

BC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB NEWSLETTER



MAY 2001

VOL 79 NO. 5

HONORARY PRESIDENTS - Esther and Martin Kafer

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

EVENING SOCIALS

Evening socials are usually held in the ANZA club, upstairs room (corner of 8th Ave. and Ontario, Vancouver) starting at 7:30 p.m. Please bring your own cups to socials if you wish to drink the free tea or coffee provided.

Tuesday, 8 May - Entertainment will be a slide show by Richard Prohaska on climbing on the other side of the world in Antarctica.

Tuesday, 12 June - Entertainment will be a slide show.



PRESIDENT - DAVE HUGHES	980-6484
PAST-PRESIDENT - ANDERS OUROM	228-1798
VICE-PRESIDENT - KIT GRIFFIN	736-8462
SECRETARY - MIRELLA LIOCE	736-5079
TREASURER - MARCIA COLLIER	987-5245
MEMBERSHIP/MAILING -	268-9502
NANCY HENDERSON	
MIKE PEEL	
TAMMIE SIBBALD	
SOCIALS - DARRYL MALBY	709-0051
DONNA BAILIE	572-5051
CLIMBING - COLIN WOOLDRIDGE	512-6390
CABIN & TRAILS - GREG HAMILTON	739-7555
CONSERVATION - BRIAN WOOD	222-1541
MONICA BITTEL	983-3097
SUMMER CAMP - DAVID SCANLON	464-3730
WEBMASTER - MICHAEL McCRAE	326-0156
EDITOR - MICHAEL FELLER	270-4050

EQUIPMENT - PAUL KUBIK	876-0764
LIBRARY CUSTODIAN - GEORGE HAMILTON	988-1888



The **BC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB NEWSLETTER** is an official publication of the B.C. Mountaineering Club and is published 10 times per year.

Submissions - of any written, drawn, or photographic material relevant to the B.C. Mountaineering Club are welcome. If possible, submissions should be sent to the editor by email or on a diskette. Deadline for submissions is the first Tuesday of the month preceding the publication month. Send submissions to Michael Feller (email - feller@interchg.ubc.ca, ph. 270-4050).

Editorial policy - All submitted material relevant to the B.C. Mountaineering Club will be published unless the club executive decides otherwise. Submitted material may be edited for clarity or brevity.

Opinions and comments expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 2674, Vancouver, B.C., V8R 3W8
INTERNET SITE: <http://www.bcmc.ca>

Front page photo - Spring skiing in the Purcells, North Star Pk. rising over the col.

SCHEDULED TRIPS

Participation on club trips is open to any person with adequate skills and experience, subject to the approval of the trip organizer. All non-member participants must sign a disclosure and waiver form relieving the club and all other participants on the trip from any liability. A trip organizer is not a certified guide. The function of the organizer is to organize the trip, ensure that it gets underway, know the access to the area, and know a route or routes on the climb.

It is expected that each person on a club trip has the necessary skills, experience, fitness, and equipment. The organizer may specify certain equipment mandatory for participation in a trip. Any person who attempts to participate in a club trip without such mandatory equipment, may be requested to withdraw from the trip. The club has avalanche transceivers and snow shovels available for hire. These may be obtained by contacting Greg Hamilton at 739-7555 prior to the Thursday before the weekend the transceivers are wanted. Each person on a club trip is responsible for his or her own safety and for checking the equipment used. Please be considerate and call the trip organizer by Thursday evening for weekend trips, and by Friday for Sunday trips.

All trips are ski trips unless indicated otherwise.

		ORGANIZER	
May 5: Mt. Bishop (bike/hike) In Seymour Park above North Vancouver.	C2/1508 m	Jean Lederer	733-1322
May 5-6: Mamquam Mtn. Skiing east of Squamish.	C3/2595 m	Greg Stoltmann	926-6496
May 12-13: Snowking Mtn. Skiing in Washington's North Cascades.	B3/2266 m	Peter Gumplinger	733-8264
May 19-20: Golden Ears (hike) Scrambling in Golden Ears park in the Lower Fraser valley.	C2/1706 m	Emil Conde	432-1905
May 19-20: Mt. Shuksan Skiing in the Mt. Baker area of Washington, approaching via the Sulfide Glacier.	C3/(4)/2783 m	Franz Mueter	420-6058

