

DELEGATION REQUEST

Names of persons speaking: Jennifer Pass, John Milne

Organization you are representing: Friends of Strathcona Park

Primary purpose of the organization: to preserve and protect Strathcona Park, education, public awareness, stewardship

Number of members: 232

Mailing address:

Box 3404
Courtenay, BC V9N 5N5

Contact name: John Milne

Subject matter: Proposed study of access issues surrounding Strathcona Park. Currently high public demand is concentrating traffic around a small number of accesses. Improving access in other areas would spread out this traffic and reduce negative impacts especially on sensitive areas.

Specific request of the regional district, if any (i.e. letter of support, funding): We hope the CVRD can support us in any way possible. We did apply for a grant in aid which was denied as Provincial Parks are a provincial responsibility. We note out that the accesses to the Park lie in various regional districts surrounding the Park. We were offered some support through using summer students employed by the CVRD, but some of this was withdrawn. We'd like some clarity on how much support we can get. The FOSEP has some money to invest in this project so we are able to pay some expenses.

Requested meeting date: May 25th, 4 pm

Audio-visual equipment needed: none. We will forward some print material to be circulated before the meeting.

Research project on public access to Strathcona Provincial Park

Friends of Strathcona Park

Introduction:

As a result of strong public pressure in the mid and late 1980's, a government formed committee, the Strathcona Park Advisory Committee, under the chair of Dr. Peter Larkin, created a public document named Strathcona Park Restoring the Balance September 1988 . This report became the guiding principle of the document Masterplan for Strathcona Provincial Park April 1993. (Restoring the Balance is available on line at <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/bib19708.pdf>) The Masterplan is now the guiding document for the management of Strathcona Provincial Park. Both committees had extensive widespread input and support by the public.

Restoring the Balance document (sometimes referred to as the Larkin Report), addresses a series of public access points into Strathcona Park that are labelled as "Areas of Concern". Section 4 page 36 describes these areas. As of 2021 some of these concerns either have not been addressed by BC Parks or the recommendations have not been followed up on. In the summer of 2020 when more people stayed or came to Vancouver Island for outdoor experiences, it became obvious that the current trail access points from the main highways are insufficient and there was no capacity to deal with the large influx of visitors to Strathcona Park. The purpose of the proposed project is to revisit some of the recommendations made in the Restoring the Balance document, assessing why the general public cannot access them and if these accesses should be opened up or not.

