

Valhalla Wilderness Society

PO Box 329, New Denver, British Columbia, V0G 1S0

Phone: 250-358-2333; Fax: 358-2748; info@vws.org; www.vws.org

Newsletter No. 57

December 2013

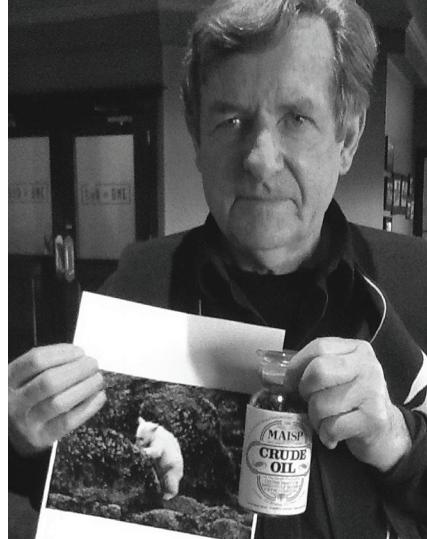
TWO COMPANIES WITHDRAW PIPELINE ROUTES FROM GRIZZLY BEAR SANCTUARIES AFTER VWS THREATENS LAWSUIT

This September, VWS coastal campaigner, Wayne McCrory, was in crisis mode after learning that TransCanada Corp., a subcontractor for Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT), was illegally landing helicopters in the Kwinimass and Khutzeymateen West conservancies to study a route for a natural gas pipeline. These protected areas, created in 2006 by the BC government's Great Bear Rainforest decision, abut the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary, which was created in 1994. Just as this newsletter was going to press, we received very good news that the company has withdrawn its pipeline route from the protected areas. A second company, Spectra Energy, has told people it will also withdraw, but Spectra's PR person has said the Khutzeymateen route is not yet fully off the table. These withdrawals are in large part due to Wayne's efforts.

The project involves the largest diameter pipeline (over 1 metre) ever built in Canada. It will require a 60-metre right-of-way strip to be logged through pristine coastal rainforest. A major industrial access road and large gas compressor stations would have to be built inside the conservancies. These would have devastating impacts on the grizzly bears and on the ecological integrity of the whole area. Whatever we mean by "protection" or "conservancy" would simply be crushed and thrown away by pipeline development.

Apparently, higher levels of government had given the company the impression that it could build pipelines through protected areas. PRGT had applied to BC Parks for a park use permit to do field studies that would involve drilling; however, it had made several helicopter landings in the conservancies to do surveys without bothering to apply for a permit. The company received two warnings from BC Parks and a third violation is being investigated. McCrory's press release called it "a shocking and unconscionable betrayal of the bears, the Park Act, and the Great Bear Rainforest decision of 2006."

Suzy Hamilton



Wayne McCrory at Enbridge hearings in Kelowna.

The issue received major coverage in *The Vancouver Sun*, the *Globe and Mail*, and other media. Meanwhile, VWS asked the Environmental Law Clinic at the University of Victoria to consider legal proceedings.

The Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary received legislated protection as a Class "A" provincial park in

1994 after an exhaustive 9-year battle with the timber industry. The grizzly bear population there is unique in that it has also been protected from trophy hunting since 1982 by a large no-hunting reserve. The BBC filmed a major documentary there, and thousands of people have come from afar to safely view and photograph the famous Khutzeymateen grizzlies, supporting a major ecotourism industry. In 2006, as a result of the government's North Coast Land Use Plan, three large conservancies were added around the sanctuary, making it one of the most protected grizzly bear heartlands in western Canada. Fourteen natural gas and two oil companies still vie for different routes to the BC coast; at least six other protected areas lie in their path.