May 19-21: Skaha Rock Fest (rock)	C5	Colin Wooldridge	512-6390
Major rockclimbing festival in the Okanagan (see P. 6). Colin will be organizing a BCMC contingent.			
May 26: Family trip	A1	Alice Obermajer	520-0580
Easy skiing. Contact the organiser for more details.			
May 26-27: Chimai Mtn.	C3/2301 m	Trevor Lumley	990-8258
Extended skiing in the Ashlu valley area.			
May 26-27: Place Glacier area	B3	Ed Zenger	434-3095
Skiing northeast of Pemberton.			
May 27: Mt. Wittenberg (snowshoe)	C	Jean Lederer	733-1322
In the Chilliwack valley area. Joint trip with the NSH.			
June 2: Sky Pilot Mtn. (bike/hike)	C3-4/2025 m	Ian McGillivray	988-3618
Climbing above Howe Sound, both Sky Pilot and The Copilot.			
June 2: Black Mtn. (hike)	A2/1712 m	George Malburg	877-1784
Family hiking trip in Cypress Bowl above West Vancouver.			
June 9: Mt. Martyn (bike/hike)	C3/1573 m	Brett McConchie	525-7029
Scrambling through the bush in Golden Ears park.			
June 9: Mt. Artaban (hike)	B2	Michelle Martineau	873-3606
Hiking on Gambier Island.			
June 9: Lynn Pk. (hike)	A2/1000 m	Nikki Ducharme	689-7851
Hiking in the North Shore mountains.			

SUMMER CLIMBING CAMPS, 2001

Two summer climbing camps for club members have been organized. These are –

1. 4th Annual Lake Lovely Water Summer Camp, 14-21 July

Seven days of mountaineering in the glorious Tantalus Range (map 92G14) with routes to charm the beginner to the advanced. Accommodation is in the luxurious Alpine Club cabin with swimming and boating at the doorstep. \$275 covers helicopter in and out and hut rental. Participants must be club members at time of application, physically fit and have ice axe and basic rope skills. This is a self-guided camp. For information and registration contact Peter Woodsworth at 254-7076.

2. Bendor Range-Mt. Truax area, 11-19 August

This is a minimal cost hike in and out camp offering a variety of hiking and climbing possibilities, with lots for everyone. Participants must be club members at the time of application and must be physically fit. For information and registration, contact David Scanlon at 464-3730.

MEMBERSHIP

New Members

The club welcomes the following new associate members:
Kevin Albert, Craig Clements, Ed Fischer, Helen

Habgood, Thalia Jensen, Rob Kay, Marilyn Krickhar,
Daragh and Karen Laven, Maurice Lyttle, and Stephanie
McClymont.

SUMMER MOUNTAINEERING COURSES

This summer the club will offer several instructional programs, particularly for members who want to upgrade their skills. The programs are economical,

and are taught by experienced volunteers (they are not professional guides). Prerequisites:

- ◆ Current membership in the BCMC (i.e. 2000-2001).
 - ◆ Good physical and mental health.
 - ◆ Payment of program fees, which cover only BCMC and instructor's expenses (surpluses are used to buy club equipment). You must provide most equipment, transport (car pooling encouraged), and food.
 - ◆ Read and sign a comprehensive waiver, and complete a health information form. The focus of the programs is on safety and skills. However, mountaineering and climbing by nature involve significant risks, and you must be prepared to assume them.
 - ◆ Commitment - all sessions are mandatory.
 - ◆ Participants will be screened for ability, fitness, equipment, and potential to contribute to the BCMC. The longer you have been a member of the BCMC, and the earlier your application is received, the higher priority you will have.
1. Courses are also open to members in good standing of the Varsity Outdoors Club.
 2. Programs tend to be fully subscribed, so we cannot guarantee that there will be space. Maximum 12 participants/program. Your application must include the application, supplementary waiver, medical form, and fees.
 3. Dates may be altered due to bad weather or conflicts.
 4. Do not phone organizers or instructors after 10 pm unless asked to do so.
 5. Applications which are not complete in all respects (membership, fees enclosed, forms fully filled out) will be ignored.
 6. Where applicable, complete a separate form for each program you are interested in.

Introduction to Rockclimbing

\$65 (full-time students \$50). This consists of an evening lecture/practice, and a weekend at Squamish. At the end, you should be familiar with basic climbing skills and techniques, and able to set up and use a simple top-roped. You must provide rock shoes, a sit harness, a helmet, one locking karabiner, a belay device (no figure 8s!), and two slings of 7mm perlon (1.5 and 5 m). The BCMC provides other needed equipment, and a copy of a rock climbing textbook for each participant to keep.

Dates:

1A 5/6 May (lecture 3 May, evening)

1B 2/3 June (lecture 31 May, evening)

This program (or equivalent) is a prerequisite for the mountaineering program. Participants in the latter are encouraged to attend session 1A.

Contact: Kit Griffin (736-8462 or kitgriffin@telus.net).

Mountaineering

\$200 (full-time students \$170). This includes three evening lectures/practices and three consecutive weekends. (Introduction to Rockclimbing or equivalent is a prerequisite.) Covers mountain travel and navigation, safety and environmental issues, snow travel, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, self arrest, and ascent of a moderate peak. You must be an experienced backpacker, and by the end of the program you should be able to safely undertake most trips up to the B4 level. Participants must provide all backpacking and camping equipment, sit harness, ice axe, helmet, crampons. The BCMC provides needed technical equipment (ropes etc), and each participant with a copy of Mountaineering - Freedom of the Hills (6th edition) and two prussiks/cordelettes.