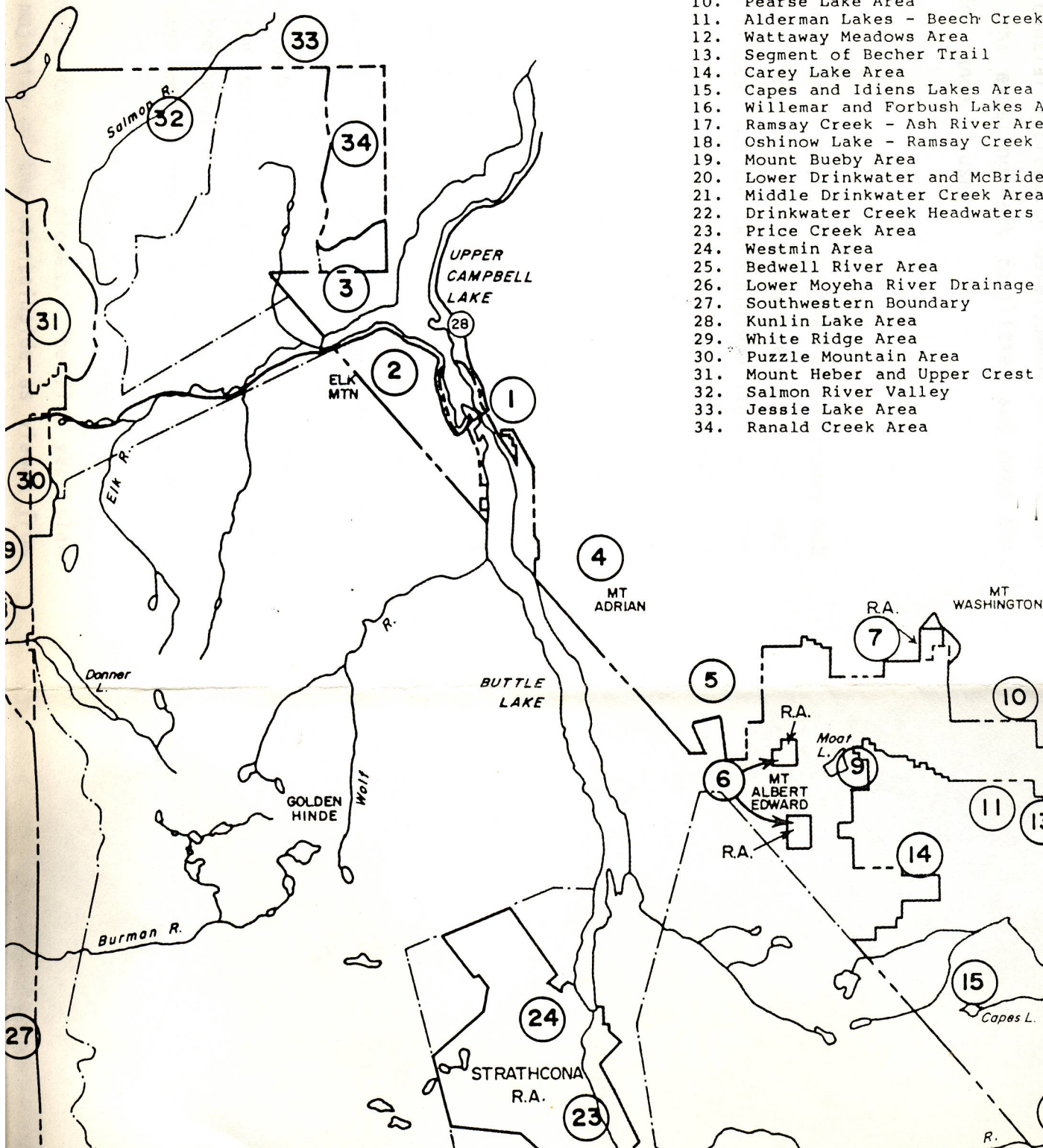
See attached maps. Within the Comox Valley Regional District these are the current areas with public access problems;

1. Gem, Pearl and Faith Lake. (#6) on the map below. Access currently is via Blueberry Road off the Inland Highway between Courtenay and Campbell River. Access is via a series of logging roads and access is blocked off with a controlled gate. Gem Lake has currently a maintained trail and is in the Park at the foot of Mount Albert Edward. Pearl Lake #9 and Norm Lake) are just outside the park and their trail status is unknown. The trail is mostly maintained by the Comox District Mountaineering group. Note the first part of the access to this area is in Strathcona Regional District but the three lakes are in the Comox Valley Regional District.
2. Divers and Rossiter Lakes. Located in the park, access is outside the park. There is currently a mostly poorly maintained road access from Mount Washington road, past the cross country ski lodge, going down the hill towards Rossiter Lake and turning left at the intersection. It follows the shore of Rossiter Lake toward Divers Lake. There is an existing trail from the end of the road to the lakes. The area is attractive for hiking as well as canoeing. Motor boats are not allowed on these lakes as they are the headwaters of the Oyster River.

