Butterwort Creek, and work on tent pads at Kwai Lake. Between 10 and 12 new trail cameras are being purchased and park staff are open to suggestions about where to place them. They could also be used to inventory snowshoers during the winter season.

Marlene brought spoke about the Bedwell Trail between Bedwell Lake and the ocean on the west coast of the Island. The old road bed the trail followed has been eroding for years and since this meeting we've learned the so called "Living Bridge" has collapsed making crossing the Bedwell River at that spot impossible. The alternate trail developed a few years ago should be upgraded as the main access.

Public Access through Clayoquot Wilderness Resort's land was discussed and stated that a legal road exists. The issue is complex and needs further discussion. Jessie said she would follow up with Jennifer. While CWR is in present full support of public access, it is important to have this registered clearly on land title.

Future meetings between Parks staff and FOSP was discussed and it was agreed they would be useful. This meeting was positive and a good initial step in developing our relationship with each other.

### **The Second Surprise from the 2021 Access Project (Mt. Washington entry point) (by Jennifer Pass)**

Last summer when we spoke to people returning from backpacking trips -- one of the surprises for us was that people did not find the backcountry crowded. Although we did hear of full and over-full campgrounds, some noisy weekend evenings, and certainly there was congestion in the parking lot and at the trail entry point. So, BC Parks, take note – hikers are not going to be deterred by a little overcrowding. And they loved the park and will tell their friends.

So, as we look at the data – surprise number two! Out of 90 hiking parties, (a sampling) 65 parties were Vancouver Island residents. So, were the other 25 parties from the mainland? No, some were mixed parties from Vancouver Island and mainland and some parties from the Islands, (Hornby, Quadra, Gulf Islands) some from mixed VI and the islands and a few from the mainland and other provinces.

Why is this important information? It may be tempting with last summer's intense use to conclude that planning cannot be done. People can come from anywhere in the world. What numbers could one possibly anticipate and plan for?

But no, we can plan for these numbers. Just look at the 2021 census. The population of Vancouver Island increased by 8.2 per cent to 864,864 between 2016 and 2021. And judging by house building and sales in the Comox

Valley in 2022, the population is continuing to burgeon. Planning for recreational space of different types must become a priority. We will need more wild spaces, and different types of access, to allow different types of recreational experience and to preserve and protect wild areas. Overuse is not good for the meadows the trails, or the wildlife—even if the people are okay with it.

We do need to encourage BC Parks to manage Strathcona Provincial Park with a view to dealing with the population growth that we are seeing and that will continue. New points of access need to be developed and managed.

### **Gayle McGee Bridge**

Recently Gayle McGee's sister made a generous donation to FOSP in memory of Gayle. She said next year it will have been 30 years since Gayle passed away meaning the suspension bridge built in her name is almost that old. This bridge provides access over the Bedwell River about a kilometre outside the Park boundary on the west side.

Gayle was an environmental activist, a member of many environmental groups, FOSP among them. She was a world traveller and worked with CUSO, Canada World Youth, Canadian Council of International Co-operation and Katimavik. She was also the chairperson of the B.C. Environmental Network.

Unfortunately she succumbed to complications from diabetes. In her memory people were invited to donate to a project (yet to be decided at that time) organized by the Friends of Strathcona Park. This project turned out to be the Gayle McGee Bridge and was completed about a year later by a volunteer group and support from B.C. Parks.



The Gayle McGee bridge when it was brand new.

### Myra Falls Mine - Ken Van deBurgt

Did you know the Myra Falls Mine has a new owner? In 2020, Trafigura Mining Group acquired Myra Falls Mine from leading global zinc and lead producer Nyrstar.

There is this interesting quote from the Trafigura Mining Group website:

“The underground mine is situated in Strathcona Provincial Park, 90kms southwest of Campbell River on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, has been operational since 1965 and employs over 300 people. With a lifespan of over ten years, the Mining Group is ramping up production at the facility to over 800,000 metric tonnes of zinc, lead and copper ore per annum, all of which are key commodities in the transition to a lower-carbon economy.”

So there you have it: the mine is contributing to the “transition to a lower carbon economy”. Enjoy your electric car and the wind turbines near you; the materials could come from a mine located in our favourite Park.

We all benefit from a multitude of products made of zinc, lead, and copper, its not just about electric cars and wind turbines. Mentioning green technology as justification for a mine in the park seems like greenwashing to us.

### A citizen’s gripe – Information shortage on Mine applications

The Myra Falls mine situated in the middle of Strathcona Provincial Park, seems an anomaly, a little world unto itself. But it is not “unto itself”; it presents a larger and larger footprint to

anyone looking up the valley at the end of Buttle Lake. And although the mine is supposedly in its final days, the extraction increases, the “tailings disposal facilities” (TDF’s) increase in height and dimensions, and the hydro lines (now one proposed to go down Jim Mitchell Lake Road) spread across the landscape.

And we citizens are largely in the dark. Try to find out details on-line of the mine’s applications to BC Parks --- very difficult; try to email a Parks representative and get a response – not likely. I think we should push for a simple publically accessible part of BC Parks website with clear entries of mine applications pending, dates and details of each application. All the information necessary for Parks and the public to consider what is being requested and what response we as citizens might want to make. Quite impossible to be an informed citizen with this lack of disclosure – and how can BC Parks know what BC citizens think of an application by Trafigura-Nyrstar, the owner-manager of the “mine in the Park”, when we are kept so “in the dark”. And without regular meetings of SPPAC, how is BC Parks being in any way publicly accountable?

**AGM - TBA -**

Sometime next fall we will host our Annual General Meeting. We'll notify everyone of the date and format closer to the time. Last year's AGM was held via zoom, but before Covid these meetings we always met in person. The advantage of zoom is people can attend without travelling. Perhaps a hybrid meeting is the best option. We could have some attending in person and some via zoom. We did have one hybrid directors' meeting and it seemed to work well. Please let us know in the comment section of our renewal form what you think and which you prefer.

We have had a few directors retire over the last couple of years. Some of us have been doing this for quite a while and we need to think about succession. If any of you would like to join as a director, please let us know. Right now Strathcona Park does not seem to be under any threat, but that can change and it's good to know there are members of the public concerned about how the Park is managed.

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**FOSP Membership Form  
Thank you for renewing.**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postal Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **alternate phone (cell)** \_\_\_\_\_

**e-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership (suggested \$10 per year)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation (tax receipts for anything over \$25)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments**  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**send to: Friends of Strathcona Park, P.O. Box 3404, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 5N5**