

No National Park – The 2% Myth

Featured Commentary

By Arlene Nora Arlow, Volunteer Reporter for the Similkameen News Leader

“Truth Will Set You Free.” How does one arrive at the “truth”? Has the public been duped about the National Park? Is it true that only 2% of the respondents in the 2010 phone survey believed a “National Park” was/is a priority?

It seems that the Province of British Columbia has reopened the debate on what was a proposed National Park between Oliver, Osoyoos and Cawston, BC. The Province is not yet willing to commit to “National Park” negotiations, so they are proposing a compromise. The news release can be found in several local and regional newspapers, including the Penticton Western News at <http://www.pentictonwesternnews.com/news/321829661.html>

The on-again-off-again park has been kicked around for more than 10 years. On December 9, 2003 Senator Fitzpatrick did his best to tout the economic potential of a National Park at a meeting of politicians and First Nations. The event was the “South Okanagan Similkameen Community-To-Community Forum” in Osoyoos, BC. His platform was aimed at everyone in the room. He referred to the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, “Where over 50% of the full time positions including the chief superintendant are held by First Nations People.” He stressed the importance of preserving, “probably the richest but also the most threatened ecosystem in Canada”. He stressed the upside of more research, cultural opportunities for First Nations and tourists, tourism and development opportunities.

Senator Fitzpatrick alluded to other destination tourism places like the Red Bridge near Keremeos, the old town of Fairview above Oliver, and the Haines homestead near Osoyoos. He called Hedley, Keremeos, Osoyoos and Oliver “gateway communities”. There would be trail riding on adjacent private land, bird watching, river rafting, astronomy, hotels, restaurants, environmental lodges, and a “more affluent tourist to visit wineries, golf courses, ski resorts and other recreational facilities.”

What has happened since? The Osoyoos Indian Band has become – through brilliance and persistence – one of the wealthiest Indian Bands in Canada. They have an interpretive centre, desert nature walk, resort, golf course, winery, vineyards and orchards. A provincial prison is under construction on the OIB reserve. And they are planning to build an upscale racetrack for the average joe who has a fast, expensive car and can put his (or her) money where their mouth is. Downside: other than the interpretive centre and nature walk, all of these developments are eating up the natural desert.

The Town of Osoyoos allowed development of expensive, multi-story condos. Downside: family campgrounds were sacrificed; long-standing businesses in Osoyoos are complaining that there aren’t as many tourists as there used to be; and almost every condo owned by an “affluent tourist” that Senator Fitzpatrick alluded to sits empty between October and April. The

only net inputs to the local economy from an empty condo are the electrical meter and the gas meter.

The Town of Oliver approved a commercial development with a Canadian Tire, Tim Horton's, Mark's Work Wearhouse and other retail shops. Downside: there are empty stores in downtown Oliver.

There are more vineyards in the South Okanagan and South Similkameen now than ever before. Wineries in the South Okanagan and South Similkameen are bringing in national and international wine awards every year. Downside: the wineries are eating up natural desert. The Historic Grist Mill And Gardens now has a bright future: in early 2015 a 10-year contract was signed whereby the Province of BC would provide seed money until the facility can stand on its own two feet. Downside: the facility needs a lot of sweat and money to make it profitable.

The LSIB-Lower Similkameen Indian Band has built a state-of-the-art community building. Downside: it will take years to pay off the debt.

All this has happened without a National Park. Here's one for you: Did you know most of the ecosystem biodiversity in the South Okanagan and South Similkameen occurs in the valleys, not the uplands? If you don't believe me, check out this biodiversity map from the BC government [http://a100.gov.bc.ca/appsdata/acat/documents/r42389/SOSRD Biodiversity poster Final 13 96368347789_6365270467.pdf](http://a100.gov.bc.ca/appsdata/acat/documents/r42389/SOSRD_Biodiversity_poster_Final_13_96368347789_6365270467.pdf)

The South Okanagan-Similkameen Biodiversity Conservation Strategy poster (see link in the previous paragraph) takes a few minutes to download, but it is worth the trip. If you can't read the text, simply swipe your mouse across the bottom-centre of the poster. Doing so will cause some symbols to appear. Click on the "+" symbol to increase the image. Then use the sliding sidebar and the sliding bottom bar to move around in the poster.

