

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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Valhalla's Submission To the Enbridge Pipeline Review Process

ONE MAJOR OIL SPILL FROM TANKERS IN WATERS SURROUNDING GRIBBELL ISLAND COULD WIPE OUT A CORE SPIRIT BEAR POPULATION

Majestic channels of marine water, sheltered from the open sea by numerous islands, carry an unending flow of nutrients pouring in from rivers that drain rich Coastal Temperate Rainforest. Teeming with salmon and other fish, the waters support an abundance of larger wildlife. But now, a sinister black death threatens these life-giving waters and all the wildlife that depends on them: the threat of hundreds of tankers, up to a kilometre long, carrying Alberta's deadly tarsands bitumen to China. Enbridge Inc., has proposed to transport this mixture across BC in a pipeline to the coastal port of Kitimat, where it will be loaded in hundreds of huge oil tankers for shipment to China. There it will provide fuel that will imperil us all as a major source of climate change.



Ian McAllister

Gribbell Island (middle) sits astride the intersection of two of BC's central coast marine shipping lanes, the Inside Passage and Douglas Channel. About 40 % of the small, semi-isolated population of 100-150 Kermode bears are white-phase, the highest of any area on the central coast. Evolutionary scientists consider Gribbell "the mother island of the white bears" and most likely where the gene for white bear coats evolved.

Just as the famed Galapagos Islands of the Pacific Ocean have been a mecca for millions of people seeking to experience their unique life forms, BC's islands and coastal waters are meccas for tourists hoping to catch a glimpse of the sparkling gem of a white Kermode bear (the famed "spirit bears" of BC's midcoast) fishing for salmon or foraging for mussels; or perhaps a dainty Sitka deer, or the unique coastal subspecies of wolf. And just like the Galapagos, these BC islands gave rise to foundational research and understandings of the evolutionary development of the diversity of life.

One of these BC island biodiversity centres is Gribbell Island, where white and black bears from the same family tell a genetic and evolutionary story to be read through ongoing research. Studies so far indicate that Gribbell Island is likely where the genes for the white bear originated and spread for many kilometres to other islands and the mainland coast.

The Valhalla Wilderness Society's Gribbell Island conservancy proposal lies in the very centre of the highest danger zone for tanker accidents. In order to add to the growing body of scientific evidence showing how destructive the project will be to the BC coast, VWS biologist Wayne McCrory produced a technical report entitled: "Spirit Bears Under Siege: A Review Of The Threats An Oil Tanker Spill From The Proposed Northern Gateway Enbridge Project on

Gribbell Island – Mother Island of the White Bear." McCrory combined years of scientific research on the Kermode bears, a genetic variation of black bears, with statistics from Alaska's disastrous Exxon-Valdez oil spill, to reveal a deadly future that lies in store for Kermode bears and much coastal wildlife if the Northern Gateway pipeline is approved and an oil spill occurs. A major oil spill close enough to reach the island could wipe its bear population and poison the bears on nearby islands and the mainland coast as well. McCrory's research exposed major underestimates of oil spill hazards by Enbridge. The report was submitted to the Enbridge Joint Review Process, and McCrory is scheduled to give an oral presentation in January 28, 2013.

VWS considers the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline and associated high traffic of giant oil tankers the biggest environmental threat ever to hit the Great Bear Rainforest and Kermode bears. Although the Environmental Assessment process for the Enbridge pipeline will soon be closed, public opposition is still rising. Expect ongoing protests from BC citizens and First Nations, and please give them your support.

More details inside, you can download Wayne McCrory's reports on the VWS website: <http://www.vws.org>.

ENBRIDGE'S GLARING UNDERESTIMATE OF OIL SPILL IMPACTS

by Director Wayne McCrory

VWS completed two scientific reports on Gribbell Island this year. A conservation study showed that the island's small number of Kermode bears ekes out a living in a very rugged landscape where over 30% is steep mountain rock unsuited for bears and, where there are no rich coastal estuaries that typify other bear areas on the coast. There are only two small salmon streams that they can depend on to fatten up in the fall in preparation for winter denning. Many of the Gribbell Island Kermode bears use the intertidal zone for travel, feeding on berries along the shoreline edge, or eating marine invertebrates such as mussels and barnacles. Past over hunting and trapping, and collection of white hides for museums combined with clearcut logging and declining salmon runs may already be putting this unique bear gene pool on edge. Climate change may also eventually have an impact. Unfortunately when the First Nations and provincial government announced protection of about 1/3 of the Great Bear Rainforest in 2006, Gribbell was not on the list.