Mountaineering: 26/27 May, 2/3 and 9/10 June.

Evenings: Thursday evenings of 17, 24, 31 May.

Fees and schedule do not include Introduction to Rockclimbing.

Contact: Colin Wooldridge (512-6390 or wooldrid@sfu.ca).

Intermediate Climbing

\$120 (full-time students \$100). This will be offered once, for those who have solid top-roping skills, e.g. an introductory course plus a season's experience. You must also be an experienced backpacker. The course will include several evenings and four weekends. Participants will help with session 1B of Introduction to Rockclimbing, and climb regularly together on evenings and free weekends. This course is experience-oriented, and by the end participants should be comfortable leading 5.7 rock climbs, and moderately technical mountain routes. Covers placing and using anchors, equipment selection and use, safety and environmental issues, lead-

ing, training, and related issues. The final weekend will be an alpine rock climb. Participants must provide all required equipment, and will likely need to invest several hundred dollars (or more). The BCMC provides participants with two books about climbing, and instructors' equipment is often used.

Rock II: 12/13 & 26/27 May, 16/17 June, and 7/8 July, plus 2 or 3 June. Evenings: the Thursday evening before each weekend.

Contact: Anders Ourom (228-1798 or aiourom@telus.net).

Rock Refresher Weekend

\$50 (full-time students \$40). This will be offered once, for members wishing to practise and refresh skills. If possible, we will break into several small groups based on skills, experience, equipment, and interest. If inter-

est justifies, more advanced topics (basic rock rescue, anchors) will be covered by some.

Refresher: 9/10 June, plus 7 June (evening)

Contact: Kit Griffin (736-8462 or kitgriffin@telus.net).

Completed applications and cheques for all programs to:

**B.C. Mountaineering Club
c/o Nicole Hoskin
202 - 2710 Lonsdale Avenue
North Vancouver, B.C.
V7N 3J1**

(Call the contact person for each program for information about it, or registration. Nicole does not make decisions about who is/is not registered, whether there's room, etc. so don't bug her about it.)

BCMC CLUB NEWS

1. Club helps finance new guidebooks

The December, 2000, monthly social meeting of the club approved a motion that the club spend up to \$16,000 from our Literary and Reserve fund to assist publication of an alpine select guide for southwestern B.C. A cheque for \$16,000 was finally sent to Kevin McLane of Elaho Publishing, in March. Half of the money will go towards the printing of the alpine select guide while the other half will go towards the printing of a new Squamish rock climbing guide. Both books will be out shortly. The \$16,000 plus royalties should be recouped, as planned, within 2-3 years.

2. Changes in this newsletter – name as well?

The changes you see in this newsletter will, your editor hopes, help to overcome some of the criticisms received in recent years. The newsletter will appear, in full colour, on the club website in the future, where it will be available to club members only in the password-protected section of the site, probably a week or so before it gets mailed out. Some changes in the newsletter were necessary to facilitate its electronic publication. Others were made since the time seemed appropriate.

The name of the newsletter on the front page appears in one of the fonts considered most popular with those who "voted" on the font at the April monthly social meeting. One question is – should its name change from the B.C. Mountaineering Club newsletter to something else? It started its life in 1923 known as the B.C. Mountaineer. In 1970 the B.C. Mountaineer was used for mainly trip reports while the first BCMC Newsletter, with news of club activities, etc, appeared. In 1977, the newsletter's name change to "BCMC News". This ceased in 1979 when it became known as "The B.C. Mountaineer Newsletter of the B.C. Mountaineering Club". The first B.C. Mountaineer in the current format was published in 1976, with another in 1977. For 1978 through 1980 the "B.C. Mountaineer" was essentially the club's General Information Brochure with the summer trips program included. 1982 saw the first of our current biennial B.C. Mountaineers and the newsletter's name was changed back to its current B.C. Mountaineering Club Newsletter. Should we change the newsletter's name to something like "Spindrift" or "Mountain Goat" etc? If you have any ideas please let your editor know.

FEDERATION OF MOUNTAIN CLUBS OF B.C. NEWS

FMCBC Annual General Meeting this year will be hosted by the BCMC.

The FMCBC's AGM will be held on Saturday 23 June in Room 215 in the Angus Building, University of B.C., starting at 10 am. A map showing the precise location of the meeting room will be in our next newsletter.

Billets are wanted for the Friday and Saturday nights of June 22-23, preferably in the west side of Vancouver. These are for out-of-town visitors. If you can provide accommodation for these nights for fellow mountaineers from Vancouver Island or the Interior, please contact Mike Peel (444-4068) or Brian Wood (222-1541).