3. Mount Jutland and Sunrise Lake. Mount Jutland is located to the north of Mount Albert Edward. Access is either via the Rossiter Lake road coming down from Paradise Meadows (see #2), or via the Blueberry Road mentioned in #1. Current access and the status of it is unknown. Mount Jutland can also be accessed by the trail to Mount Albert Edward. There is a trail at the end of the logging spur, which leads to Sunrise Lake,. The Lake is in the sub-alpine. Hiking trails conditions in the park are currently unknown. Possibilities for parks recreation with access to Jutland Mountain, Albert Edward, etc. are obvious. Fragility of the environment is something that definitely needs to be assessed in the report.
4. Mount Wood and Mount Becher area (#8 on map). Access from the parking lot on Wood Mountain ski hill (now defunct and part of Treaty Settlement Land). The trail winds up the hill to the top of the decommissioned ski hill and enters Strathcona Provincial Park and finds its way up to the top of Mount Becher, with spectacular views of the Comox Glacier and the Comox Valley. There is a fork in the trail just before the final steeper section onto Mount Becher, which leads to Mount Drabble and McKenzie Lake and connects to the hiking trails within Strathcona Provincial Park on the Forbidden Plateau area, Lake Helen Mackenzie, Hairtrigger Lake, etc. The status, clarity of the section of the trail that connects the parking lot with the trailhead in the park is not clear, well defined or maintained. The current status of the land of Wood Mountain is that it's Treaty Settlement Land with the Komo'ks band.
5. Willemar and Forbush Lakes (#16 on the map). Access is via the logging road around Comox Lake. Both lakes are outside the park, Forbush borders the park. There used to be a trail from the end of Forbush Lake that connected to a trail up the Ashwood River. There are recreational potentials there as well as hiking in the park with gigantic old growth Douglas fir trees. The logging road is not always accessible due to the locked gate.
6. Comox Glacier and Century Sam Lake Access is via the same logging road around Comox Lake with the same access problems as #16. Trail heads are located on the south fork of the Cruickshank River just after crossing the bridge on the Comox Lake road. Both hikes are in the park and have well maintained trails. Use, maintenance and accessibility is not always clear, the Comox Valley Mountaineering Club has a key to the gate and have more detailed information on these two trails as well as access to the next few trails.
7. Capes and Indiens Lakes (#15 on the map). Access is via logging road around Comox Lake and the Cruickshank.
8. Alone Mountain Access same as above, directly from the logging road around Comox Lake. Access and trail conditions are unknown. CDMC can likely provide that information.
9. Carey Lakes. #14 on map. Access is via the North fork of the Cruickshank via a steep logging road. Access condition and trail conditions unknown. Suitable for day hike or access to the ridges in Strathcona Park.
10. Oshinow Lake, Ramsey Creek and Mount Bueby (# 17, 18, 19 on map) can all be accessed via the continuation of the road around Comox lake and likely fall within the Clayoquot Regional District. Access, road conditions and access from the Comox Valley are unknown as is the condition of the Ash River trail.

Recreational use, water recreation, hiking access in the park. Also there is no knowledge of its accessibility from the south end, Port Alberni site.

This map is from the Larkin Report. The same situations exist with accesses in the Strathcona Regional District to the north and Clayoquot Regional District to the west. The list of access points in these other regional districts are available, but not included here. The Friends are approaching these regional districts as well as the CVRD. We have also contacted B.C. Parks and received encouragement for our efforts.



1. Buttle Narrows Area
2. Elk Mountain Area
3. Mountain Flannigan Area
4. Mount Adrian Area
5. Norm and Pearl Lakes Area
6. Gem and Faith Lakes Recreation Area
7. Paradise Meadows Area
8. Wood Mountain Area
9. Forbidden Plateau Fee Sample
10. Pearse Lake Area
11. Alderman Lakes - Beech Creek
12. Wattaway Meadows Area
13. Segment of Becher Trail
14. Carey Lake Area
15. Capes and Idiens Lakes Area
16. Willemar and Forbush Lakes Area
17. Ramsay Creek - Ash River Area
18. Oshinow Lake - Ramsay Creek
19. Mount Bueby Area
20. Lower Drinkwater and McBride
21. Middle Drinkwater Creek Area
22. Drinkwater Creek Headwaters
23. Price Creek Area
24. Westmin Area
25. Bedwell River Area
26. Lower Moyeha River Drainage
27. Southwestern Boundary
28. Kunlin Lake Area
29. White Ridge Area
30. Puzzle Mountain Area
31. Mount Heber and Upper Crest
32. Salmon River Valley
33. Jessie Lake Area
34. Ranald Creek Area