The second VWS report uses details from the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska, together with information from knowledgeable biologists on the toxic effects of oil on grizzly and polar bears, to assess the potential impacts of an oil spill on the Kermode bears of Gribbell Island. We also contrasted the impact assessment that Enbridge submitted to the Joint Review Panel with the actual experience from the Exxon Valdez. Here are some highlights from the VWS report:

Enbridge's environmental assessment report (2010) states that only a limited number of coastal grizzly and Kermode bears would be affected by a pipeline or tanker spill. But this was based on serious underestimation of the degree of risk of an oil spill, and extent and duration of the impacts. Enbridge projects that a spill might not happen for several centuries. But similar studies for the Exxon Valdez projected one spill every 240 years. In reality the Exxon Valdez spill occurred only 12 years after the tankers started plying Prince William Sound.

Enbridge claims that a hypothetical tanker spill in Wright Sound (next to Gribbell Island), of about the same volume as the Exxon Valdez spill, would affect 240 km of shoreline. But the Exxon Valdez spill affected 750 kilometres of shoreline — a stretch of coast equal to the entire California coastline.



Courtesy of Barb Murray

This year Wayne McCrory gave talks and slide shows to audiences in Nakusp, Kaslo, Nelson and Qualicum Beach, using the Kermode bears as an example of wildlife gravely threatened by tanker traffic in BC's coastal waters. He will be speaking at the community hearing on the Enbridge pipeline on January 28, 2013, in Kelowna. You can find more information about his reports, and download the reports, at www.vws.org.



oceanadventures.bc.ca

A spirit bear cub hunting mussels and barnacles in the intertidal zone. Studies have shown that wildlife will eat food contaminated with toxic chemicals.

Similarly, Enbridge claims there will be no long-term effects on the marine environment. But one of the most stunning revelations of the Exxon Valdez Trustee Council-funded monitoring over the last ten years is that Exxon Valdez oil persists in the environment and, in places, is nearly as toxic as it was the first few weeks after the spill. At this rate it will take decades and possibly centuries to disappear entirely.

Using the best information possible, my professional review concluded that a major oil spill from a tanker carrying Enbridge bitumen along the BC inside marine channels would have significant, cumulative, adverse, and immitigable impacts at the individual-level, population-level, and genetic level of the Kermode bears of Gribbell Island. This is primarily because of the likelihood that all of the estimated 100-150 Kermode bears on Gribbell Island would come into direct and fairly lengthy and toxic contact with stranded oil on the seashore during the active bear season. Kermode bears would also ingest toxic quantities of oil through feeding on contaminated fish, seabirds, and marine mammals killed by the spill.

The bears would suffer physically for a variety of reasons, including the loss of their fur due to oiling, and consequent lack of temperature control, causing hypothermia, kidney failure, and disturbances to red blood cell production, often leading to mortality. Further, oil-caused reductions in marine food resources (salmon, mussels, barnacles, etc.) will add to the impact and population stress. Such damage will likely be long term. Some 20 years after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the marine ecosystem is still suffering substantial and persistent contamination of mussel beds.

Gribbell Island is only one small island, and the Kermode bear is just one species, that would be affected by a major oil spill. Studies show that bears might survive contact with a small amount of oil, but a major amount would be deadly.

INCOMAPPLEUX RIVER TO RUN FREE

When the BC Government declared that all claims staked for hydro electric projects (on 800 BC rivers and creeks) must be advanced or lost, TransAlta, a giant Alberta independent power producer, filed for a permit to drill, dig pits and clear forest for access to its claim on the Incomappleux River. If ultimately approved, the project would have diverted 8.8 kilometres of river into a pipe. Roads, excavation, powerlines and structures would have devastated the intact wilderness that is the gem of the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal. But suddenly the whole river, with its bull trout spawning and rearing habitat, was also in danger. The studies would have been costly for TransAlta, at which point most applications become a done deal. The project had to be stopped in the investigative stage, and there were only 3 months to do it. How was it saved?



Craig Pettit

This would have been the site of the powerhouse. Blue-listed bull trout jump up this drop in the river and congregate a short distance upstream for several weeks before dispersing downstream to spawn. On shore there is a treasure trove of rare species in a forest of 1,800-year-old trees. If the power project had become a reality, most of the river would have arrived here in a huge pipe, where it would have been passed through a turbine and returned to the river. A huge linear clearcut for powerlines would have shattered the ancient forest forever.