SKAHA ROCK FEST 2001

Presented By Five Ten, Maxim & Prana
May 19th - 21st, Penticton, British Columbia

YOU ARE ALL INVITED TO WESTERN CANADA'S PREMIERE ROCK CLIMBING EVENT!

LOCATION: Located in the Okanagan Valley of Southern British Columbia, the Skaha Bluffs are just outside the city limits of Penticton.

THE CLIMBING: The Skaha Bluffs are a mere 15 minutes from downtown Penticton! Situated above Skaha Lake, the crags are reached by a day-use pay parking lot. Upon walking up "the stairs", you will find climbs for all abilities from 5.6 up to Scott Milton's 5.13d. And no, Skaha Bluffs aren't just for the sport climber. There's a lot available for the "trad" climber as well, from the 5 star 5.8, "Double Exposure" to climbs in the 5.12+ range. Although the majority of the routes are relatively short, 30 meters on the average, their quality, both the rock and their aesthetics, are enough to make you always come back for more.

THE EVENT: The inaugural SKAHA ROCK FEST will take place on the May long weekend (May 19th-21st), 2001. The planned activities include something for everyone. There are clinics for the beginner as well as advanced, clinics for the photographer and a competition open to all climbers. After a full day of climbing there will be time for people to meet and socialize both evenings at the festival's barbeques and entertainment. There are slide shows lined up by "Skaha Rockclimbs" author Howie Richardson and Vancouver climber/photographer Richard Wheeler. Also, the final night features a live band. This event is planned for people to meet, socialize, have fun and climb lots!

CLINICS: A number of clinics are lined up for the festival. We have climbing clinics for the beginner as well as for the advanced climber. These clinics will be organized through Russ Turner, Skaha Rock Adventures. There is also a photography clinic for the climbing photographer which will be run by Vancouver climber/photographer Rich Wheeler. For information regarding these clinics please go to our web site at www.skaha.org or call Russ Turner at (250)493-1765, or Rich Wheeler at (604)601-1330.

ACCOMMODATIONS: For the festival, people are encouraged to camp at Waterworld RV Park & Family Campground. The campground will be reserving the tenting portion of the campground for the festival. Our goal is to establish a tent city which is within walking distance of our evening socials. The campground has also set up a special "climbers" discount for those who chose to camp there. Prices will be set at \$5/person/night and you are asked to book your spot in advance for the festival. The campground has all the facilities needed - showers, hot tub - and is within walking distance of all amenities. The campground has also asked us to ask those of you who have dogs to please leave them at home for the festival. Thanks for your co-operation. For further information, contact -

Phone: (250)492-4255

E-mail: wonderfulwaterworld@home.com

REGISTRATION: For the festival we are asking people who will be attending the evening socials and the climbing competition to pre-register for these events. The cost to register for the festival is \$20/person. This includes entry into both evening events, hot tub, slide shows (Sat night), Band (Sun night), prize draws, access to barbeques, gear displays/demos. The cost for the

climbing competition will be \$10/person and includes entry into comp, heaps of climbing, and chances to win prizes for different categories. For those who don't pre-register, a registration table will be set up in the Braesyde parking lot on Saturday (May 19) morning and you will be able to register there. All people who register for the festival will be asked to sign a waiver.

ACCESS TO LAKE LOVELYWATER

How to cross the Squamish River if you don't have a boat - Kodiak Adventures offer a boat shuttle service across the river. Contact them in Squamish at 604-898-3356.

SPONSORS: Five Ten, Prana, Maxim Climbing Ropes, Mountain Equipment Co-Op, Arc'teryx, Black Diamond, Gripped-Canada's Climbing Magazine, Metolius, Waterworld RV Park & Family Campground, The Crux Climbing Center, Ray's Sports Den, Barley Mill Brew Pub, The Bike Barn, Skaha Rock Adventures, Greyback Construction, Climbers Access Society of BC.

INFORMATION: Festival e-mail - skaharockfest2001@hotmail.com
Festival web site: www.skaha.org
Phone: Kurt Werby (250) 494-2280, Ann Armstrong (250) 493-8337.

NEWS

Lillooet LRMP - phase 1 is completed but the overall planning process is not yet completed.

comment by M. Feller

In mid-April, the Land Use Coordination Office issued a press release indicating that the B.C. government, by accepting the conservation/recreation option, and not the community/logging option, had brought the first phase of the Lillooet LRMP to an end.

The LRMP table, after 5 years of discussions, agreed late in 2000 to pursue a phased approach to completing this LRMP. Phase 1 established the overall strategic direction for the planning area, including new protected areas and the level of impact on resource development across the land base. Phase 2, to be undertaken from now until March 2002, would add further details to finalize the LRMP.