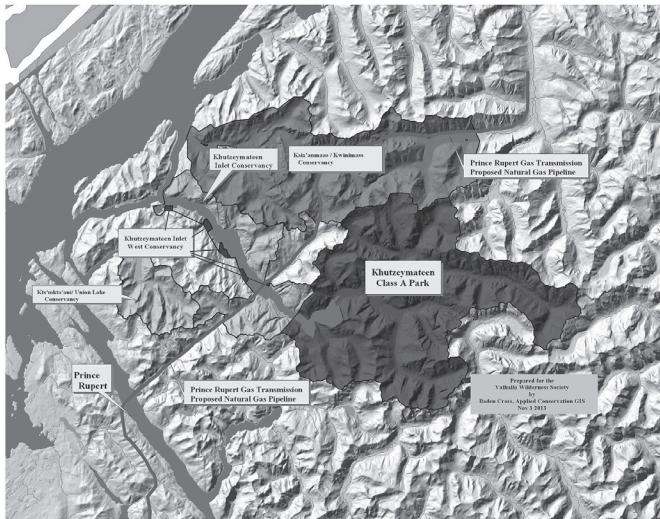
Over the last year, the BC government has opened up the central-north coast to proposals for giant LNG (liquefied natural gas) facilities that would process natural gas to be transported over the mountains through pipelines from fracking projects in northeast BC for export to China and other countries.

Fracking, the process for extracting shale gas, causes massive environmental impacts. Natural gas pipes are often as small as 10 cm in diameter, so it would require

a great number of fracking wells to sustain a more than 1 metre diameter pipe. Some people speculate that the intent is to make the pipes usable for tar sands bitumen.

The current frenzy for building bitumen and natural gas pipelines to the coast is a serious threat to climate change. Natural gas is methane that leaks all the way from the fracking process to the LNG plants and distribution points; this leaking is as bad or worse for climate change as coal. Internal BC government documents say that the pursuit of an LNG industry could double the province's entire output of greenhouse gas emissions at a time when the province is supposedly struggling to meet its legislated targets to dramatically reduce greenhouse gases.

Given the Klondike gold rush mentality surrounding the BC government's LNG promotion efforts in Asia, more foreign corporations are jumping at the offering of cheap "fracked" natural gas, provincial LNG subsidies, bargain-basement taxation, and a streamlined approval process. Fourteen companies have now made proposals, and any of these could easily apply to go through the Khutzeymateen protected areas.



Map shows pipeline route through Khutzeymateen-Kwinimass conservancies.

Further research by *Vancouver Sun* reporter Larry Pynn shows that six other protected areas, and possibly more, lie in the path of planned pipelines. They include Nisga'a Memorial Lava Beds Park, Finn Creek Park, North Thompson River Park, Bridal Veil Falls Park, Coquihalla Summit Recreation Area, and Lac DuBois Protected Area. In July, BC Parks produced a 12-page brochure outlining the steps energy companies should take to obtain park use permits for research and drilling for pipeline routes in protected areas, and how to apply to have protected area boundaries changed to allow for road and pipeline construction. We have heard that the BC government may be planning to amend the Park Act to make it easier to put pipelines through provincial parks.

The withdrawal of Prince Rupert Gas is a ray of hope for the Khutzeymateen. But the shocking revelation is

that the government has intended to sell out our parks to development, even by foreign countries, and to gut the Park Act in order to do so. When that happens, protection of our whole park system will collapse. VWS has written to the BC Minister of Environment asking that any proposed pipeline routes through protected areas be cancelled, and to not issue any research permits because it sets a bad precedent for industrial use of our parks. We urge all of you to write letters to BC Environment Minister Mary Polak, Premier Christy Clark, and others, insisting that the Park Act be kept as it is and enforced, with no pipelines in parks and no research permits for them.

JOINT REVIEW PANEL REPORT ON NORTHERN GATEWAY TO BE ANNOUNCED ON DECEMBER 31

In 2012, VWS became a major voice trying to save the BC coast from oil tankers when Wayne McCrory released a report on the threat of a tanker spill to spirit bears and central coast marine and land ecosystems if the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline is approved. The genetically unique spirit bears of Gribbell Island are threatened with severe toxic effects from spilled oil contamination, leading to probable extinction from a coastal oil tanker spill if the Northern Gateway project is approved.