With more than a little help from our friends

On September 14 VWS sent out an Action Alert. Our members sent letters to the government comment site. VWS would like to thank Kelowna-based Nature's Presence Foundation, Nelson-based West Kootenay Ecosociety, SmallTownFilmsOnline, Envirowatch, theCanadian.org, the *Watershed Sentinel* and others for spreading the word on the Internet. This not only increased letters, but googling "Incomappleux and IPP" brought up numerous sites publishing or referring to the Action Alert.

The research was there

So often nature defenders must suffer frustration that the only scientific studies available are by the company that wants to do the development, but not this time. VWS had immediate access to a stack of scientific studies regarding the very site where TransAlta proposed to put the development. Some were fisheries studies by government biologists, and verification that the area was critical grizzly bear habitat adjacent to Glacier National Park. But what especially stood out was 10 years of Incomappleux lichen surveys by Dr. Toby Spribille and his colleagues, lichenologists Trevor Goward and Curtis Björk, along with biodiversity studies on other organisms including plants, land snails and mushrooms. These reports were available because of funding by VWS members, supporters and major funders, and because all the researchers contributed a large part of their work. Thus, it was VWS's good fortune to be able to put into the government's hands immediately an 11-page review of all the research, plus a 6-inch stack of scientific reports. In addition,

there was a petition for the park proposal signed by 5,000 people.

Nobody minced words

Dr. Spribille sent a strong letter to the government. TransAlta puts forward the image of a "green" company and good corporate citizen. VWS also wrote a letter pointing out that this image would never survive cutting down 1,800 year old trees for a transmission corridor, tearing up a haven for grizzly bears next to Glacier National Park, and taking water out of a stretch of river where blue-listed bull trout congregate before spawning. Proof was quickly evident when columnist Larry Pynn's article appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*, heavily focused on Dr. Spribille's letter. We are very pleased, because VWS is the only environmental organization of which we are aware focusing so much on the very small species that compose most of our biodiversity. See the *Sun* article at <http://www.vancouversun.com/business/urged+block+planned+river+project+globally+significant+inland/7543174/story.html>

The company acted quickly

On November 14 VWS received a letter from TransAlta saying that it was withdrawing the application. The company explained that it had inherited the claim in an exchange with another company, and that government policy had forced it to apply for a permit or lose the claim (which was true). The quick action meant that the matter was resolved with no conflict and no damage to the forest. You can see the *Vancouver Sun* article on the withdrawal at:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/metro/Environmentalists+celebrate+Alberta+company+drops+plan+hydro/7550231/story.html>

STEPS IN PROTECTION OF THE SELKIRK MOUNTAIN CARIBOU PARK PROPOSAL

2001 : Help comes to the Incomappleux

Wilderness adventurers invited the Wilderness Committee (WC), Purcell Alliance for Wilderness (PAW), and Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) on a trip to the upper end of the Incomappleux Valley. Although much of the ancient cedar forest in the lower valley had been clearcut, the upper valley had a stunning primeval rainforest with trees up to 4 metres in diameter, in an intact wilderness adjacent to Glacier National Park. Some of the trees were tied with engineering tape to indicate the route of pending logging roads and cutblocks.

Wayne McCrory/Toby Spribille



WC immediately proposed an extension to Bugaboo Provincial Park that crossed the Purcell Range and took in the Incomappleux Valley. But its activists lived far distant on the coast. Eventually, with the agreement of the other two groups, VWS took over developing the proposal and began years of work researching and refining proposed boundaries in consultation with the other groups.

2002: A serendipitous meeting

A young student lichen researcher, Toby Spribille, arrived at the Valhalla Wilderness Society office and asked Colleen McCrory whether she knew the whereabouts of any old-growth forest. Colleen connected him up with director Craig Pettitt, who was beginning a tree-aging project that would eventually suggest that the largest trees were at least 1,800 years old. Spribille wrote the first in a series of reports on the rare lichens he found, that would continue over the next 10 years as he obtained degrees at the Universities of Göttingen, Germany and Graz, Austria, becoming an international expert on old-growth temperate rainforest.

