

## **MINUTES**

March 11, 2025

### **Meeting of the Elders Council for Parks in British Columbia**

Present: Wayne, Nancy, Bev, Bob, Bill, Tory, Colin, Mark

Guest: Jim Standen, Assistant Deputy Minister, BC Parks

Regrets: Ric, Mel, Kaaren

1. Land acknowledgement
2. Motion to approve agenda
3. Guest: Jim Standen, Assistant Deputy Minister, BC Parks

#### **Issue: Restructuring of BC Parks**

- Have gone from one executive director (ED) to an ED in each of 3 regions (one for North is still posted for competition). John Hawkings is filling in for North ED until competition is completed.
- New structure is in place as of Jan 13, but may take a couple of years to fully implement
- Most staff keen; some need support
- Will look at how camping & recreation can improve
- Three EDs report to Jim Standen
- Allows JS to look at 30/30, park sites and trails, more strategic issues

#### **Issue: New provincial government/Cabinet following 2024 Election**

Where is government at? We are still figuring that out. Minister is great, positive person.

We have not had time to have much discussion on mandate letters.

Budget is static – no growth or restraint.

New resource projects – gov't is trying to balance them with environmental goals and say they will not be sacrificed.

Our past focus has been growing access to parks for families with cost of living concerns.

Recreation Expansion program – funding ends after this year. Not a bad thing. Every camper wants certain things: water, etc. We're running out of spaces.

30 x 30 is still in mandate letter and this work continues.

Still largely Indigenous-led, but not exclusively. Some of the big protected areas will be those led by Indigenous communities.

BC Parks just issued letter to show support for South Okanagan Similkameen. Hope to keep momentum going through and after federal election.

Letter was from Ministers Neill (WLRS) and Davidson (Environment & Parks) to the steering committee.

**Action Item:** Copy of letter requested: JS will check to ensure he can share it.

**Issue: Protection in Kootenays**

conversation is still at early stages, looking to Dominion Coal Block, Ktunaxa FN interests, federal interests.

JS – We still have a ways to go in addressing roads, water, mineral tenures; lots needs to be worked out before we can sign land transfer agreement to feds. We want to work with Parks Canada to lay down parameters.

E.g. non-status roads; continued applicability of BC Water Sustainability Act.

**Issue: Restructuring & Conservation**

Q: What are benefits to conservation of restructuring?

A: No change in our conservation approach; it was focused on recreation, trails. We want to ensure conservation is protected. We've added conservation staff. JS is a biologist by training.

**Issue: Legal designation for IPCA's & IUCN criteria**

Q: What is the legal tool to establish IPCAs? Any discussion of role of conservancies? What designation is possible?

A: Not simple. Target 1 criteria. I've been talking with my colleagues about other possible legal tools. Haven't made substantial progress yet. I want to see lands protected, but also see BC Parks as an agency.

**Issue: Natural disasters in parks: fires/flooding & progress in re-opening them**

Mt Robson, Coquihalla Tunnels – well under way, just about finished. Minor setback in Robson. Have to do some redesign.

Cathedral is unique: its history involves land tenure issues that complicate bridge rebuild. Fisheries windows are narrow.

Golden Ears: have engineers engaged; hope to have it reopened by May.

**Issue: Did recreation report come out?**

JS: Hasn't been finalized, not publicly released yet. No decision on whether it will be public or internal.

Elders Council (EC): should be obligation to release it. Parks and trails and conservation important issues.

JS: Recently we've had economic analysis of outdoor recreation value to BC economy. Not released yet, but will combine with parks and recreation planning. John Hawkings can speak to this.

Visitor management side is important: want users to be educated, leave no trace, not become a problem, etc. This is a type of conservation too.

**Issue: Access to government**

EC: Minister's advisory council for wildlife includes backcountry recreation people. They say there is no avenue for them into government. Does outdoor recreation report address this?

JS: We've reinstituted the Adventure Tourism Task Force. I sit on that. Guide outfitters, bear viewing, etc.

EC: How can Elders help you?

JS: We're in an unavoidable time of restraint. Had gains over the last few years. Have to ride the hard times. Echo how important it is to maintain the parks system.

Ecological reserves part of parks seems a bit neglected. New person has taken over.

Within the program there's a desire to see more ERs added to the system, but we have no mandate for that.

I'm looking at strategic stakeholder engagement. How do we do this provincially and regionally?

We had a glitch with service contractor so we didn't have a lot of data re usage statistics. Then Covid happened. So we haven't had annual reports, data for quite awhile. We're trying to improve that.

Jim leaves meeting.

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4. **Minutes from February 2025 Meeting:** Colin moves, Tory seconds. Approved.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** Same as last meeting.

- Discussion:  
Bob: waiting for estimate from archivist to work on Chess Lyons archives. Will bring forward once we have that.

Motion to approve financial report. Moved Bob, seconded Mark. Approved.

6. **Letter from outgoing Lieutenant Governor:** received.

- Mel has applied for renewal of LG as patron.

**Action:** Nancy will call Jerymy Brownridge (private secretary to LG) to get meeting.

7. **Meeting with Ministers:** May 8 @ 11:30 a.m. Wayne, Tory, Colin and Nancy will attend.

- Informal meeting with Victoria-based Elders on evening before, Monday, May 7.
  - Agenda for April meeting will include discussion of Ministers.
8. **Adjourned** to next meeting, April 8 @ 10 a.m.