Wayne McCrory

Marine foreshore in Khutzeymateen near where PGRT pipeline was proposed to cross under the fiord.

The report was submitted to the Joint Review Panel (National Energy Board [NEB] and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency [CEAA]) last autumn. In February 2013, McCrory followed up with an oral presentation to the panel in Kelowna, BC, and in May, made a similar public presentation to 500 people at the Gathering of Eagles event in Castlegar, BC. The report is on our website at www.vws.org. We deeply appreciate that many of you have written letters to government opposing the Northern Gateway project. The Review Panel's final report on Northern Gateway is to be released to the public on December 31.

SLOCAN VALLEY FUEL TRUCK SPILL IS A WARNING TO THE PROVINCE

This year, the Slocan Valley had its worst environmental disaster ever when a fuel tanker truck attending a forest fire fell over in Lemon Creek, spilling 35,000 litres of jet fuel. This fuel is much lighter than tar sands oil, and residents were told that 80% of it would evaporate. The spill was small in comparison to an ocean tanker or ruptured pipeline, but the damage was devastating to aquatic life and local residents. Dead fish, birds, beavers, river otters, and small aquatic life were flushed down the river. People living near the river had to be evacuated and temporarily lost their drinking water.



Craig Pettitt

Fisheries biologist Otto Langer examining insect life above Lemon Creek fuel spill.

While the government claims it will beef up its response capacity to spills, our environmental protection system is actually very crippled after many years of deregulation. Despite the fish kill, no Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) personnel attended the accident because heavy staff and budget cuts have nearly dismantled the agency in our region. Over time, they experienced numerous difficulties getting information and adequate studies from the government. VWS director Craig Pettitt inspected the spill site and provided documentation on the tanker spill for use in potential legal battles.

The Perry Ridge Water Users brought in retired DFO fisheries biologist Otto Langer and asked Pettitt to escort him to inspect Lemon Creek 65 days after the spill. Langer was shocked to find that simply turning over a rock unleashed a strong odour and obvious visual presence of fuel — this despite two months of cleanup by trained crews and several heavy rainstorms that had flushed through the system. Insect populations in Lemon Creek were healthy upstream of the spill, but were nonexistent downstream. Langer pointed out that jet fuel contains benzene and up to 200 other toxic additives. It also persists in cold water environments and sediments. Residents are now very worried that toxic fuel residues may still be seeping into their domestic water.

CEAA PANEL REJECTS NEW PROSPERITY MINE

Decision now up to minister

In July 2013, biologist Sadie Parr made a presentation on behalf of VWS to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's (CEAA) Review Panel, showing that the New Prosperity Mine proposed by Taseko Mines Ltd. at Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) would have dire consequences for wildlife and fish. Wayne McCrory presented technical findings from his 80-page grizzly bear report that showed that, if approved, the mine development would push the threatened South Chilcotin grizzly bear population over the edge into extinction. McCrory's report was funded by Friends of Nemaiah Valley (FONV) with some support from VWS.

This was the second environmental review on the proposed mine, which would be the largest open pit copper-gold mine in Canada. After the first review rejected the project, the company amended its plan and the federal government granted it a new review, despite very clear indications that the environmental and social impacts would still be huge. On October 31, 2013, this second CEAA panel released its final report and concluded that the development would have significant detrimental effects on the environment and on First Nations cultural/heritage values and traditional uses, and would "adversely affect" the Title and Rights of the Tsilhqot'in and Secwepemc First Nations.

