

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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Newsletter No. 52

December 2008

Dear Members and Supporters:

This is not the usual yearly report. It is an alert about several crisis situations in BC: the Ministry of Environment paying aboriginal people to shoot Chilcotin wild horses to be used as wolf bait in the mountain caribou recovery program; the Ministry of Forests also paying aboriginal people to round up wild horses and send them to slaughterhouses; and a proposed pipeline that will carry "dirty oil" from the tar sands of Alberta to the BC coast. Huge oil tankers the size of the Exxon Valdez (remember the huge Alaskan oil spill?) would be moving in and out of the northern part of the Inside Passage. The home of the Spirit Bears and all the marine life off BC's mid- and north-coasts would be terribly vulnerable to oil spills. In summary, we have a lot of work to do together next year, but we also have a lot of people on our side.

However there is some positive news. The Inland Rainforest Conservation Report in this package is a milestone in VWS's Inland Rainforest project. It contains a photograph of VWS's new map of park proposals. (The actual map is about 4 feet by 3 feet.) This map summarizes ten years of research and networking. Hopefully it will guide conservation efforts in this region for many years to come.

The Conservation Report tells how government scientists in the mountain caribou program have recommended 25,000 hectares of Inland Rainforest to be set aside from logging in the West Cariboo Mountains, and 20,000 hectares in the Central Selkirks, in both cases falling within VWS's park proposals.

This year two German environmental organizations, Robin Wood and Naturschatz, threw their weight behind the Inland Rainforest campaign with a splendid magazine article and letter writing campaign that delivered nearly 5,000 letters from German people to the Premier's office. It was a joy to work with them. You can find website addresses for some of their material in the enclosed Conservation Report.

Director Wayne McCrory continues to work with the Gitga'at First Nation on expanding protection for coastal ecosystems, especially Gribbell Island. He and other VWS staff continued to work hard to help bears.

In 2008 director Richard Caniell led a spirited campaign to protect the Slocan Valley from such development as subdivisions, pollution of Slocan Lake, houseboats and jet skis on the lake, chip truck traffic and the construction of a cell phone transmission tower near a children's playground, a school, and peoples' homes. His work on cell phones has made ripples throughout Canada, and his efforts to protect the lake



Wild horses of the Chilcotin: wolf bait

have had a powerful provincial significance.

As ecological crises besiege the planet, there comes news that Canada's Environment Minister has said "We will not — and let me be perfectly clear on this — aggravate an already-weakening economy in the name of environmental progress." Some Environment Minister. In a country that still depends heavily on primary resource extraction, damage to the environment and depletion of resources (as in climate change and "peak oil") represent damage to the economy that is now threatening far worse consequences than anything we've seen yet. The Minister's view is part of a tragic human pathology that sees itself disconnected from nature, and believes it can keep strangling the goose and still have golden eggs in the future. Make no mistake, such delusions represent a terrible danger to mankind and to all life on Earth.

Inside you will learn more about what the directors and staff have done this year. It is important to think of it as work that YOU are doing. The economic uncertainty in the States, spreading into Canada, has had negative effects on some of the foundations that have funded our work in the past. But we've also built a very substantial infrastructure for future inexpensive forms of activism, and the directors all have a want-list of things they hope to achieve next year.

Please make sure that you are hanging in there with us. Some of you are able to send a couple of thousand dollars every year. Others buy a membership or chip in \$10-\$20. The whole essence of a moral force in society is this: that the largest number of people contribute something. No matter how small, it adds up like the drops of water in the sea combine to become one of the most powerful forces on Earth.

Sincerely,
Anne Sherrod, Chair

MOUNTAIN CARIBOU: THE BATTLE BEHIND THE SCENES



by Anne Sherrod

The BC government announced a new plan for protecting caribou in October 2007. Details will be found in the enclosed Inland Rainforest Conservation Report, but what is not clear in that report is the role that VWS played from October 2007 to the present time. What had happened was that the BC government had invited logging companies, snowmobilers, heli-ski outfits, and ten environmental groups under the title “Mountain Caribou Project” to sign confidentiality agreements and become part of secret negotiations. This required them to keep crucial information away from the public and the environmental community, in what had started out as an open public process. VWS learned about the negotiations and blew the whistle on them in the media.