2003-2005: Stopping the logging

VWS, PAW and WC immediately took Spribille's first report to the logging company, Pope and Talbot (P & T). They proposed a moratorium on old-growth logging in the area, which P & T rejected. VWS and PAW then met with the Ministry of Forests (MOF) and insisted that, under the Forest Practices Code, P & T's logging plan must take into account rare species. P & T amended its plan, but it still had 7 clearcuts and extensive road building in the old-growth.

When the groups persisted, MOF flew several of its staff, including its old-growth expert, Dr. André Arsenault, plus a P & T representative and Pettitt into the Incomappleux forest. P & T agreed to a temporary moratorium pending further studies by Dr. Arsenault.

2004: Dr. Arsenault released his report, describing the area as a "generally rare forest type of global significance", and confirming Spribille's findings of rare lichens.

2005: P & T amended its development plan again, to propose an Old Growth Management Area (OGMA), an area to be set aside from logging. MOF approved it without consulting VWS. VWS filed an objection and Pettitt showed that P & T had loaded the OGMA with steep, rocky terrain, leaving prime forest to be logged.

MOF amended the OGMA to include the best forest. It is on file today, though it is not legislated. A number of cutblocks that were already approved at the time could still be logged at any time.

2003-2009: The Mountain Caribou protection

In 2003, the BC government started a planning process to recover the endangered Mountain Caribou. The government wanted to give the Central Selkirk caribou herd phoney "aspatial" protection that is nothing more than a prescribed timber volume to be left between clearcuts. It required a fierce struggle by VWS to get definitive areas protected. The protection is partial and weak, but bans logging. VWS also fought to get some of the extensive burned and clearcut areas out of the government's proposed "protection" and real forest put in. The Mountain Caribou Process set back work on the park proposal for at least 6 years, but we had no choice but to participate, and when the dust settled, about one-half of the park proposal was designated no-logging to protect Mountain Caribou. This covers parts of the park proposal outside the Incomappleux Valley.

2005: A critical bridge in protection

Pope & Talbot commenced logging in Boyd Creek, a tributary of the Incomappleux which, though distant from the ancient rainforest, is in the park proposal. A small number of local people blocked the road until the company brought court orders for them to move. The logging trucks moved in, but that night a massive rockfall came down on a key bridge and damaged it; not long thereafter another rockfall did worse damage. Ministry of Forests refused to fix it, and P & T would soon declare bankruptcy. The bridge never has been fixed to standards that would accommodate a loaded logging truck. There has been no Crown land logging in the valley since.

2007: Spribille and BC lichenologists Trevor Goward and Curtis Björk announced the discovery of 7 lichen species new to science in the upper Incomappleux, catapulting the Incomappleux Valley into recognition in international scientific circles.

2010: Reinforcements arrive

Riel Marquardt began making a film on the Incomappleux, including Craig's work aging the trees, and has since used it to introduce hundreds more people to the forest. Eventually, Marquardt and his friends became the Kelowna-based Nature's Presence Foundation. VWS and the foundation have worked together collecting 5,000 signatures on a petition, and have met with the Minister of Environment and MLAs representing the park proposal ridings.

2012: TransAlta withdraws its application for an IPP on the Incomappleux River

BUILDING THE NEXT STEPS TO FULL PROTECTION

1. Now is the time to renew the letter campaign for the park, writing the Premier and key ministers and MLAs.

2. Continue gathering signatures on the petition. You can download the petition and a fact sheet from the VWS website, and mail the signed petitions to VWS.

3. Continue to defend the Incomappleux from development proposals. There are at least two other IPP proposals on creeks lower in the Incomappleux Valley. The one on Boyd Creek, while being distant from the ancient forest, is in the park proposal. Another, at Pool Creek, is well outside the proposal, but is the site of the recent discovery of Methusela's Beard, a coastal lichen species very rarely found in the interior, as well as hosting spawning bull trout. There is also now an application for a new heli-ski operation in the Incomappleux. The company wants to build a lodge on Battle Mountain, part of the intact wilderness south of Glacier National Park. VWS is responding to these things, unfortunately, this newsletter will not reach you before the deadlines for public input.

4. Continue scientific research to document the species that could be lost in further development of the valley, and to show the scientific value of preserving intact ecosystems.

