

SIERRA CLUB OF WESTERN CANADA

Lower Mainland Notes

Vol. 2 No. 1

January 1975

ECOLOGICAL RESERVES COLLECTION GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VICTORIA, B.C. VBV 1X4



BOX 35520

STATION E

VANCOUVER V6M 4G8

SPATSIZI PLATEAU WILDERNESS PROVINCIAL PARK
 PRESERVE OR PLAYGROUND?

In announcing the establishment of the new Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park, the then Resources Minister Bob Williams described it as a "wilderness-wildlife preserve", indicating the government's recognition that the Spatsizi is a different and, to date, unique kind of Park. But in order to preserve its unique qualities, the management policies adopted for the Spatsizi will be critical. Since there are no resource use conflicts except those relating to the wildlife, the management question is basically one of recreational use.

The Sierra Club feels that until a sound management policy for the Spatsizi can be devised there should be a moratorium on hunting. We feel this is essential because of the confusion and lack of knowledge over hunting activities there, wildlife populations, and divergent opinions regarding what constitutes sound hunting practices. To give some examples:

- According to the Northern Times of November 21 last, various sources report that between 150 and 600 trophy animals heads have come out of the Spatsizi last Fall, and an investigation is under way to check on the rumours. The Vancouver Sun of December 6 reports that the Fish and Wildlife Branch is conducting investigations following the transportation of 52 heads of various animal species from the Spatsizi to Vancouver. "52", "150", "600": each differs from the preceding figure by a multiple of three or four. What is happening in the Spatsizi?

- Eye witness accounts have been numerous that hunters are gaining access to sheep country via the BCR right-of-way which follows the Klappan river, and there are reports of a heavy harvest of mountain sheep this past season. These stories have been doubted by some on the grounds that a permit is required from the BCR to use the right-of-way and that permits are hard to obtain. Does the access provided by the BCR permit too much pressure on the sheep of this area?

- Mountain sheep studies have indicated that trophy hunting for large-horned rams may have serious consequences for the survival of sheep populations through disruption of their complex sociology. The Fish and Wildlife Branch believe that trophy hunting of sheep does not have adverse effects. In view of this difference of opinion, what management policy should be pursued?

- An eminent biologist commented recently: "in view of the fact that caribou have not taken lightly to the intrusion of human beings onto their range, the protection granted by a Wilderness Area as we know this today may be perfectly inadequate". While acknowledging that the size of the Spatsizi caribou herd, its population dynamics and

total hunter harvest are not known, the Fish and Wildlife Branch have expressed confidence in their ability to manage these caribou. In view of this evident disparity, what management policy should be pursued?

- The Fish and Wildlife Branch have said that their Regional staff are in the best position to assess the need for curtailing hunting, fishing, hiking, etc., within the Spatsizi, and have rejected the Club's call for a moratorium on hunting. They have also said that their biologist responsible for the Spatsizi must spread his efforts over 106,000 square miles of mostly inaccessible country and they cannot carry out more than one patrol a year.

Public participation in decisions regarding the Spatsizi has been promised. At the Sierra Club's last lecture on the northwest on January 27, Irving and Rosemary Fox will outline their views on the management policy which should be pursued. A panel of outstanding biologists - Ian McTaggart Cowan, Vladimir Krajina and Gordon Haber - and Tommy Walker, who knows the Spatsizi better than anyone, will comment on these suggestions and exchange ideas with the audience on the issues raised. The Sierra Club hopes that this exchange will help in arriving at a management policy for the Spatsizi that will assure its long-term protection as a wilderness-wildlife preserve.

"1066 AND ALL THAT" : THE UNIVERSITY ENDOWMENT LANDS

Former Resources Minister Bob Williams announced on December 2 the NDP Government's intention to set aside 1066 acres of the University Endowment Lands south of 16th Avenue as a park.

The 600 acres of UEL not included in the former government's plan includes valuable (in park terms) woodland between Chancellor Boulevard and 16th Avenue, and the lovely forest and deep ravines between Chancellor and North West Marine Drive, where the loose silt soil makes this area very susceptible to erosion. We feel strongly that it is in the present and long-term interests of the people of Vancouver that this whole acreage, which has been a de facto park all along for those who wished to explore its network of trails, should be included in any future park. Any compromise, such as blocks of housing buffered by mini-parks around the ravines, would totally destroy the present value of the forest as it now is. As William Chalmers, Sierra Club member and Chairman of the Endowment Lands Regional Park Committee, expressed so well in an article published in Western News on 4 December last, "a large natural park is something much more than the sum of its component parts. The integrity of the forest stands and the preservation of the natural drainage systems simply are not compatible with a mix of housing and smaller parks. To many people the most desirable feature of a large unbroken forest system is that when 500 feet away from the roadways, all sounds of traffic disappear and one could be miles away from the city".

It is our hope and expectation that the new government will have the wisdom and foresight to preserve all of the UEL forest as a park for the recreational needs of present and future generations in this growing city.

