

Friends of Strathcona Park Newsletter - Summer 2023

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www.friendsofstrathconapark.org

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Bedwell Trail Proposal

The FOSP built the trail connecting Bedwell Lake to the ocean at the head of Bedwell Sound in the 1990's . It's been referred to as the Alpine to Ocean route. Over the years FOSP has done some maintenance on this trail and now it's time to do some more. A few months ago we approached B.C. Parks through Jessie Moore, the new Strathcona Park Supervisor. So far we haven't heard back, but expect to soon. We'd like Parks approval for this work.



Building the Gayle McGee suspension bridge on the Bedwell Trail in 1998. Walter Latter putting on the deck and stanchions.

A FOSP member hiked the route recently and will give us a report of what needs doing. FOSP has some money to invest in this, so funding and expenses to B.C. Parks won't be a problem. A rough plan indicates 5 - 7 people could upgrade the trail in about a week. We're asking for an indication of who would like to volunteer to help. We need fit and capable people who would be available later this summer or fall . Expenses will be paid and a commitment of about a week would be required. Anyone who would also like to help in the planning is welcome as well.

If you are interested please let us know how you'd like to be involved on the membership form at the end of the newsletter, or through our website by emailing us.

SPPAC Needs New Members

It is a committee with a long name – The Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee. So, we will use the initials: SPPAC. SPPAC was formed in 1993 “to ensure public participation in the ongoing operation and management of Strathcona Park and Strathcona-Westmin Park.”(quote from terms of reference (ToR) see link below) But why? Other provincial parks don't have such a committee. After much public action in 1993, instigated by the Friends of Strathcona Park, a Master Plan for park usage/development issues was drafted. This Master Plan established continuing public accountability through the establishment of SPPAC. Now, 30 years later, SPPAC needs more members. There is a maximum of 11 mandated; presently there are only seven members, of which

only two of us are women.

So, what are the criteria for membership? The Selection Criteria in the ToR, states “all members must have a general knowledge of the Park and have a strong commitment to the vision and philosophy of the Master Plan”.

Beyond that, Parks is looking for a range of skill sets – (10 areas are listed in the ToR) (see the link below for more detail). While affiliation with a group will not preclude being selected for SPPAC, the Terms of Reference are clear that members are there for the good of the park, not for a specific interest group. (When I applied it was suggested that I might be advocating for FOSP, but I said that FOSP only advocates for the Park, so that won the day!)

SPPAC meets only twice a year and the meetings are in the evening, and at the Parks office at Miracle Beach. There is a possibility there could be more meetings if issues call for that. One meeting focuses on mine issues (Myra Falls mine). Park users are those who are aware of concerns and those concerns are discussed at our meetings. (e.g. trail overuse, fire concerns, parking issues, climbing area supports, etc.)

We are so fortunate to have a public advisory group to assist BC Parks with usage/development/mine issues that arise. Parks listens to the public through the SPPAC lens, so this is an important role for individuals who care about the park to have input in the park’s development and protection.

For more information about SPPAC, see the Terms of Reference at

<https://bcparks.ca/strathcona-park/strathcona-park-public-advisory-committee/>

I hope this article inspires you, who love Strathcona Park, to apply to join this unique committee.

- Jennifer Pass

Park Update

This update uses information from Jessie Moore, the new supervisor for Strathcona Park, as circulated at the last SPPAC meeting in June. Thanks Jessie for making this available.

The budget for Strathcona Park this season is about the same as in 2022. Extra funding came from the Park Enhancement Fund and License Plate fund that went to the Strathcona Wilderness Institute and Comox District Mountaineering Club for their projects.

There was little damage to park infrastructure from last winter's snowfall. As well as permanent staff, there are student rangers assigned to the park for a couple of weeks. They will be doing some trail maintenance as well as some assessment of trail conditions. The bridge over the creek exiting Moat Lake will be repaired this fall as well. The Butterworth Bridge on the Elk River trail has been replaced. Rangers have been dealing with dogs off leash and dog waste problems in the Forbidden Plateau area. This situation has been improving, but banning dogs could be considered if it remains a problem. Illegal camping and fires in the Moat Lake area have also been a problem.