Biodiversity research continues in the park proposal, which has rare habitats that

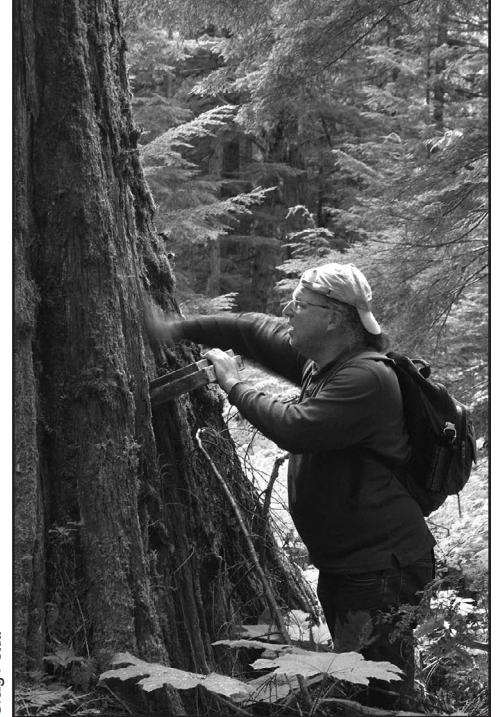
have been very little studied. Scientists around the world are warning that the massive loss of species threatens the survival of life on Earth. The worst loss is occurring at the level of the smaller species. They say we are altering ecosystems before we even know what species live there, unknowingly destroying species that could be key to the survival of other species.

In 2011, a team of experts in land snails gave southeastern BC its very first thorough survey of land snails over diverse habitats at numerous points in the Central Selkirks. Early results were reported in last year's newsletter.

In 2012 the scientists, Dr. Jeffrey Nekola from the University of New Mexico; Dr. Brian Coles, Research Associate, National Museum of Wales; and Dr. Michal Horsák and Veronika Schenková, a Ph.D. program student, from Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, released their report. After lengthy lab work, they had found more species than we reported last year. One-fifth of the snail species found in the study area are species at risk.

"Snails have very important functions in the ecosystem," says Dr. Horsák. "Many other species depend on them for food, mainly carnivorous soil beetles, parasitic flies and also various vertebrates. Snails can effectively concentrate calcium from the environment into

their shells, and thus can act as a source of calcium in an acidic environment. For example in Scandinavia bird populations have been known to suffer rapid population collapse when snails are eradicated due to acidification. Many snails also depend on intact, natural habitats for their survival."



Craig Pettit

Dr. Jeffrey Nekola sweeps debris from the moss on a forest giant into his collection box. At his laboratory at the University of New Mexico, he identified a tiny species of snail never before known in BC or Canada.

WHEN "CLEAN AND GREEN" ENERGY IS REALLY DIRTY BROWN

By far the most important environmental issue anywhere is energy production and use. According to the International Energy Agency, carbon emissions reached an all-time high in 2011. Melting of Arctic ice is proceeding far faster than predicted. Hurricane Sandy is finally recognized as part of climate change, and scientists are saying that we are definitely heading for long-term temperature increases that would make planet Earth uninhabitable.

While industry has never worked harder to deny climate change and thwart any significant action, it is also exploiting the concern for climate change to promote rapid expansion of alternative energy sources. These sources, such as independent hydro power plants, and natural gas, have a lower carbon footprint than coal and oil, but their carbon emissions are still large. Some scientists say the shift to these energy sources will not result in sufficiently reduced carbon emissions to deter climate change.

Unfortunately, the gold rush to develop these alternative sources of energy is being fuelled, not by concern for global warming, but by the corporate quest for endless growth. It is true that the shift to natural gas reduces the use of coal for producing electricity; but total world coal production reached a record level in 2011, increasing by 6.6% over 2010. Companies are simply shipping their coal to foreign markets. These forms of energy are not "alternative"

to coal at all. They are additive. In a review of the 2012 World Energy Report, Professor Michael T. Klare points out that increases in production of coal, oil and natural gas are feeding a global surge in the market demand for these fuels.

Most glaring of all is the gold rush to extract "shale gas" — deriving gas from "fracking", which is blasting rock with water and chemicals, and liquifying it for export to the Orient. The liquified natural gas (LNG) industry is sky-rocketing, and being touted as a solution to climate change, even though studies have proven that it results in *more* carbon emissions than coal. Fracking makes massive demands on water supply while contaminating water tables with toxic chemicals, causing earthquakes and making people sick. The process uses huge amounts of energy, which is driving the increase in private hydro projects that are heavily impacting our fish, rivers and forests. Natural gas and LNG companies have their own disastrous plans for pipelines and increases in tankers plying BC's coastal waters. By touting these forms of energy as "green", industry and governments are evading the necessity of drastic cutbacks in the use of fossil fuels. They are convincing themselves and the public at large that rampant growth in energy consumption can continue. Meanwhile massive environmental damage is being sneaked through, oftentimes without environmental impact assessments, on the excuse of curbing climate change.