Within days, the “stakeholders” announced their “collaboration” in a mountain caribou recovery plan. The agreement allowed the logging industry to get away with very little loss of timber supply and no reduction in the rate of logging. VWS denounced the confidentiality agreements, the secret negotiations and the plan; in doing so it was joined by eleven other environmental groups. During 2008 the environmental community was engaged in passionate debate about the ethical issues raised by the secret deal.

In 2008 government scientists went to work on draft maps to show where the new “protection” for caribou habitat would be located. Repeatedly this year VWS director Craig Pettitt spent hours and hours studying numerous maps pumped out by the government’s mountain caribou Habitat Teams. He compared them with VWS’s habitat maps, went out on the ground and looked at areas, and wrote detailed critiques. With information from both Craig and the government scientists’ own updates, I was able to write numerous updates for the environmental community and media. VWS was the only organization providing this depth of information.

Throughout this process, the worst planning was done in the Central Selkirk planning unit, VWS’s home area and the location of the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal. The maps we first received from government showed only 60% of the 20,000 hectares of no-logging zones that the government had promised in the Central Selkirks. The “Herd Ex-

pert” argued that the caribou didn’t need it all, but his argument was not supported by other government biologists. VWS protested vigorously. The Herd Expert was instructed by government to go back to the drawing board and show protection for the whole 20,000 hectares.

On the next map, Craig’s meticulous examination found that much of the proposed 20,000 hectares was burns and clearcuts of no use to mountain caribou. Ministry of Environment analysis confirmed this and MOE refused to approve the draft. Another problem was that the Herd Expert was proposing non-spatial forest retention, meaning that the logging companies would be given room to pick and choose what they wanted to leave behind, in the process of fragmenting it all with clearcuts. The plan had to be redone a third and then a fourth time.

VWS was pleased when the scientists recommended prime low-elevation Inland Rainforest in our Quesnel Lake Wilderness proposal for 100% forest retention, i.e., no logging. In the Central Selkirks, heavily clearcut and burned areas were removed, some high quality cedar-hemlock forest had been added, and the no-logging zones would have geographic boundaries that banned logging.

The government scientists completed their mapping in mid summer of this year. The government then took the scientists’ maps back to the “stakeholders”: the logging companies, snowmobilers, heli-ski outfits and environmental groups that signed the confidentiality agreements. There has been no word since. When the government finally announces its decision, expect conservation zones loaded with clearcuts, burns, steep slopes, sparse subalpine forest and any other areas the logging companies don’t want; areas that are also unusable by mountain caribou. If this doesn’t happen, we’ll be greatly surprised.

**YOU CAN HELP IF YOU WRITE A LETTER RIGHT AWAY
AND INSIST ON AN END TO OLD-GROWTH LOGGING:**

**Premier Gordon Campbell
Room 156
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
premier@gov.bc.ca**

DEATH BY PLANNING PROCESS:

Wild horses, wolves, mountain caribou and even a dog caught up in the vortex of death caused by a plan to “protect” a species at risk

The *Vancouver Sun* newspaper has learned that last winter the BC Ministry of Environment paid aboriginal people to kill wild horses in the Chilcotin area of BC to use as bait to trap wolves. It's part of a program to increase the population of endangered mountain caribou. According to the *Sun*, “Rodger Steward, regional manager of environment for the Cariboo, said he would not rule out making another request in the future.”



Nemiah wild horses.

In addition, the Ministry of Forests has been paying aboriginal people to round up wild horses, to be sold at auctions where they are bought by slaughterhouses. According to the *Sun*: “Mike Pedersen, Chilcotin forest district manager, said the horse culls are a response to ranchers’ concerns about loss of forage. ‘It’s a worthwhile project,’ he said, noting that horses also compete with moose and mule deer.” Pedersen said buying extra hay was a hardship for ranchers in these economically hard times.

VWS director and biologist Wayne McCrory has been studying the wild horses for years. When he read the article in the December 06 *Vancouver Sun*, he sent the newspaper a letter stating:

“Mike Pedersen, Chilcotin forest district manager, is totally misleading the public by blaming the wild horses for causing the ranchers to buy more hay and competing with deer and moose.

“Are some 400 horses to be blamed for supposed hardships of some 30,000 or so cattle? Hardly. Pedersen ignores the fact that one range study in the Chilcotin as well as two in the foothills of Alberta found to the contrary, and said that there was little effect of wild horses on ungulates such as moose. In Alberta, there was little overlap of wild horses and cattle in summer.