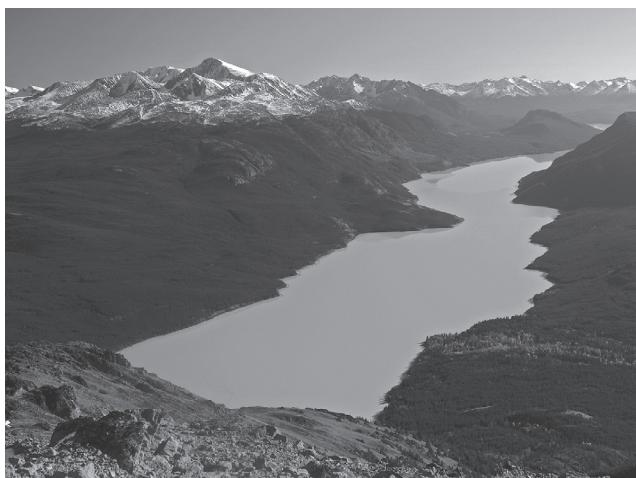
These conclusions are very good news. It is unlikely that the mine will ever be able to go ahead, given the massive First Nations and public opposition. If allowed, it would poison Teztan Biny and would wipe out significant First Nations cultural/heritage sites and key traditional uses. However, it remains to be seen what final decision will be made by Federal Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq. She has 120 days.

The 2013 panel also concluded that there would be significant adverse effects on the South Chilcotin grizzly bear population unless cumulative effects mitigation measures were effectively implemented by the mining company. This ignored the recommendations of McCrory's report, which documented cumulative effects that would lead to bear mortalities and displacement that could not be "mitigated." Yet the Panel more or less agreed with Taseko's mitigation plan, in spite of the fact that lack of adequate enforcement would likely render it less than sufficiently effective.

Several years ago, the proposed Windy-Craggy mine promised 500 jobs and over \$1.2 billion in tax revenues. After a large controversy, the BC government had the wisdom to cancel the mine and protect the area by establishing Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park. We believe Fish Lake and the entire 202,300 ha middle and upper Taseko (Dasiqox) River watershed should now be protected as a provincial conservancy or Class A Tribal Park, as follows.

DASIQOX-UPPER TASEKO CONSERVANCY PROPOSAL

This conservancy proposal was developed several years ago by VWS, Friends of the Nemaiah Valley (FONV), Environmental Mining Education Foundation, and the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation. The area includes a vast mountain enclave for grizzlies, major salmon runs, bighorn sheep, and many species at risk. The threatened grizzly population is the largest dryland population left in the coastal mountain foothills of North America and is a "salmon bear" that also feeds on whitebark pine nuts and wild potatoes.



Wayne McCrory

Lower Taseko Lake, part of the last, largest surviving wilderness enclave on the lee side of the continental coast ranges in western North America.

The proposal links six provincial parks and an aboriginal preserve, making for a large, globally significant protected area on the lee side of the Coast Mountains. The whole area is a rich, living cultural/heritage landscape for the Xeni Gwet'in and Yunesit'in First Nations. Within the proposal is an ancient village with over 100 pithouse (kekule) depressions near a salmon river, as well as an ancient site of a war between the Tsilhqo'tin and Secwepemc people. Currently, FONV is sponsoring a two-year community-based program that will look at the socio-economics of protection, the best type of protection, and develop a campaign strategy



Jeremy Williams

Massive clearcut logging closes in on the Dasiqox conservancy proposal.

with the First Nations governments. Wayne is completing a technical background study of the proposal's ecological values, fish and wildlife, species at risk, cultural/heritage values, and resource conflicts to inform the process. He and Xeni Gwet'in wildlife/traditional experts and researchers Alice William and Norman William recently completed a field survey documenting some of these values. This included discovering high use of whitebark pine nuts by grizzly bears in the high country, where the bears dig out cones cached by red squirrels. The proposal has probably the largest expanse of endangered whitebark pine stands in BC, if not Canada.



Wayne McCrory

In September 2013, VWS director Craig Pettitt aged this ancient whitebark pine tree in the proposal to be 800 years old!

In 2013, McCrory and VWS director Craig Pettitt spent time in the field within the proposal area. One of their goals was to sample the age of one of the largest reported whitebark pines. Using a diameter tape, they measured its diameter to be 117.5 cm — by far the largest whitebark pine they had ever seen. Hours spent looking at tree cores and counting growth rings through a microscope showed an average growth rate of 26.5 cm/yr, a rate that is phenomenally slow. The largest tree has a potential age of 800 years; several smaller ones were roughly 500 years old.