NORTHWEST DEVELOPMENT LECTURES

- INDIAN LAND CLAIMS: The Indian position, as movingly described by Philip Paul on October 28, is that the issue is one of white land claims. Intricately woven into the Indians' hereditary system of choosing their leaders and interwoven in their customs - in their established root and berry gathering areas, their fishing stations, the places where they communicated with the Great Spirit - were clear ideas of land rights. The white settlers and their governments have never recognized the prior existence of the Indian people. At the heart of the land claims issue is the demand of the Indian people to be recognized. They are seeking acceptance of their existence prior to European settlement and the opportunity to participate in the development of the Province. Therefore they are insisting that land claims be dealt with before any kind of major development takes place. What is happening to white people in the north today is the same as what has already happened to the Indian people. White people in the north are beginning to feel as the Indians have felt. There has never been so much destruction of the land as there has been in the past 100 years, and white people are becoming concerned about the quality of life. Much could be learned from the Indians on how to conserve the environment. The Indian people are prepared to assist in building a future based on the kind of quality of life that they enjoyed for thousands of years.

- IMPACT OF GROWTH ON LIFESTYLES AND COMMUNITIES: Joe L'Orsa characterised past development in the north as "smash and grab", with a total disregard for environmental values, resulting in the resources being extracted and processed elsewhere, and removal of control over the resources from the local people. The consequences of such practices are:

- destruction of the social fabric of communities by an influx of people from outside;
- alienation, when local people no longer have any say;
- relative deprivation, when local people have less than newcomers;
- anomie, a breakdown of social norms and values.

He stressed the need to base development on a definition of progress as "that which enhances the quality of life", where haste has no place. He spoke of the dangers of basing the economy on one or two largescale industries and compared the economy to an ecosystem, where greater diversity brings greater stability. Diversity can be achieved by carefully examining the potentials for use of the north's resources, including the skills of local people, and developing a variety of enterprises, including cottage industries, on these. He stressed the importance of taking the needs of the Indians into account. Since communities differ, each community should be encouraged to develop a community plan. It is important to find the existing values of the community and to place alternative plans before the community. Local people not only must participate in decision-making, but be fully informed of the long-term ramifications of each option.

LOWER MAINLAND EXECUTIVE: When we listed our committee members in our November Notes we omitted by mistake the telephone nos. of Ed Deak and Roger Freeman. Please note: Ed Deak 434-9645; Roger Freeman 263-9101.

BRIEF TO ROYAL COMMISSION ON FOREST RESOURCES: This was presented in November by Jerry Fagerlund on behalf of the Sierra Club in the Lower Mainland. It called for an early conversion from the present type of old-growth liquidation forest economy which is extending progressively into less desirable forests as exhaustion takes place, to an intensive, sustained yield economy on the most productive lands, releasing marginal lands for other uses. While this may not provide the large revenues that have been realized in the past, as a substantial part of the profits will have to be ploughed back into forest management, intensive forest management will have to come eventually and the longer postponed the greater will be the proportion of forest land pre-empted in the liquidation phase and the larger the cut-over acreage never to be utilized again on a regular commercial basis. Intensive forest management would help remove uncertainties regarding future timber supplies as the Province would be making a substantial commitment to managing the next crop of trees, something it has not done to date. Possible job losses in logging and milling of old growth timber could be off-set by the employment of more labour in new-growth management.

THREATS TO FRASER ESTUARY: The Club was represented by Ken Hall at a meeting of Delta Council on November 24, at which the BC Wildlife Federation presented a brief opposing the Council's plan to complete a dyke between the Westport and Tsawwassen Causeways which had been stopped by Environment Canada on the grounds that it would destroy a vital intertidal salt marsh, thus adversely affecting the life forms dependent on it. The BCWF urged Delta Council to support the moratorium on major developments in the Fraser estuary called for by the Ecological Sub-Committee of the Airport Planning Committee (see our November Notes). The Sierra Club endorses the position taken by the BC Wildlife Federation.

MEETINGS ON NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT: The newly formed Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility is holding workshop meetings on Thursday evenings at 7.30 at SPEC, 2007 W. 4th. For further information contact Lille d'Easum 263-7831 or Gary Gallon 736-1822, 942-5581. Any member interested in attending should also contact our Energy Coordinator, Ian Bain on 224-6265.

BERGER HEARINGS: Further to our earlier reports concerning the Sierra Club's protest against the slashing of Federal funds to citizens groups involved in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, when the recent mail strike ended we received a letter from then-Minister for Northern Affairs Alf Nunweiler, drawing our attention to the fact that the Provincial Government had funded the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee to the amount of \$25,000.

SIERRA CLUB LECTURES: Beginning February, we are devoting the next four monthly public meetings to the uses and abuses of energy. On February 24 staff of the BC Energy Commission will discuss questions of energy consumption and conservation as they relate to BC. On March 23 David Brooks, Director of Research in the Office of Energy Conservation in Ottawa, will talk about the necessity of energy conservation and the opportunities it presents. In April we plan a meeting on coal strip mining in BC, and we hope to devote the last meeting in May to implications of arctic oil and gas exploration.