“If Pedersen is so worried about the ranchers having to buy more hay for their cows he should first look in his own backyard at all of the thousands of acres of badly over-grazed private land where ranchers run their cattle, at the huge and obvious take-over and loss of native grasslands in the Chilcotin by forest in-growth due to his Ministry’s fire suppression policies, as well as the fact that some ranchers leave their cattle out longer on the public range than their permits allow and yet the Ministry turns a blind eye.

“It’s nice to have the wild horses as a handy scapegoat. Not surprisingly, it is this same Ministry office that in 1988 sponsored the last wild horse bounty hunt in Elkin Creek in which dozens of horses were shot and left on the range so that a local rancher could have more grazing for his cows.

“The horses were in the Chilcotin wilderness quite some time before the white man and even before the moose. These wild horses are stunningly beautiful and symbolize

a wild and hardy spirit and an amazing social structure as well as a powerful cultural/heritage icon for First Nations and most other cultures. They deserve far better treatment than this.”

Aboriginal people are divided on the issue. Some say they’ve always rounded up wild horses. But they have not always sold them to slaughterhouses or to be used as wolf bait. Should the taxpayers of the province and the nation pay them to do that?

The *Vancouver Sun* hosted a blog on the article that gave vent to an infuriated public. The BC government knows from a long way back that most of the public is adamantly against the trapping of wolves, and the slaughtering of horses draws even more public wrath. Some commenters believed that the government was using aboriginal people to do dirty work for the ranchers and the government and take the fury that was sure to come.

The enclosed Inland Rainforest Conservation Report will explain many details about the mountain caribou planning process and the killing of predators. What has likely added an edge of desperation to the government’s program is that BC will be host to thousands of foreign visitors visiting the 2010 winter Olympics. They will not be pleased to know that our government is involved in wiping out an endangered type of caribou.

But at the same time, the government does not want to reduce the rate of logging or the timber supply of the logging companies, it does not want to pay money to rehabilitate mountain caribou habitat that has already been logged, and it even refuses to ban snowmobiles from extensive areas of high quality mountain caribou winter habitat. The caribou scientists have identified many areas where snowmobiles ought to be completely banned, yet we can find very few areas where there has been a ban.

In the Inland Rainforest Conservation Report, you will also find the story of Rosie, the dog that stepped in two wolf traps set by the Ministry of Environment as part of the mountain caribou program. It is utterly predictable that a predator control program would involve trapping, because the whole intent of predator control has always been to use the least-cost methods to cut the shortest swath to whatever profits human resource exploitation, whether it’s trophy hunting, ranching or logging. See the story of Rosie to get an idea of the suffering that these traps cause.

You can find the *Vancouver Sun* article at <http://www.vancouver.sun.com/opinion/unews>. Letters can be sent to:

**Tom Ethier, Director
Fish and Wildlife Branch
Environmental Stewardship Division
Ministry of Environment
PO Box 9391
Victoria, BC V8W 9M8
Tom.Ethier@gov.bc.ca**

BC COAST: ENBRIDGE PIPELINE MUST BE FOUGHT

This year the BC government finally did formally protect two new conservancies in the Khutzeymateen Inlet, adding very important protection to the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary. That and the Spirit Bear Conservancy, protected through the efforts of this Society, remain safe from logging. But their sensitive ecosystems are already being hurt by the collapse of salmon populations. Now there is a disastrous proposal for an oil pipeline and huge oil tankers that would travel into the northern part of the Inside Passage.

Coastal Report from Director Wayne McCrory, RPBio.

The horrible tar sands development of Alberta has become a nightmare to British Columbians, especially those living on the coast. The tar sands are known as “dirty oil.” Their extraction from the ground is, itself, an environmental disaster that brings cancer-causing pollution to those who live nearby. Future tar sands development threatens to kill millions and millions of birds. And Alberta and Canada insist upon mining it despite warnings from the top climate scientist in the US that the dirty stuff should be left in the ground because it will contribute hugely to global warming.

Now, goaded by soaring market prices for oil and China’s huge appetite for it, a company called Enbridge has revived a plan to build a 1,300-kilometre pipeline across northern BC to be terminated at Kitimat. There the oil would be loaded onto huge tankers the size of the Exxon Valdez, and their travel route would include going in and out of the northern Inside Passage, endangering the shores of the Great Bear Rainforest with potential oil spills that experiences show *will* happen. If anything could be worse, it’s the fact that other corporations are also lining up to send their dirty oil to the terminal, and the applications are being fast-tracked. Horrified BC residents already have surveying going on near their properties.