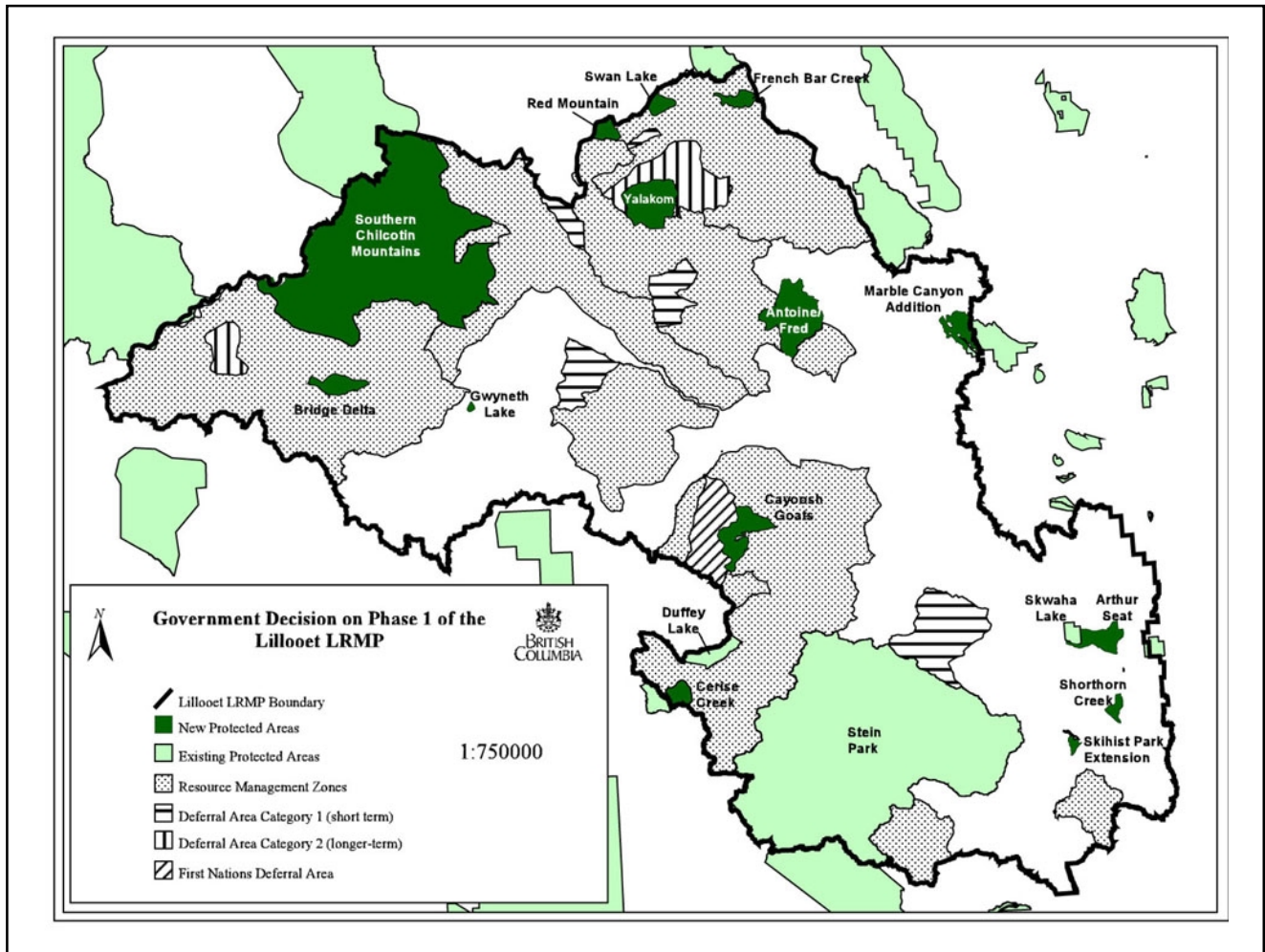
The government has done relatively little and, other than the Southern Chilcotin Mountains, no new protected areas have been created or will be created in the near future. In the case of the Southern Chilcotins, an Order in Council (OIC) was signed confirming it as a protected area and requiring it to be managed as a class A park. However, an OIC can be easily reversed by the next government, and it does not provide as much protection to an area as does legislation under the Park Act. Contrary to rhetoric you may have heard or seen, little has been protected.

The LRMP table was unable to come to a consensus so the two major groups each put forward their protected area options. The government agreed, in-principle only, to the conservation/recreation option, but the press release noted that "government retains the authority to re-evaluate its decision in the context of the final Phase 2 recommendations. If necessary, government may refine its decision to ensure the most appropriate land and resource management plan for the Lillooet area".

Since the present anti-environment government is about to be replaced with an even more anti-environment government, which will be the one assessing the phase 2 recommendations, the fight for protected areas, non-motorized recreation zones, etc. in the Lillooet Forest District has barely begun.