Some other projects either completed or about to be completed are: a new food cache on the Della Falls trail, plans to replace the dock at the Della Falls trail head, a new toilet was installed at Baby Bedwell Lake, plans to assess the access to Gold Lake which was blocked due to a logging road bridge being removed, a new toilet will be installed at the Kings Peak area, and a damaged toilet was replaced in the Weaton Hut area in Marble Meadows. 28 backcountry bridges were inspected by an engineering firm with the idea of creating a replacement plan for the next 5 years.

Park staff have been busy with modernizing and updating asset management plans. This sounds complicated, but should provide benefits in

planning and budgeting in the future.

Work is being done to relocate the power line from the dam on Jim Mitchell Lake to the mine site. The line will be buried under the road for part of the way and relocated from passing through the old Price Mine adit to follow the road.

At the Myra Falls Mine work is being done to raise the Lynx tailings dam to allow for more tailings storage. Work is being done on the mining and reclamation plan submitted in 2021. This involves expansion of till borrowing, modernizing underground mining methods, and reviewing the amount of the bond available to pay for closure.

Again, thanks to Jessie Moore for making this information available.

Why Is There a Mine in the Middle of the Park

Many visitors to Strathcona Park wonder why there is a mine and industrial wasteland in the middle of a beautiful wilderness park. The reason goes back many years.

In the 1960's it was common in B.C. for large Provincial parks to be what is called a class B park. This designation allowed what was called "multi use" which means logging, mining and other such uses were allowed. A class A park did not allow these uses and was much better protected. Western Mine was developed at that time.

In the late 1980's a mining company called Cream Silver wanted to conduct exploratory drilling around Cream Lake and other locations in order to find more mineral deposits. This led to the protests and arrests of 1987 when the Friends of Strathcona Park was formed. As a result of political pressure the government made some changes. The majority of the park was reclassified as class A park with Wilderness Conservation as its zoning meaning no manmade structures of any kind were permitted. The area around the mine and its power generation facilities were renamed Strathcona-Westmin Park and classified as a class B park, one of only two

remaining in the whole province. Strathcona Park's Master Plan was developed and a separate Master Plan was created for Strathcona-Westmin Park.

What does this mean? The Master Plan for Strathcona Westmin Provincial Park calls for reclamation when the mine runs out of ore and its operation is finished. In part it calls for:

- "the surface of the land shall be reclaimed
- "land and watercourses shall be left in a stable condition

- "Native indigenous species shall be used and cover established to a self sustaining state

- "Treatment of structures and equipment... all to be removed or covered.

- "Waste dumps shall be reclaimed.

- "Water courses to be reclaimed...

- "All roads except those required for permanent access shall be reclaimed

- "Amount of acid generated shall be monitored. Treatment will continue until effluent meets Ministry... standards.

- "Two access roads will be left after decommissioning the mine; the main access road to Myra Creek and the access road to Jim Mitchell Lake... All other small access roads will be reclaimed.

- "The ultimate goal is to return the area to Strathcona Provincial Park, reclaimed and rehabilitated as much as practically possible, so it will become part of the larger Strathcona Provincial Park.

- "When the mine is closed, the reclamation and decommissioning process will be well advanced. ...the disturbed areas of the mine site will gradually be returned to as natural state as practicable.

There is much more detail in both the Master Plan and the Mine Closure Plan. The ultimate goal is for the mine site to be reclaimed and added to Strathcona Park as class A park land. In reality there will be a need for a very long time to keep treating mine waste. This means some power generation facilities will have to remain in order to

provide power to do this job. One of the two dams and power houses will remain and the other removed. It is important that reclamation proceed as soon as possible, that a substantial bond be in place to pay for both reclamation and

long term treatment of waste material and that upon full closure the plans in place are followed so the goals of the Master Plan can be realized. It is imperative that the public, FOSP and SPPAC remain vigilant to keep these commitments in the future.

**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 \$25 or more. _____

Comments - I would like to volunteer to help with the Bedwell Trail project by:

Other comments -