This development is part of a “perfect storm” of converging exploitation that threatens hurricane-force ecosystem destruction on the coast, and it all has to do with exports. As pointed out before in our newsletters, the BC government’s big protection decision protected only one-third of the Great Bear Rainforest. The other two-thirds was to be managed by Ecosystem-based Management (EBM). VWS refused to support EBM because the standards clearly would not protect anything. Now the BC government’s own forest watchdog, the Forest Practices Board, has blown the whistle on EBM. It issued a report showing that what is being called “selection logging” under EBM is actually the high-grading of the largest and oldest cedar trees.

At the same time, the US economic downturn has shut down all US markets for Canadian wood except cedar. The prices for cedar have sky-rocketed, causing logging companies to start ransacking coastal forests to cream the giant cedars. These are the very ancient trees that bears need for winter denning.

Meanwhile, the BC government has signed major agreements with China to deliver BC wood. Minister of Forests and Range Pat Bell has been in China promoting BC cedar and other types of logs. China has stopped logging its own old-growth because of environmental damage and has closed down hundreds of pulp mills for the same reason. Now it is gaining jobs by manufac-



Orca whales — beloved by British Columbians but not beloved enough. Out of the rare southern population in the waters of BC and Washington State, seven disappeared this year. Researchers believe the Chinook salmon collapse has deprived them of food. One of the major culprits in the salmon collapse is overfishing by humans.

turing wood products from BC’s raw logs and exporting them to other nations — jobs that should have stayed in BC. Whether it’s wood, or oil, or minerals, trade links are being set up to allow China to siphon BC’s resources.

The proposed oil tanker route from Kitimat will be through Douglas Channel to Hecate Strait, passing a number of established and new conservancies created by the BC government. Near the bottom end of Douglas Channel the giant tankers would ply past the Gitga’at community of Hartley Bay on one side and Gribbell Island, mother island of the Kermode bears, on the other side. The route then crosses the Inside Passage in Wright Sound and then goes past Gil Island and then Campania and Trutch Islands before reaching Hecate Strait.

Campania Island is protected by a new conservancy announced by the government. Further seaward, tankers coming from Kitimat would pass through the traditional territories of the Haidas and the Haida Gwaii (South Moresby) archipelago, world famous for South Moresby National Park Reserve and many endemic animals and a superbly rich marine environment. The Haidas are greatly concerned about the impacts of oil spills on the marine environment that has sustained them for thousands of years. The Gitga’at at Hartley Bay are also opposed for similar reasons. They also have had firsthand experience with fuel spills when the BC Ferry ‘Queen of the North’ went off course two winters ago and smashed a reef on Gil Island and sank.

Like the oil tankers that are proposed to run through this complex maze of channels, islands and reefs with some of the Pacific’s most horrific winter storms, the BC Ferry had the best navigational equipment one could find. But like the catastrophic Valdez oil tanker spill in Alaska, human error and folly came in to play, and it hit a reef and sank.

Since the sinking of the Queen of the North (and heroic night rescue of survivors by the Gitga’at in their small fishing boats) the Gitga’at have been at the centre of a running battle to try to get the BC government to remove the diesel fuel from the Queen of the North, rather than let it gradually leak to the surface and slowly poison the marine shores or run the risk of a major rupture causing a major spill. Even the slow leaks drift down the Inside Passage and affect their traditional seaweed gathering sites on Princess Royal Island. Some mother spirit bears forage with their young on barnacles and other rich intertidal food sources on Gribbell Island and

Continued on the back page

UNBC Conference: A Highlight of the Year

The Inland Rainforest Conference sponsored by the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) was an important event this year. VWS sent a team of four participants: Dr. Lance Craighead and VWS directors Craig Pettitt, Anne Sherrod and Daniel Sherrod. Lance and Craig both gave presentations.

Anne sat on a panel that fielded questions from Bruce Fraser, head of BC's Forest Practices Board, and the audience. A field trip visited both logged and unlogged ancient rainforest, with discussion led by UNBC forestry experts. It was very important for VWS activists to hear all the presentations from scientists studying the Inland Rainforest, and to link up with the very active conservation community near Prince George and around the university.

