

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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ACTION ALERT

Urgent Request for Letters!

B.C. GOVERNMENT PREPARES TO OPEN PARKS TO PIPELINES AND OTHER DEVASTATING DEVELOPMENT

The BC Government introduced the **PARK AMENDMENT ACT (Bill 4)** in the legislature on February 13. It would: 1) enable the government to permit exploration "research" for industrial development of parks and protected areas, even Class A parks; 2) remove special restrictions on park use permits in small parks; and 3) weaken the restrictions on commercial film activity in parks.

Bill 4 is INDISCRIMINATE: it does not limit the purposes for which a permit can be requested. It enables permits to be issued for "feasibility studies" for any type of project that the government might decide to include in the regulations. It would apply to ANY provincial park in the province. It could unleash a gold rush of pipelines, mines, IPPs, tourism resorts and even film-making in our parks.

"Research" could mean road building, drilling, digging pits and many other activities. It could mean highly destructive mining exploration. These exploration activities can seriously damage a park, but if Bill 4 passes, they would no longer be against the law in BC parks; permitting them would be a matter of ministerial discretion.

Bill 4 does not state what comes after a "research" permit. We know that if studies indicate that development is feasible, companies can apply for "boundary adjustments" to parks – meaning the removal of an area from protected status. 35 parks have already been listed for possible boundary adjustments for natural gas pipelines, transmission lines and roads connected to pipelines. But studying parks for industrial development will sooner or later mean opening them to industrial development. The discovery of an ore body in a park could be used to leverage a mine.

Bill 4 was introduced into the legislature on February 13 with NO public consultation. Knowledgeable observers say it is possible the government could push it through in as little as a few days or a week. The government promises that projects will be studied for their environmental impacts, but West Coast Environmental Law warns that this is NOT stated in Bill 4.

Bill 4 is the de-protection of all of BC's parks. Our parks are our children's heritage; we purchased them with blood, sweat, tears and enormous amounts of taxpayer dollars; they belong to us, let's not whimper for crumbs.

Some people are advising that the government should be asked "to ensure that the process is transparent" and that "the public has an opportunity to comment." *This is whimpering for crumbs, and if we ask for crumbs, crumbs is what we will get. Extensive public input and government decision processes on these areas have ALREADY occurred, at great taxpayer expense, and the decision was "full protection".* Please consider telling the government that you want **NO changes to the BC Park Act, NO industrial development or activities in BC Parks.** The removal or damage of resources or land for economic or industrial purposes has been illegal for over 50 years and should stay that way.

Countless British Columbians spent their life energies, money, time, and efforts for decades to preserve some few areas free from economic exploitation, as a refuge for all our wild species, and for the public to have the opportunity to experience wholeness in nature. We have no other places in the province where we can find this rare and spiritually uplifting experience. Now, the government is ready to trash the work of over 75 years of preservation in a cheap, disastrous alliance with mega-profits corporations. Everyone who has ever valued our park system should denounce this action in the strongest terms.

**Bill 4 has already has its First Reading in the Legislature
We must act very quickly — here's how your voice can be heard**

1. SEND A LETTER TO THE PREMIER AND THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

Premier Christy Clark
PO Box 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Fax: 250-387-0087
Email: premier@gov.bc.ca
Tel: 250-387-1715

Honourable Mary Polak
Minister of Environment
PO Box 9047
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
Email: ENV_Minister@gov.bc.ca
Fax: 250-387-1356
Telephone: 250-387-1187

2. SEND THE LETTER TO YOUR MLA AND ASK HIM OR HER TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST BILL 4.

3. SIGN THE WEST COAST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PETITION TO PROTECT OUR PARKS AT:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/379/085/605/>

4. PROVIDE ONLINE COMMENTS TO THE LEGISLATURE AT:

<http://www.belegislation.ca/2014/02/13/1st-reading-bill-bc-park-amendment-2014/>

More Details

Thanks to West Coast Environmental Law for the expert analysis on their website that provides the source of some of this information; please visit the WCEL website for even more details

Bill 4 will blast a hole through the *Park Act* -- and through our park system.

Currently it is illegal to take resources or disturb land in a Class A Park without a Park Use Permit. A permit can only be granted if the Minister determines that "it is necessary for the preservation or maintenance of the recreational values of the park" and that it will not interfere with the use of the park "in accordance with its purpose." Now, under the cloak of "research", the proposed Bill 4 would allow the Minister to issue a permit for any kind of research, even if it will harm the park. Bill 4 does not limit the purposes for which permits may be issued.

In July, 2013 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. Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain natural gas pipeline expansion alone could potentially require boundary adjustment to ten parks. Then there's the TransCanada gas pipeline, and of course, potentially, the tar sands bitumen.

Bill 4 would wipe away special protection for small parks

Currently park use permits cannot be given to allow resources to be taken from small parks 2,023 hectares or less in size. These small parks are often in ecologically fragmented areas, and if they are fragmented any further, they will be destroyed; such parks often harbour species at risk that can be wiped out by even a small amount of disturbance. But Bill 4 would eliminate this restriction.

Damage could be devastating

The TransCanada LNG pipeline would be the largest diameter pipeline (4 feet) ever built in Canada. It would require a 200-foot right-of-way strip to be logged. A major industrial access road and large gas compressor stations would have been built inside the conservancies. These would have had devastating impacts on the grizzly bears and on the ecological integrity of the whole area. Over the last year, the BC government has opened up the central-north coast to proposals for giant LNG facilities that would process natural gas 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 four inches in diameter, so it would require a great number of fracking wells to sustain a four-foot pipe. Some people speculate that the intent is to make the pipes usable for tar sands bitumen.

The corporate takeover of BC parks

If it is passed, Bill 4 virtually means there is no really "protected" area in the province anymore. All that is required is for some corporation to apply for a "research" permit, and the government to issue a park use permit. And, as it becomes routine to allow damaging activities in parks, we may be sure that, sooner or later, the *Park Act* will be further "deregulated". Minister of Environment Mary Polak says she will personally decide if an investigative-use permit will be issued for a given park. ***This same Minister, whose mandate is to protect our parks, is promoting Bill 4 in the press.***

Please write your letter NOW - we may only have days or weeks left