CHILCOTIN CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

Dasiqox-Upper Taseko Conservancy Proposal shown to include perhaps the largest surviving whitebark pine stands in Western Canada

This major protection proposal was developed by VWS, Friends of the Nemaiah Valley (FONV), Environmental Mining Education Foundation and the Xenigwet'in First Nation. It includes a large mountain refuge for the West Chilcotin grizzly, major salmon runs, bighorn sheep, many species at risk, and the largest contiguous stands of whitebark pine in BC, if not Canada. The threatened grizzly bear population is the largest residual dryland population left in the Coastal Mountain foothills of North America and is a salmon bear that also feeds on wild potatoes and whitebark pine nuts. Our field surveys show that grizzlies eat the pine nuts by raiding squirrel mid-dens.

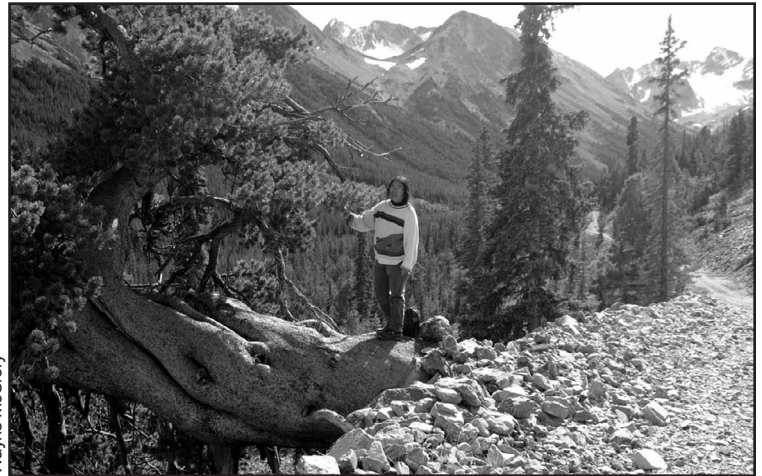
Whitebark or "pinion" pine is an ancient, high elevation species growing up to treeline. It was recently listed by COSEWIC as endangered because many stands in western Canada are dying out due to a combination of pine beetle and blister rust. Major die-offs in Yellowstone National Park are causing conservation concern for grizzly bears, which depend on the pine nuts for fattening up in the fall months. The trees are also largely dependent on seed dispersal by the Clarke's nutcracker, a member of the crow family.

Several years ago VWS began working with the Xenigwet'in on documenting wildlife, fisheries, and plant/whitebark pine values in the Dasiqox-Upper Taseko Conservancy Proposal. This fall the Xenigwet'in, with VWS support, received federal funding to start a species at risk study. It is hoped that the studies will lead to a recovery plan for whitebark pine stands that may be threatened. Protection of the whole area as a provincial conservancy will be paramount in protecting, not just these last great ancient pinion pine forests, but the adjacent Lodgepole pine and Douglas fir forests that act as protective buffers to the whitebarks.

Proposed Prosperity 2 Mine at Fish Lake (Tetzan Biny)

The 2009 application by Taseko Mines Limited (TML) for a gold/copper mine at Fish Lake, in the traditional territory of the Xenigwet'in First Nation, was turned down by a federal Environmental Assessment Panel. But the company re-submitted in a "new" form very similar to the one already rejected by the panel. Phenomenally, the federal government accepted the reapplication, and now the mine is being reviewed again. We need have no illusions about the intent of this. The federal government has hamstrung the new review panel with changes to the *Environmental Assessment Act* that prevent the panel from making conclusions on its review, and it has gutted the *Fisheries Act*, removing the regulations against destroying fish habitat. These changes are aimed at unleashing a flood of mining, drilling and pipeline development across Canada.

First Nations and various groups involved, including VWS, recently identified major deficiencies not adequately addressed by Taseko in their revised environmental review, including the negative and irreversible effects on species at risk such as the threatened Chilcotin grizzly bear, the health of the fish in Fish Lake, the high social costs to the First Nations and local tourism operations, and other major concerns. Worse still, in a November 12 review, Environment



Wayne McCrory

Ancient whitebark pine in Upper Dasiqox-Taseko Conservancy Proposal, likely over 1,000 years old.