VWS was hosted by Rick and Julie Zammuto of Save-the-Cedar League, who took us on a tour and showed us the Walker Rainforest Wilderness. VWS's written presentation to the conference is on the UNBC website and can be seen at <http://wetbelt.unbc.ca/2008-conference-Sherrod-et-al-Thirty-Years.html>.



Craig Pettitt presents a slide show on VWS's Inland Rainforest Project, the maps, and ground-breaking research on rainforest lichens by VWS consultant Toby Spribille and his colleagues.

In addition, Craig took VWS's Inland Rainforest slide show to various public interest groups throughout the year. This included the North Okanagan Naturalists in Salmon Arm, Selkirk College geography students, BC Parks Kokanee Nature House and the Slocan Valley Food for Thought discussion group.

BEAR CONSERVATION

BLACK BEARS

For the past several years VWS has organized and sponsored a provincial Bear Smart program for the upper Slocan Valley that includes 3 large provincial parks, public and privately owned lands, and the two lake villages that look across at Valhalla Provincial Park. With funding from the province, we are completing a bear hazard assessment and bear-people conflict prevention plan.

In 2008 the province also provided Bear Smart funds for public education on bear-proofing of attractants including garbage, fruit trees, livestock, chicken pens, compost and so on. VWS now has electric fencing kits and bear-proof Bear Saver residential garbage bins to loan people.

VWS biologist Wayne McCrory gave a bear aversion (non-lethal treatment of bears) course for the local RCMP, park ranger, and others; with a more formal one being planned for the spring. Much credit goes to the RCMP for using non-lethal methods to try to route a black bear sow and two cubs from New Denver's fruit trees. These bears did not respond and were eventually shot.

Sadly, the bears were not only feeding on fruit, but also on numerous bags of garbage. Most New Denver residents feel strongly about protecting bears, but by now all should know to keep their garbage off limits to bears. Many residents do this, but others seem not to care. It is hoped that ongoing public education will help.

VWS staff biologist Erica Mallam and executive director Daniel Sherrod once again picked many trees full of fruit this

year to keep it away from bears, but New Denver is a fruit haven and many residents want their fruit to ripen on the trees. Electric fencing can help a lot in these situations. Contact VWS if you are interested in acquiring some.

GRIZZLY BEARS

Despite the objections by the Valhalla Society, some First Nations and some boat-based tour operators, alarming reports still arrive on our desk about blatant helicopter tourism on the central coast. This fall, a helicopter was photographed landing on the Mussel River, frightening off grizzly bears just so one of the wealthy clients could fish for salmon. Mussel River is in Fiordlands protected area. The helicopter number was reported to BC Parks by a First Nations bear viewing guide who had come to the area by boat with some of his clients. In another instance, a tourist from England contacted us after feeling outraged by being misled by King Pacific Lodge that their helicopter trips into the Green River were not disturbing bears. King Pacific flies up to 4 trips a day into the Green River and does fishing and bear viewing trips from rafts. Our field surveys show that the Green River concentrates bear and salmon activity in only a 2 km section of the narrow river valley below the falls, thus making aircraft landings and take offs a high impact. When the bears are disturbed by helicopter traffic and other tourism activities they have nowhere else to go. It is places like the Green River that should be off limits to helicopter tourism.

Wayne McCrory also spoke to Minis-



ter of Environment Barry Penner about the grizzly bear no-hunting reserves that were recommended by the mid- and north-coast planning tables. Penner knew nothing about them. VWS has now been told they will be implemented. We hope so.

Wayne and Baden Cross of Applied Conservation GIS asked for an investigation and went to the press when a grizzly bear cub was wantonly killed at Lagoon Cove marina/resort on Cracroft Island near Knight Inlet on the coast.

Director Anne Sherrod made a submission to the Prince George Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB) seeking to stop the approval of permit applications for three grizzly bear hunting camps on the Morkill River in the Walker Rainforest Wilderness. An Action Alert to members resulted in a number of excellent letters sent to the ILMB. Our understanding is that the application has been shelved indefinitely.

The Campaign to Save the Valhalla Mile

Approximately a mile of shoreline was left out of protection when Valhalla Provincial Park was created because it was private property. Recently the property (155 hectares) came up for sale. VWS cannot hold property, but another organization, the Valhalla Foundation for Ecology and Social Justice (VF), can. The foundation is now working with The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) and BC Parks to buy the land and add it to the park.