The conservation/recreation option, shown in the figure on P. 8, would protect 71,500 ha of the Southern Chilcotins, its major accomplishment. The remaining 28,000 ha of protected areas would be spread around the Forest District in 12 smaller parks, which include the alpine areas of the northeastern portion of the Cayoosh Range, and Cerise Ck., as well as a portion of the Yalakom. No boundaries are yet finalized. This would be done during phase 2 of the LRMP.

The government requires the Southern Chilcotins to "continue to accommodate a broad range of tourism and recre-



ation (mechanical and non-mechanical as well as commercial and non-commercial), including tourism development in defined areas while maintaining the core wilderness values.”

Several important (to the BCMC) areas that should be protected, such as Lost Valley Ck. (prime wilderness and excellent wilderness skiing and hiking), Siwhe Ck. (only opportunity to do an extended circuit hike utilizing the Stein valley starting and finishing in the Fraser valley, and containing some fine wilderness peaks), Bendor Range (MacGillivray Pass) and Shulaps Range have been put into categories of deferred areas – Lost Valley as a “First Nations Deferral Area”, and the others as short-term de-

ferreds.

A First Nations deferral area is one which will “allow First Nations and government to come to an agreement on land use and designations. Community-based tenures will be considered to provide First Nations with economic opportunities on lands they claim title to but have yet to be resolved through treaty negotiations”.

The other deferral areas “have been established to allow for more detailed planning before resource development activities can occur. Category 1 [short term] deferral areas will be in place for 2.6 per cent of the plan area and will be

resolved during Phase 2 of the Lillooet LRMP process. Resolution of Category 2 deferral areas, covering 1.4 per cent of the plan area, will go beyond Phase 2 until forestry and access planning requirements are met in adjacent lands."

The press release adds –

"These deferrals do not add new impacts for resource development activities. In fact, this overall land-use decision should immediately increase availability of land and resources."

In other words, deferral areas are not seen as protected areas. They seem another form of "Special Management Zone" which, so far in B.C., has meant logging as usual after public consultation, rather than 'logging as usual without public consultation'.

Resource Management Zones, which cover nearly all of the Duffey Lake corridor, for example, are euphemisms for full industrial (timber, mining, ski resort) exploitation. The press release states that – "Establishing these zones is expected to result in a net increase in the availability of [the] timber harvesting land base from where it was at the start of the Lillooet LRMP process. As well, this...could increase the actual forest harvest above current levels."

In summary, it seems as if the size of the southern Chilcotins proposed protected area prevented many of the other areas of importance to us from being considered as protected areas. The struggle to get any of these deferred areas protected will now become that much more difficult during phase 2. This, of course, results from the government's obsession to stay close to the mythical magical 12% figure which has no scientific or social justification. The government did indeed go well beyond 12% - to 18.8% for the Forest District, but, given the nature of the land in question and its importance to wildlife (no corridors are provided for animals, such as grizzlies, to travel between protected areas) and to such a large percentage of British Columbians,

another 10% of the District badly needs protection.

So, where do we go from here –

The 2 options presented to the government were considered "offers" by the table.

The table asked government to accept one or the other of the "final offers" without modification. If government accepted one of the "final offers," then the table agreed that members would accept, respect and support government's decision and immediately start work on Phase 2. The table also understood that government has the authority and mandate to make a land-use decision differing from the presented offers; however, such a decision may not enjoy the support of any or all of the LRMP process participants.

The "final offer selection" process has not been used by any other LRMP. In essence, however, the two offers were considered as distinct consensus recommendations to government since all table members agreed to support either offer if cabinet accepted one or the other.

The Lillooet LRMP table must now complete Phase 2 of the Lillooet LRMP in a manner that reflects, and is consistent with, these decisions made by government in Phase 1.

Phase 2 will complete detailed planning necessary to finalize the land-use plan for Lillooet.

Phase 2 will begin immediately, make substantive progress after eight months, and be completed by March 2002. (theoretically!)

Watch for the entire process to disintegrate under the new government.

TRIP REPORTS

Mt. Rohr, 10 March, 2001

Being basically lazy, we usually prefer to do Rohr as a fast day-trip, thus freeing Sunday for doing the laundry and other relaxing things. Since we had not been up the valley for a few years, it was deemed high time to go back. Lots of other people apparently agreed, and by the end of the week,

we were turning away callers in order to keep the party to a reasonable size.

For once, everyone made it to St. David's church within a few minutes of the assigned time (6:30) and we headed

north, guided by our usual navigational beacon - Tim Horton's. The forecast was for a sunny afternoon, and the sun was visible, although it was fighting a losing battle with incoming cloud. As we started skinning up the logging road (at a leisurely 10 a.m.), the first flakes of snow drifted down. The snow cover was exceptionally thin, so slide alder, boulders and deadfalls that would normally be buried had to be negotiated, but the route was basically straightforward. By the time we reached the basin below the headwall, the frozen snow surface was covered with several cm of new stuff, and travelling was easy. After picking our way awkwardly up the west wall of the basin, we paused in the upper valley for a quick lunch and watched the cloud cover gradually sinking lower.