INLAND TEMPERATE RAINFOREST CAMPAIGN

Mountain Caribou Crisis Deepens

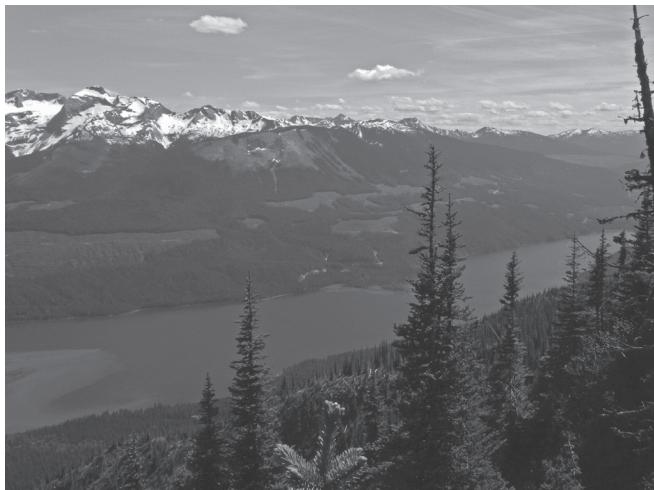
The flagship species of BC's Inland Rainforest, the mountain caribou, continues to be the victim of machinations to log its last remaining habitat. Last year's census is a shocking indictment of the BC government's Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan. When the plan was initiated

in 2007, there were 1,900 mountain caribou left in BC. The latest figures show only 1,533. Even the Wells Gray herd, our second largest herd, lost approximately 100 animals. Yet the recovery plan has not fully protected one hectare of land for the mountain caribou. The snowmobile bans were far too little, and have been poorly enforced.

VWS's January press release raising red flags about this did receive mention in the *Vancouver Sun*; however, our voice was drowned out by the government's public assurance that all that needs to be done is to shoot more wolves and undertake captive breeding of the caribou. As usual, it trotted out its rubber-stamp Progress Board to say Amen.

The good news is that the Central Selkirk herd that uses our Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal is holding steady at 88-89 animals. The last census figures in 2012 showed this herd predominantly in our park proposal. In addition, improvement for the Wells Gray herd is forecast because forest burned by fires in the 1940s will soon reach an age that will exclude moose and their predators, the wolves. But there has also been extreme logging around the boundaries of Wells Gray Provincial Park, where the park's caribou have historically migrated. The only good habitat left outside the park is in VWS's proposed Quesnel Lake Wilderness, which, according to the 2012 census, is used by 226 mountain caribou. Protecting this area is crucial to any future prospects of saving caribou in that area.

Field trip to Quesnel Lake and Presentation to the T'excelc First Nation



Alex Kolter

Looking across the north arm of Quesnel Lake onto the west slopes of the Caribou Mountains. Everything in this picture lies within our 268,000 ha proposal.

After field trips in the proposed Quesnel Lake Wilderness with Williams Lake Indian Band (T'excelc) representatives in fall 2012, this year, Craig Pettitt worked with GIS analyst Baden Cross to refine the proposal boundaries because the earlier proposal included too many clearcuts and beetle-killed forest. In autumn, VWS directors McCrory and Pettitt

guided a group of VWS supporters into the Quesnel Lake proposal area. The group gathered photographs of grizzly bears and other wildlife, as well as information on caribou use of the lakeshore that will help the campaign. After many years of field research, mapping, and meetings with representatives of the T'excelc (Williams Lake Indian Band), Craig and Wayne were finally able to meet with the Chief and Council, who fully endorsed the new boundaries of a large protection proposal along the north and east arms of Quesnel Lake, and gave Valhalla the green light to move ahead on a campaign. We next need the approval of the Xat'sull (Soda Creek Band). We have asked these governments to decide on an appropriate First Nations name for the proposal. High values for mountain caribou, grizzly bears, moose, salmon, rainbow and bull trout, as well as plentiful First Nations cultural/heritage sites are found throughout the area.