The property was nicknamed "The Valhalla Mile" because it includes slightly more than a mile of undeveloped lakeshore along Slokan Lake. It is literally in the heart of Valhalla Park and therefore key to the ecological integrity of the entire 50,000 hectare (122,600 acre) park. The land was ripe to be bought by developers for resort and summer home developments, which could be ruinous to the park and the lake. Fortunately in May 2008 TLC negotiated an agreement to purchase with the owner. The government will be providing the majority of the purchase price and another large chunk will, we hope, come from other organizations. But the two foundations have to raise approximately \$300,000 from public donations. A large part of it is already raised, but there is only a limited time to raise the funds. For more information see: www.vws.org or www.conservancy.bc.ca/. To contribute by mail, make your cheque payable to:

The Valhalla Foundation/ Box 63/ Silverton, BC V0G 2B0



*"Give us an inch and we'll take a mile."
A \$44 contribution will buy approximately
one inch of the shoreline.*

Join the Valhalla Wilderness Society and make a donation today!

Valhalla Wilderness Society

Box 329, New Denver, BC Canada V0G 1S0
Phone: (250) 358-2333, Fax: (250) 358-7950, vws@vws.org www.vws.org

- Please sign me up for membership (\$10.00) _____.
- I would like to make a one-time donation of \$ _____.
- I would like to become a Sustaining Donor at the rate of: \$ _____/month.
- Please make an automatic withdrawal from my credit card. The withdrawal should occur on the 1st day of each month or the 15th day of each month, beginning the month of _____, 2009.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Fax: _____

VISA #: _____ MASTERCARD #: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____ E-mail: _____

All donations are tax creditable, Charitable Tax # 119260883 RR

Order Form

Posters	\$ Canadian	Total purchases	\$
Save the Spirit Bear's Rainforest Home. . . .	\$ 8 _____	Shipping/handling (\$2 minimum)	\$ _____
Spirit Bear of the Rainforest	\$ 12 _____	Shipping of posters add \$6.95	\$ _____
Spirit Bear, full-body image, laminated . . .	\$ 10 _____	plus 10% on amounts \$10 or over	\$ _____
Khutzeymateen grizzly	\$ 4 _____	OR 20% for overseas	\$ _____
Valhalla Park - wildflowers on Mt. Idaho . .	\$ 10 _____	BC residents add 7% PST	\$ _____
Inland Rainforest map & Declaration	\$ 12 _____	Membership - \$10 (no tax).	\$ _____
		Donation (tax receipt issued)	\$ _____
		Grand Total Enclosed	\$ _____

* New *

"Testimony for Earth" book by
Bob & Linda Harrington \$ 22.95 _____

The Harrington's book is an inspirational guide to adopting more ecocentric values for the benefit of the planet and ultimately for our own survival. The book is based on the principles of Drs. Stan Rowe and Ted Mosquin's "Manifesto for Earth" which offers ideas about revisoning our place in nature.

VISA # _____ Exp. _____

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Signature _____

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PROTECTING THE SLOCAN VALLEY

Twenty-five years ago many residents of the Slo-can Valley wanted a park across the lake. Thousands of people sent donations for the campaign and filled a whole filing cabinet at the Ministry of Environment with letters. The result was Valhalla Provincial Park. Today residents of the valley are keenly aware that they are caretakers of a wonder of wonders for all Canadians: a 30-kilometre long fjord-like lake, 500 kilometres inland, warm enough to be swimmable, with most of one shore wilderness, the other shore uncluttered by development, offering amenities in quaint vil-lages. Sound like a standing invitation to devel-opers? It is; as a matter of fact, the residents need help fending them off.



Valhalla Provincial Park in the background; Village of Silverton on the left, New Denver on the right. The lake itself is an unprotected, shared resource.

Many travellers in BC will be well aware of what has happened in the Okanagan. Big lakes in the desert and grasslands of the Okanagan Re-gion have attracted millions of people. Developers made multi-mil-lion-dollar fortunes smothering the lakes with condominiums and lodges. Others make big bucks renting huge houseboats and jet skis that make it constant party-time on the lakes, driving away people interested in nature. Amongst the terrible social impacts: many of the people who used to live there — the people most interested in pro-protecting the area — can no longer afford to do so. They are forced to pack up and move somewhere else.