The biggest proponents of the potential National Park are CPAWS-Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society; the OSPS-Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society; and the WCWC-Western Canada Wilderness Committee. CPAWS has done a very good job of appealing to your sense of guilt about humanity's ecological footprint. After bullying and intimidation, guilt is a powerful social tool, especially in advanced societies that don't live hand-to-mouth.

In May, 2010 the Western Canada Wilderness Committee hired McAllister Opinion Research to conduct a phone survey https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/sites/all/files/McAllister%20-%20Okanagan_Similkameen%20Poll%20-%20JUNE%202010_DISTRIBUTION.pdf

The PDF document begins innocently enough:

The results of this report are based on a telephone survey of 405 randomly selected adults aged 18+, living in the Southern Okanagan-Similkameen region of British

Columbia. A random sample of 405 would yield a margin of error $\pm 4.8\%$, 19 times out of 20.

The 2010 phone survey didn't simply ask questions, it headed participants straight to a moral precipice, corraling them such that if their response was "no" they would either be lying or daft. Between the first and fourth question in the survey, the surveyors managed to take a 2% level of interest in a National Park and twist it into a 63% level of approval. Here is the question #1 from the 2010 McAllister Opinion Research telephone survey:

Q1. When you think about the various issues affecting the South Okanagan – Similkameen region today, what ONE issue CONCERNS you the most?

Believe it or not, this question was intended to secure support for a National Park. You will be surprised at the results. CPAWS and the WCWC have always maintained more than half (more than 50%) of people surveyed in 2010 wanted a National Park in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. What if I told you that of the things foremost on people's minds, the National Park was not a priority? It wasn't even in the top 10. There were more people in the survey whose reply was "Don't know" or who refused to answer the question than there were with a possible National Park on their mind.

The survey results show a MERE 2% OF THOSE SURVEYED believed a National Park was an issue in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Here's what the unprompted "issues" were from respondents in the 2010 phone survey question #1, paid for by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee:

Environment/Conservation issues 17%
Water Shortage/Quality 14%
Economy/Jobs 12%
Lack of affordable housing 7%
Over development/growth 5%
Taxes/HST 4%
Healthcare 4%
Farms/Food 3%
Municipal Issues/Mayor 3%
Too much regulation/government 2%
Schools 2%
Proposed National Park 2%
Transportation/Roads/Transit 2%
Too many people/overpopulation 1%
Politicians/Government 1%
Cost of living/prices 1%
Other (specify) 4%
NOTHING 5%
Don't know/Refused 11%

We will move on. Question #2a in the 2010 phone survey could not have been reasonably be answered by a layman. Why? Because the layman knows neither the amount of available land nor do they know how much of that land has already been protected in the South Okanagan (or South Similkameen). Most likely they believed there is virtually no protected land in the South Okanagan, otherwise why would the person on the other end of the phone be asking such a question?

Q2. Please tell me whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements:

Q2a. We have protected TOO MUCH land in the South Okanagan already

Without a context of the upside and downside of removing land from the general economy and without at least a vague understanding of the protected areas that already exist in the "Okanagan", the responses are moot.