LOCAL ISSUES

Incomappleux Valley: Two More IPP Applications Withdrawn

Last year's newsletter reported that, as a result of VWS's campaign, independent power producer (IPP) TransAlta withdrew its application to do studies for a hydro power development on the Incomappleux River. However, there were two additional IPP applications in the valley, on Pool Creek and Boyd Creek. After last year's newsletter went to press, we learned with great relief that Sequoia Energy had withdrawn its Boyd Creek application, citing environmental sensitivity and public opposition. TransAlta withdrew from Pool Creek.



Craig Pettitt

Boyd Creek (lower left foreground) continues to flow freely into the Incomappleux River after an IPP proponent withdrew its application for a run-of-river project.

Also after our last newsletter, VWS issued an action alert and rallied opposition to a new heli-skiing permit in the Incomappleux, with a lodge to be built on Battle Mountain. Today, almost a year later, no decision has been made, although the government tells us one is pending.

This year, Director Craig Pettitt manned an information kiosk at the huge Creatively United Festival in Victoria, gathering numerous pages of signatures on the petition

for the Selkirk park proposal. He teamed up with Riel Marquardt of Nature's Presence, who showed his documentary on the Incomappleux. Pettitt's information table at the Gathering of Eagles event in Castlegar, BC collected many more signatures. Sadie Parr also gathered more signatures this fall at the International Conference on Bear Research and Management in Utah. Anne Sherrod made a photo presentation, *The Biodiversity of the Incomappleux Valley*, at a conference of the Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology and to a conference of Botany BC, an association of botanists from all over BC. All the while more and more signatures on the petition rolled in.

Endangered Creeks Expedition Challenges the Incomappleux River

This summer, the Selkirk park proposal received some spectacular support when eight of BC's most skilled and daring kayakers from the Endangered Creeks Expedition signed up as VWS members and then, in the name of saving the park, pitted their prowess against the Incomappleux River, one of the last wild rivers to be paddled in BC. They successfully followed the Incomappleux from Glacier National Park to its confluence with the Arrow Lake in six arduous days, including a two-and-a-half-day pack with heavily laden kayaks over 13 km cross-country. As the team started their trip, so did the September monsoons. One night, the river rose by nearly a meter. Although the guys successfully made it through huge rapids, others were far too formidable to run. "It resulted in some of the most ridiculous portages we have ever done," said team leader Carl Jacks. Team member Randy Speers said it was the ultimate experience of his kayaking adventures, and one of his best memories was walking through a grove of cedars all more than 3 metres wide. The best part for the rest of us will be the film footage these guys are putting together, which will garner much attention for the park proposal.



Craig Pettitt

Hayden successfully navigates the chute on the Incomappleux River at the 7.5 km canyon.

What makes this such a blessing is that the closure of the road into the Incomappleux, due to damage by spring runoff, dashed our hopes to be able to produce Valhalla's own film on the Incomappleux. The area needs all the attention it can get because it is still part of Interfor's tree farm license. Your continued support will help us carry on with our efforts to have this area protected in our Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal.

Proposal to Downgrade Visual Quality Objectives on Kootenay Lake Threatens Destruction of Scenic Quality by Clearcutting

The BC government is quietly reversing decades of forest policy that preserved scenic quality around parks and tourism communities. The logging companies are running out of wood and must drastically reduce their rate of cut. Instead, government is opening up our most valued tourism resources for increased clearcutting. To do that, it is reducing the Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) set by the land use plans. Two examples this year are the scenic route into Wells Gray Park and the slopes of the magnificent mountains along Kootenay Lake. VWS supported residents of both areas with investigation and press releases. When the Slocan Valley was downgraded several years ago, it led to atrocious logging and deterioration of scenic quality.

In 2012, government struck a Special Committee on Timber Supply to consider downgrading conservation areas for logging. After widespread public input, the Committee recommended that no land use plans be changed without a science-based review process with community participation, and no logging of sensitive areas should occur without broad consensus. However, the government had already allowed BC Timber Sales to create a new standard for landscape scenic quality assessment. This gave the government's own logging corporation the ability to override the land use plans.