Residents of the Slo-can Valley are starting to feel the crunch. At planning meetings in New Denver, close to 90% of the participants put protecting Slo-can Lake as a public resource amongst the one or two top priorities for planning. Citizen action has managed to hold off a number of proposals, but subdivisions are starting to crop up throughout the valley.

VWS director Richard Caniell is head of the Valhalla Committee for Environmental Health. The committee deals with direct risks to human health and lives from environmental exploitation. This year, when an entrepreneur asked for a permit for houseboat and jet ski rentals on the lake, Richard launched a major campaign against it. The chief focus was on pollution of the lake, high risks of accidents as-sociated with jet skis, noise pollution shattering the quiet of the vil-lages and the wilderness shores of Valhalla Park, and lakeside development.

A flyer/brochure was created. VWS networked with various community members and groups, which joined in signing the flyer. In addition to Valhalla, the signatories included the medical doctors of the New Denver Health Clinic, the Hills Recreation Society, Healthy Housing Society (New Denver), Roseberry Parkland Development So-ciety, and Destination Silverton. Numerous letters were sent to the Regional District planning division in Nelson asking for a ban on these commercial activities. New Denver has a bylaw prohibiting such rentals; Silverton is considering one. Slo-can did not participate. Now that the elections are over, the request for a prohibition bylaw in Sil-verton will be reinstated.

CELL PHONE TOWER

Richard represented VWS in the campaign of many New Denver res-idents against the installation of a cell phone tower. He sent strong letters of protest, accompanied by massive scientific reports from around the world, to Telus, the CBC and Health Canada, with copies to media. He launched a major public education campaign, with a full page ad in the local newspaper, "Advisory" articles and letters were sent to local newspapers, chiefly disputing those who insist cell phones are safe while refusing to read the health hazard concerns on our website, or evidently, anywhere else. He made presentations to the New Denver Village Council both in person and in writing, bring-

ing to their attention the Canada Supreme Court ruling (*Sraytech v Hudson* [2001]) upholding Village Council bylaw restrictions based on general welfare and health concerns for its residents, which was confirmed by the advice of municipal lawyer Donald Lidstone (of Lid-stone, Young, Anderson).

Recommendations were presented to New Denver Council for possible action against cell phone tower transmission any closer than 500 metres from a playground or residences, in part based on the Vancouver School Board's effective prohibition of cell towers within 305 metres of any school facility, citing their Incompatible Land Uses Near School's policy. The Village Council has put the matter on appeal with Industry Canada. An aroused and resistant part of the village awaits that decision.

CHIP TRUCKS: HAZARDS TO RESIDENTS' LIVES SERVE PULP MILL PROFITS

In the mid-eighties the Celgar Pulp Mill proposed to expand its mill ca-pacity by nearly one-half. VWS and the Slo-can Valley Watershed Al-liance attended the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) hearings and led strong opposition to the proposal. Greatly increased chip truck traffic along the narrow, winding scenic highway of the Slo-can Valley was a major focus of the EIA hearings.

The residents of the valley supported an alternative form of transportation of the chips by barge on the Arrow Lakes. A govern-ment study found that barging was the most economical route, but the province gave Celgar complete discretion over which alternative it would choose. To make the lake route attractive to Celgar, the Province promised to pay the barge costs. What was required of Cel-gar was to make the modifications necessary to unload the barges at Castlegar. Instead, Celgar chose to use Highway 6, and no wonder. The cost of upkeep of the highway, plus highway reconstruction at a cost of \$200 million in taxpayer dollars, fell on the taxpayers, while Celgar maximized its profits.

Now, despite claims to the contrary, the chip truck traffic gets heavier and heavier, dominating the ferries, endangering motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, generating noise and air pollution and killing wildlife. We have noted 11 trucks in an hour, some in a convoy of two, occasionally in a convoy of three. This does not permit drivers to pass them. Going up Silverton hill and other steep grades, the trucks move at 20 to 30 kph. This causes some drivers to take dangerous chances.

The solution chosen by Celgar threw away lots of potential barge and dock jobs. The barge solution is still the right one, but we'll have to demand it from candidates in the next election. What we require is a committed intent to make using the Arrow Lakes for chip traffic into a reality and return Highway 6 to residents, tourists, logging trucks and the other businesses that have no alternative such as barge transport.