Canada rejected TML's draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the basis of three "major" areas of deficiencies related to tailings storage, effects of water quality such as from seepage and surface runoff control, and potential effects on wildlife such as migratory birds, wetlands and species at risk.

Public hearings have not yet occurred, and it would be much better if all involved would recognize that the alternative

plan now under review was seen as worse than the original plan in the earlier review. VWS biologist Wayne McCrory has been working with Friends of Nemaiah Valley (FONV) and the Xenigwet'in First Nation to expand grizzly bear field surveys at Fish Lake. Habitat mapping has shown the area as major spring habitat as well as a significant regional movement corridor for grizzly bears and other wildlife. DNA from hair collected at rubbing mark (trees) shows that at least one grizzly bear travelled between Fish Lake and distant Chilko Lake (where grizzlies gather to feed on salmon).

Massive First Nation and public opposition has continued to mount, but the new panel no longer has the power to act on our pleas, and federal government has already turned a deaf ear to massive public outcry at the gutting of the *Fisheries Act* and weakening the *Environmental Assessment Act*. The public input phase has not begun, stand by for more information in the future.



Wayne McCrory

A set camera has captured a satisfying moment in the secret life of a rare dryland grizzly bear.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Bear Smart program

Today Conservation Officers kill most black bears involved in complaints, instead of relocating some as they have in the past. Between 2005-2010, the province killed an average of 610 black bears and 150 grizzly bears annually. This is far too high and the public does not generally support such killing.

VWS has been making major efforts to reduce bear-people conflicts. We continue to support two Bear Smart coordinators in the Slocan Valley, Daniel Sherrod and Evelyn Kirkaldy. This involves continued public education on controlling attractants, a public circular, hazing bears out of the community, helping people with electric fencing for fruit trees and livestock, and other activities.

In 2012, Daniel and Evelyn gave two workshops in the community on setting up electric fences around chicken yards, fruit trees and other sites where bears and attractants are a problem. They also helped people set up 10 new electric fences and gave advice to others. Daniel in particular was kept busy with our bear community hotline, and working closely with the villages and RCMP on black bear issues. He also arranged free transportation of excess fruit to food banks in Nelson and Castlegar. Despite receiving a small amount of regional funding, untold hours of unpaid labour are being expended responding to bear calls.

In 2012, Daniel Sherrod was also instrumental in getting an

orphan black bear cub from the Arrow Lakes rescued and sent to the Northern Lights Wildlife Shelter for rehabilitation and release.

In March 2012, Wayne McCrory attended the bear-people conflict symposium in Missoula, Montana and garnered new information for integration into the VWS Bear Smart program.

VWS activist Anne Sherrod gathered and submitted a petition to the Village of New Denver with 279 signatures that asked the province to reinstitute live trapping and relocation of black bears. The village endorsed the recommendations of the petition. Subsequently the Village was instrumental in initiating a resolution that was passed at the Union of BC Municipalities requesting adequate funding and staff for the Conservation Officers to be more active and proactive.

A major VWS Bear Smart study for the Upper Slocan Valley is nearly complete by biologists Maggie Paquet and Wayne McCrory. The study was partly funded by Bear Smart, VWS and the local community. It lays out a bear-people conflict prevention plan for the community to reduce the availability of attractants to bears. Results of the study have already been presented to the Villages. Between VWS, BC Parks, the Villages and other agencies, over \$100,000 overall has been invested in bear-proof collection bins. The communities should now apply to the province for Bear Smart status. This will mean that the province will have to do some non-lethal relocations and mild bear aversion instead of just killing the bears.

WOLF "MANAGEMENT" IS RETURNING BC TO BARBAROUS TIMES IN THE TREATMENT OF WILDLIFE

First it was the mountain caribou. The government said we had to start massive shooting and trapping of wolves to save the caribou from being eaten. Many knowledgeable biologists said it would not and it would only cause more damage to the ecosystems. Now the government admits that 11 years of wolf killing programs have not brought about an increase in caribou. The proposed solution? We haven't been killing enough wolves, so now we need to do it from helicopters, shooting whole packs with automatic weapons.