Optimistically, we pressed on, but as we climbed higher our landmarks began to disappear in the murk and within an hour we were in a total whiteout. Only the sight of a shallow ridge of rocks to our immediate left provided any orientation, and then they, too, faded into the gloom. Cutting across to the right for about 50 metres brought us onto a steepening slope and provided no clue as to our location, so we cut back.

Just as the trail-breaker completed this little traverse, resigned to having to call it a day, a muffled exclamation caught his attention. Behind him, the next person in line was visible, but the remainder of the party was rapidly disappearing down the slope. Frozen into immobility like a Gore-tex tableau, they vanished into the murk without a sound. A deep (60 cm) slab had broken loose along our ski track and beyond, taking out a 70 metre swath of the slope. Fortunately, the slope ran out quickly, so the seven members of the party caught in the slide were not buried by the time it came to rest about 70 metres below the break. Nevertheless, it was a very sobering experience, and convinced us that we should (have) retreat(ed).

Ironically, just after most of the party had de-skinned and started down, the cloud suddenly began to lift and within twenty minutes we were standing under the promised sunny skies. Yes, there was the summit, and there was the correct route. And there was the mother of all cornices hanging ominously above the same treacherous slope onto which we had wandered an hour earlier. We had been even more fortunate than we first thought!

The ski down was very pleasant, with some of the best powder we've ever enjoyed in the Rohr basin, despite the

thin snowpack. By 5 p.m. we were all back at the cars, packed up and headed south. After a good dinner (really) at Wigan Pier in Squamish, it was down the Sound to reach Vancouver at a perfectly civilized hour. Definitely a memorable trip.

Participants: Bob Lee, Erica Ellis, Chris Underwood, Blake Drummond, Margaret Hanson, Dennis Siska, Marina Dodis, Monica Bittel, Margaret Ellis (organizer), and Brian Ellis (reporter)

Avalanche on Mt. Duke, 17-18 March, 2001

I learned to ski in the backcountry. As a result, during my first few years of skiing, avalanches really weren't that much of a threat to me, simply because I refused to venture onto any slopes that were steep enough to release. However, as my confidence has grown, so has my willingness to venture onto steep terrain, to the point where I have become quite accustomed to skiing in avalanche terrain. The safety boundaries in such cases can be quite fuzzy, and it is often difficult to reliably assess danger and risk. Here is a report of what happened to us, offered up so that others can learn from our mistakes.

Seven of us travelled to Mt. Duke on the March 17-18th weekend. We knew that the weather report was for clouds and snow, so we opted for a destination where we could get some decent yo-yo skiing in. After much slogging on logging roads (the alder is just on the cusp of becoming vicious), we broke into the forest and travelled up the basin underneath the Duke-Vantage col. There is good skiing here from the ridge connecting Duke and Vantage, plus the option of accessing much terrain on other aspects as well.

We dropped our stuff, and went off to ski. Skiing from the ridge requires climbing a west-facing slope of about 25-30 degrees, so we dug a pit and a rutschblock fairly low on the slopes. The pit revealed hoar layers at about 35 and 60 cm, and the rutschblock failed at a five (fairly stable). The deep hoar frost layer was still there, but was non-reactive. Satisfied, we set a track up the slope and skied a fantastic run in 30 cm deep powder before returning to camp to have dinner and go to sleep.

The night was fairly warm, with moderate winds and steady snowfall. There was approximately 10-15 cm of new snow overnight. On Sunday we finished breakfast and set out to ski the same slope we had the day before. Dave and I were a few minutes ahead of the rest of the group, and had a brief discussion at the base of the slope about digging a

pit. I decided against digging a pit, as snowfall accumulations were moderate, and I believed the results would have indicated only slightly worse than the previous day, and the previous day's results were pretty good. We were aware, but not too concerned about avalanche danger.

So, I set off up the hill, and as our tracks from yesterday had been completely filled in, I had to break trail the whole way. All routes up to the ridge ascended avalanche terrain, so route finding was largely a task of finding moderately angled slopes and avoiding the worst bits of micro-terrain. The route frequently crossed open slopes, and at one point did a brief traverse of some steepish slopes for want of a better option. We arrived at the top and removed our skins. We skied some moderate (20-30 degree?) terrain and had a fantastic run in great snow. Caroline was trying out her fancy new skis. Like all of the new breed of bright red skis, they seemed truly happy and joyous to be let loose in the powder. I swear - there is something genuinely uplifting about seeing a pair of bright red skis romping through the snow.