The government told the residents around Kootenay Lake that their scenic slopes must be logged to feed the mills because the Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan took so much forest away from them. VWS's press release and submission to government called this extremely misleading: the government's own documents show that the mills received additional timber supply to fully compensate them for what was set aside for mountain caribou. A decision is expected soon.

Toxic Mine Waste Along Carpenter Creek Poses Substantial Hazard for New Denver and Slocan Lake

In 1996, the combination of heavily logged slopes, old mining waste, and heavy rains proved disastrous in the US Pacific Northwest. The logged slopes could not hold the water, resulting in numerous landslides and debris flows that came down on roads and creeks. Creeks and rivers overflowed, picking up toxic waste from old mines and spreading it. This prospect looms for BC, as climate change seems to be accompanied by prolonged, sometimes heavy spring

rains that this year caused flooding across the Kootenays.

The Slocan Valley, where VWS is based, experienced a famous silver rush in the late 1800s. A mine still operates upstream from New Denver on Carpenter Creek, and a century of tailings ponds is perched just above the creek. Director Craig Pettitt has been monitoring the area and writing reports warning of serious hazards for the last two years. The provincial government has ignored them. This year Pettitt submitted a detailed inspection report and photo documentation to both local and provincial governments. He documented flood channels that were either unarmoured or recently armoured with material too small for the flood force of this particular creek; a mine staging yard built into the flood channel with no embankment protection, mine tailings ponds perched along and above the creek channel with failing and breached embankment protection, and private land owners parking heavy equipment within the flood zone of the creek. He warned in the press that "Should these tailings ponds be breached, there are thousands of cubic metres of crushed fines, probably containing hazardous chemicals and heavy metals, that would be washed down to Slocan Lake."

The report caused a flurry of meetings between government and the mine representatives, but we have seen no effective action. The Village Council of New Denver took the matter much more seriously. Whatever happens now, everyone is forewarned.

New Chilcotin Wolf Study by Biologist Sadie Parr

Almost one year ago, VWS put out an Action Alert on BC's disgraceful draft Wolf Management Plan asking people to object to key elements of the plan. Some 1,400 comments AGAINST the plan were received in less than three weeks, with fewer than 560 in support. The public input period ended on December 5, yet some 11 months later, the final plan has still not been released. Besides a no-limit year-round open season on wolves, the province also funds a \$76,000 wolf-trapping program in the Chilcotin, where wolves are often erroneously blamed for cattle losses.



Remote camera photo, Sadie Parr

A Chilcotin wolf travels through the Brittany Triangle Wild Horse Preserve.

Wolf biologist Sadie Parr has been a tireless campaigner to protect wolves for many years; in the past several years, she has been an indispensable volunteer for the Valhalla

Wilderness Society. This year, Wayne McCrory and wolf biologist Dr. Paul Paquet designed a three-year study to document the diet of Chilcotin wolves that will make Sadie eligible for her Masters degree. She has now spent part of the last 6 months hiking hundreds of kilometres of wilderness trails in search of wolves and their sign in the Nemiah Valley and Brittany Triangle Wild Horse Preserve. She has interviewed local First Nations and ranchers to learn more about people's attitudes towards wolves, collected wolf droppings and hair samples from wolves killed by hunters and trappers, set up remote cameras on travel corridors, and mapped some of their movement patterns.



Sadie Parr

Wolf researcher Sadie Parr scanning for wolves in the Brittany Triangle Wild Horse Preserve.

All of this research is supported by VWS, Wolf Aware Inc., Friends of Nemaiah Valley (FONV), and the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation. Sadie will use hair and scat analyses to detect what wolves have been eating during certain seasons. She has also been busy making presentations to local First Nations schools on the importance of wolves and other carnivores. Visit her website www.JustBeings.com or follow JustBeings on Facebook to learn more about her wolf research and her Rancher's Toolkit, which aids rural livestock operators to learn how to protect their domestic animals in non-lethal ways.