But that's not all. Now it's the cattle. We're being told that ranchers are losing money due to wolf depredations, and that wolves are killing more and more cattle all the time. So there will have to be open season for hunting and trapping wolves in the grazing lands. Yet in 2010 only .01% of BC cattle were killed by wolves (Hume, Vancouver Sun, 2011). The government compensates ranches for verified predation losses.

Yet this increased killing for these reasons is to be enshrined in a proposed government Wolf Management Plan that is now in draft form receiving comments from the

public. **Already, more wolves are being killed than at any time since record keeping began in 1976. According to the draft plan, since then the number of recorded kills hit an all-time high in 2011, with 1,400 wolves killed. But many, if not most, wolf kills are not reported.**

The government has been quietly sitting on the plan for over a year. It was only made public on November 14, and the public was given until December 5 to send in comments. VWS sent out a Wolf Action Alert that is on the VWS website at www.vws.org.

VWS has been networking with a number of independent activists and groups sticking up for wolves. One of them is Sadie Parr, the activist for the Canadian Wolf Coalition. VWS contributed to her trip to a wolf conference in Manitoba this year. We are all asking for an extension of the deadline for public input.

In February of this year, VWS also sent out a press release that gained coverage in the *Vancouver Sun*, regarding the



fact that the government was killing wolves, purportedly to save caribou, while it was failing to ban snowmobiles from caribou winter habitat — a factor known to pack down snow, permitting wolf predation on mountain caribou in their winter habitat in the heavy snows of the subalpine mountains.

VWS is recommending no leghold traps, no open seasons, no helicopter shooting, no shooting for caribou. We are asking for large areas to be set aside where wolves are protected and can live their natural pack life, and supporting payments to ranchers.

**SHE SAW
SHE HEARD
SHE TOOK ACTION**

She exuded an innate sense of responsibility. VWS doesn't allow children to sign its petitions, but she was so self-assured that her voice mattered as much as anyone else's, that she was allowed to sign a letter card for the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal. But for the most part, children must depend upon adults to write the letters that will help protect their future.



Anne Sherrod



Craig Pettitt

A grizzly bear takes a pause from fishing in one of the rivers of the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal.

Spread your letter around to MLAs and these government representatives:

Premier Christy Clark
Parliament Buildings / Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Phone: 250-387-1715 / Fax: 250 387-0087
premier@gov.bc.ca

Hon. Steve Thomson, Min. of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources / Room 248 / Parliament Bldgs Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Be sure to include the NDP Environment Critic:

Rob Fleming, MLA
Room 201/Parliament Bldgs / Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Fax: 250-387-4680
rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca

And send a copy to VWS: info@vws.org

With over 1,500 species at risk in British Columbia, VWS has been asking government for a dramatic increase in the percentage of fully protected lands. The Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal stretches of 4 rivers, rare ancient forest, and extraordinary wetlands. This is a key time to send letters to the government officials shown on the left, asking them to preserve the park. On the VWS Home Page, you can download a fact sheet, a 30-page report, and a petition on the park proposal. If every member filled even one page of the petition and mailed it to us, that would be a great help.

Alas, no park can save ecosystems from impacts that travel hundreds of kilometres. All of our coastal and marine parks are, in fact, gravely imperilled by pipelines and tankers for oil, diluted bitumen, natural gas and liquified natural gas. Like the people of Louisiana during BP's oil spill, or in Alaska during the Exxon Valdez spill, BC residents will be frantically trying to clean black tar off of sea birds and catch oily otters. But who is going to clean up our Spirit Bears, grizzly bears, whales, salmon and wolves? We'll instead have to watch them die ghastly deaths.

There are community hearings on Enbridge in Victoria, Vancouver and Kelowna during January. You won't be able to speak if you haven't already registered to do so, but you can support those who are speaking against it.

Wayne McCrory will be speaking at the Kelowna hearing on January 28.

VWS needs an email list of people who can and will write letters. If you would like to participate, send us your email address so that you can receive our Action Alerts. We don't send many, but right now there are a lot of development proposals coming up. If you are on the list and wish to be taken off, send us an email.

Not all VWS 2012 activities would fit in this newsletter, but you can find an expanded and colour version on our website.



Anne Sherrod

All that is beautiful in nature comes from interconnectedness and flow. Your donations are part of the life blood of the Valhalla Wilderness Society. If you like the work reported here, we hope you will use the enclosed donation form, or go to our website at <http://www.vws.org> and make a generous donation.