At the bottom of the slope, we put our skins back on, found our up-tracks again, and started back up for another run. As we climbed, we had naturally spread out because of differences in arrival times at the bottom. Dave was in the lead, followed by myself, Yuka, and Mike. Frank, Mark and Caroline were below. I had just crossed an open slope and got to a kick turn under some trees when I heard the yells from below me. Mike had started an avalanche underneath him, with the initial fracture line being the ski cut created by the up-track. Feeling the slope moving underneath him he managed to step off the slab and back onto solid snow above, before yelling "Avalanche!" to warn the rest of the party. The slab was about 35 cm deep, and perhaps 15 m wide, and 30 m or so long. It moved slowly, and I could trace its path as it moved down the open slope below. Dave and I were above the fracture line and thus completely safe while Yuka and Mike had managed to avoid being caught by the slab. Frank and Mark were luckily by the far edge of the track, and were able to get to safety before the avalanche reached them. As things calmed down, we were able to find out from Mark that Caroline was OK, although she couldn't move. This statement was the source of some future confusion for myself and others in the party.

As everyone was OK, the immediate concern was to get everyone into safe zones, which took a minute or two. It

turned out that there was a slight communications problem centered around the meaning of the phrase: Caroline is OK. Caroline was indeed unhurt, but had been caught by the avalanche and taken for a ride. She managed to grab a tree on the way down to stop her descent and by doing so managed to keep her head above the snow as the avalanche swept past. However, once the avalanche stopped, she was basically wrapped taco-style around the tree and buried from the neck down. She was somewhat uncomfortable, completely immobile and understandably eager to be out of there. In any case, it is possible we would have come to her aid faster if we had realized the degree to which she was buried. Digging Caroline out took about two to three minutes, and we managed to locate her dropped ski pole about ten to fifteen minutes later. No one was hurt, and no equipment was lost. Our day of skiing was over, however.

ANALYSIS

The slab failed on a hoar frost layer. The initial fracture line started on an up-track that had already been skied by 10 previous people before fracturing under the weight of the 11th. Having gone up the track before, we were less prepared for it collapsing than on our first run. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned in this case, as in another case earlier in the year for me, is that just because a slope has been crossed by 10 skiers does not mean it will support the weight of the 11th. On an up-track, the repeated weight of the skiers on the same track may gradually cut deeper and deeper until the slope releases. In this case, the skier who released the slab was a big guy, and this may have contributed to the fact that the slab released underneath him.

As far as routefinding goes, it is possible that if I had been more cognizant of the danger I might have chosen a slightly different track. The slab that released was on an open slope, and the ski track traversed underneath a convex roll. Just above the release point, I had made several steep S turns to avoid crossing the roll itself. This is a somewhat difficult question, as the slope was too steep to go ski straight up-hill, and the treed areas were discontinuous and might have made for difficult route-finding in the micro-terrain.

One major factor was that we did not dig a pit on the morning of the slide in question. Another pit, dug after the avalanche in the same vicinity of our first pit, got a Rutschblock 4 (failed on the second jump), which borders

on questionable. Interestingly, the block failed at about 60 cm, although on the same layer as the avalanche, meaning that there was great variability in the snow depths and the way slopes were loaded. The slope that we dug our pit on, just to the right of the slope that failed, was evidently much more wind-loaded than the avalanche slope. In short, slope variability was an additional factor whose influence was not known.

It is an open question whether increased discussion and more care before we set out to ski would have changed the outcome. There was a warming trend, and moderate amounts of new snow loading a weak layer that we already knew about. Various members of the party were all aware of these factors and concerned to varying degrees. Still, the results of the post-mortem pit we had dug were still fairly good, and the snow so tempting that I suspect that the end result of a discussion would probably have been to ski the slope, but conservatively, which is pretty much what we did.

Once the avalanche occurred, it took several minutes before anyone in the party reached Caroline and started to dig her out even though her location was known. Although this was not dangerous, it could have been problematic if her situation had been more serious. Communication was awkward, and it is important to remember that what people say and what you interpret may be two different things. While digging Caroline out, two people further up the slope served as spotters for the rest of the

party, but later skied down and joined the rest of the party down below during the middle of the operation. Again, bad communication meant that they were unclear as to their role.

We did many things correctly. Mike yelled "Avalanche!" to warn the rest of the party and this cry was quickly taken up by the rest of the party. Whether by accident or design, the group was well spread out when the avalanche slid and this contributed to the fact that only one skier was caught by the avalanche. After being caught, Caroline kept her head together and managed to stay on the surface and grab a tree, then fight to keep her head above the surface of the snow as the avalanche swept past. We quickly established that everyone was OK, and rapidly got everyone in the group into safe zones after the avalanche stopped.

Finally, we were quite lucky in many ways. The slab that we triggered was fairly shallow, the avalanche relatively small, and the one skier in the party who was caught was not completely buried. Had the avalanche triggered in an area of deeper snow, covered a larger area, or caught multiple skiers, the outcome could have been markedly different.

The winter's not over yet.

Ski Safe!

Jeff Oh (reporter)