Bear Smart Activities Continue

Daniel Sherrod, Evelyn Kirkaldy, and Erica Mallam continued to coordinate the Slocan Valley Bear Smart program, including more public education, a workshop on electric fences, and installation of nine electric fences for livestock protection.

Valhalla Society Conservation Work Recognized

On behalf of the Valhalla Wilderness Society, VWS Director Wayne McCrory received the 2013 Conservation Leadership Award from the Kootenay Conservation Program.

A TRIBUTE TO KEY VALHALLA SOCIETY CONTRIBUTORS WHO HAVE PASSED ON

By Wayne McCrory

This year, it is timely to pause and pay tribute to some people who were key supporters of successful VWS park campaigns, and have passed on to a new camp up the trail.

On August 4, friends and family of the late Colleen McCrory gathered in Silverton to the haunting sound of bagpipes to celebrate the dedication of a small park on the shore of Slocan Lake in memory of Colleen. Because this was Colleen's favourite beach, where she rested from her many environmental campaigns and basked in the serene vistas of Valhalla Park across the way, the park was named "Colleen's Beach Park." VWS supported the small parcel being donated to the Valhalla Foundation for Ecology, thanks to the generosity of one of Colleen's good friends, Rick McGuire.



Meghan Burns

L to R: Colleen's children and grandchild, Sean Pownall and daughter, Rory Pownall, and Shea Pownall, with her brother, Wayne McCrory.

Two other very passionate and stalwart supporters of VWS have passed on this year. Each in their unique way made outstanding contributions to protection of the half-million-acre spirit bear conservancy complex. I met caribou biologist Robert A. Ruttan in the mid-1960s, when I was a young biologist just starting my career with the Canadian Wildlife Service. Robert was one of the most knowledgeable field biologists and conservationists I had ever met, and he became one of my mentors. He first appeared before my eyes when an elevator door suddenly opened on the 8th floor of the federal building and there stood this strikingly handsome man with long raven-black hair, wearing a native buckskin jacket and leaning on a rifle in a colourful beaded buckskin gun case. He had just come down from



Lorna Visser

Biologists Wayne McCrory (left) and Robert Ruttan.

doing caribou counts in the Arctic. We quickly recognized a kinship. Robert eventually became a wonderful supporter of the Valhalla Society. Besides helping Colleen with her boreal campaign and producing a report on how clearcut logging would impact boreal black bear den habitat, Robert, with the help of his wife, biologist Shirley Ruttan, worked for three seasons as a VWS spirit bear community coordinator in the village of Klemtu. Because of his strong conservation ethics and in-depth ecological knowledge, he was a true "renegade" biologist who stuck to his views but could also be patient and persuasive. Thus he was the perfect person for this job.

Along with his friend hereditary chief Archie Robinson, Robert helped convince the Kitasoo band council and the community to consider protecting large areas for the spirit bear. Robert lived to the ripe old age of 90. His ancestral Mohawk name was Ka-ka-Kwo, "The Raven." Fly on, Robert, to the happy grounds ahead. We thank you for all you have done for all the animals.

Tess Tessier, or "Nana Tess," or "Grandma Tess," as she liked to be known, was a truly colourful, outspoken character and conservationist who showed up in our Valhalla office in New Denver several decades ago. She was adorned with a flamboyant purple hat draped with purplish feathers, a big smile, and carrying a scrapbook with a jumbled collage of spirit bear pictures and text that comprised her planned spirit bear book. She came to town in a purple-painted motor home looking for support for her book. It seemed like a good idea. It took several difficult years, but eventually her book was published by Hancock House, with some financial support from Valhalla. "White Spirit Bear" was a big success in helping promote protection of large areas of habitat for the spirit bear in 2006. Thank you, Nana Tess, for all you did to help save the spirit bear. You were one of a kind and touched many lives.

We end this year's newsletter with this outstanding photo and the hope that grizzly bears and people can continue to coexist as they do at the guest ranch upstream from our Valhalla Foundation

Elkin Creek Nature Preserve in the Nemiah Valley.



Susy Chaston