Protecting the Slocan Valley, continued

The growing reality in the Slocan Valley is that everything that is not a park is getting logged. Directors Wayne McCrory and Craig Pettitt have worked with residents of the community of Hills on the clearcutting in the unprotected area at the head of Slocan Lake. They have both made numerous field trips into logging sites and other problem areas in the valley. Unfortunately the area at the head of Slocan Lake was left out of the park. The VWS maps for the Inland Rainforest Region now include proposed park protection linking Valhalla and Goat Range Parks across Bonanza Creek and Ranch Ridge, as an important wildlife travel corridor, as well as an Ecological Reserve for Perry Ridge. In the coming year, VWS would like to launch a renewed campaign against logging in the valley. It is a terrible disgrace, but our provincial governments have left us with no measure whatever as to when it is time to stop logging a valley -- the reality is to log it until all of the merchantable trees are gone.



Slocan Lake and Valhalla Park. VWS office sits in immediate foreground.

Coastal Report, continued

the Gitga'at are worried about the spirit bears being affected by the Queen of the North fuel leaks, and about the impacts a major spill by tanker traffic would have on the whole marine environment. Gribbell has the highest proportion of white "black" bears anywhere in North America and an oil spill that impacts their foraging areas along the ocean or the salmon runs they depend on in the fall could be catastrophic.

What VWS Is Doing

In the coming year VWS expects to work with other organizations on the coast to fight the oil pipeline. It is also critical that coastal protection be expanded. Several key ecological and/or genetically significant areas were not protected in the BC government's Great Bear Rainforest decision. One of them was Gribbell Island, which some scientists regard as the mother island where white-phased bears evolved because today up to 45% of its black bear population is white. Ourselves and many others were shocked when Gribbell was not protected and logging continued. Not only does the island have the highest incidence of white Kermode bears found anywhere in North America, but its small size (20,690 hectares or 50,932 acres) makes it more vulnerable to impacts of development such as clearcut logging.

In 2008, I worked with Baden Cross of Applied Conservation

GIS on an analysis of wildlife habitat on Gribbell Island, partly based on habitat surveys with the input of Marven Robinson, Gitga'at bear viewing guide. The map overlays showed that of the six hinterland valleys on Gribbell, five already have been heavily clearcut and roaded. Two of these valleys include the only salmon streams on Gribbell; they have had clearcutting right to their banks. On the adjacent mountain slope facing the sea, recent selection logging by helicopter still caused a landslide into the ocean. The VWS study did find that winter bear denning habitat and Sitka deer winter range have been less impacted by logging as these important habitat areas are found on steeper slopes away from the valley bottoms. However, given the high market values for old-growth cedar, helicopter logging could start targeting these more remote but critical wildlife habitats as on the south coast. The results would be devastating.

The map exercise is being used to help VWS finalize a briefing document to convince First Nations and the provincial government that no more logging should be allowed on Gribbell Island and that it should be protected. Bear viewing on Gribbell Island has become a very important source of income and jobs for the Gitga'at First Nations of nearby Hartley Bay. Recently, the Gitga'at indicated that they were starting an initiative to protect Gribbell Island so that is good news! We will keep you posted.

A Few Final Words

This year-end report did not have space to report myriad small but important details of the work we are doing: items like Craig Pettitt's investigative work on the use of ATVs and snowmobiles in mountain caribou habitat, the help he has given people trying to protect their watersheds, or Wayne's uncountable efforts to help wildlife.

In addition, there is little room to tell about what many of you have given. The directors and staff of VWS are frankly thrilled with the donations you pour in every year. The reality is that, as the economy worsens, there are fewer funding sources for our work other than you. Grants from foundations are critical but are unreliable from year to year. It is your donations that provide the stability of the organization. You can contribute to the cause in the ways listed on the right. If each and every person receiving this

newsletter did only one of those things, our effectiveness would greatly increase. Or, if many people did two or three of those things, it would help even more. Because there are many reasons to be discouraged about the state of our environment, it is definitely a time to take action, to become part of a positive force in this world. Please do it in whatever ways you can.

- ★ **Make a donation to the Valhalla Wilderness Society**
- ★ **Become a monthly donor**
- ★ **Sign up new members**
- ★ **Hold a fundraising event in your home, which is a way to greatly multiply your contribution.**
- ★ **Write letters to government and newspapers regularly.**