Question #2b on the 2010 phone survey is a no-brainer:

Q2b. It is important to protect the natural ecosystem, plant and wildlife species in the South Okanagan in order to maintain our quality of life here

Unless you live under a rock, you know that your environment needs to be protected in one way or another. Water, food and shelter come from our "environment". For this question, 95% of the respondents agreed with the statement. I, too, agree with the concept. I get it. And so did Abraham Maslow in 1943. He penned a paper called, "A Theory of Human Motivation". "Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs" is the basis for every introductory class in human psychology. The online reference "Simply Psychology" <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> puts Maslow's Hierarchy this way:

- 1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.*
- 2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.*
- 3. Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.*
- 4. Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others.*
- 5. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.*

Let's be real. How many people participating in the phone survey equated the steak they had thawing in the refrigerator to a beef heifer or beef steer that was walking around on all fours a month prior, in the very uplands that CPAWS and the WCWC want to protect?

Were participants in the 2010 phone survey told that persons holding a grazing or hay-cutting tenure, permit or lease are held accountable if they damage the environment? Part 5, Section 46 of the BC Forest And Range Practices Act includes the following:

A person, other than a person described in subsection (1), must not engage in any activity on Crown land that results in damage to the environment

If the Ministry approves the activity in advance or something unforeseen like bad weather happens, an exception to environmental damage can be granted. Seems the BC government holds those ranchers accountable.

Were participants in the 2010 phone survey told that the Nature Trust of BC owns over 70,000 hectares (170,000 acres) of land in BC, including part of the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area and part of the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area, both of which are in or right next to the proposed National Park zone?

Were participants in the 2010 phone survey told that the Province has set aside 9,364 hectares in the proposed national park zone calling it the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area?

Were participants in the 2010 phone survey told about the BC Ecological Reserve Act? The BC Ecological Reserve Regulations? The BC Park Act? The BC Park, Conservancy and Recreation Regulation? The Protected Areas Of British Columbia Act? The BC Ministry Of Lands, Parks and Housing Act? The BC Ministry Of Environment Act? The BC Environment And Land Use Act? The BC Land Act?

Let's move on to question #3 in the 2010 phone survey. Apparently 63% of respondents knew Parks Canada was up to something. In fact, Parks Canada had been studying the National Park proposal for six years. We assume Parks Canada took a thorough look at the prospect, including weighing the economic pros and cons:

Q3. Parks Canada is currently studying a PROPOSAL to create a new Canadian national park in the southern portion of the Okanagan-Similkameen region. This national park would help protect the waters, wildlife and natural systems of this area from population and development pressures. Before today, have you heard about this proposal?

In 2006 the initial National Park concept looked at establishing a park 650 sq km in size. To their credit, Parks Canada's 2010 document pared this down to 284 sq km. The 2010 Parks Canada study map shows approximately 30% of the proposed area is already "Provincial Protected Areas". About 30% is provincial "Crown Land". About 5% consists of four small parcels near Vaseaux Lake currently designated as a "National Wildlife Area". The majority (approximately 35% give-or-take) is privately-owned land.

The 2010 Parks Canada study and map can be found at [http://cpawsbc.org/upload/South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Feasibility Study.pdf](http://cpawsbc.org/upload/South_Okanagan-Similkameen_National_Park_Feasibility_Study.pdf)

Private land is the bulk of the proposal. It is interspersed throughout the proposed park zone. Some of the private parcels are less than 100 acres (40 hectares), some of the private parcels are 1000 acres (400 hectares) or more. Most of the private land is mountainous. Some of the private land is rangeland. Some of the private land is currently used for producing grapes, fruit, vegetables and hay.

How efficient and accountable is Parks Canada, anyway?! To their credit, Parks Canada conducts internal audits on a regular basis. In 2014 they published an internal audit and evaluation http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/pc/R62-442-2014-eng.pdf

In the report Parks Canada states, "A national strategic guide to all establishment and expansion activities has not yet been developed." What's that? Parks Canada doesn't have a policy for establishing a national park?

Parks Canada admits in their 2014 internal audit it does not have a handle on expenses related to establishing national parks:

Actual Expenditures: Expenditures specific to the five step national park establishment process were not readily available. Management was able to provide data covering four years between 2008-09 and 2011-12 but it required several months to produce the information.

Parks Canada's 2014 internal audit also suggests difficulty figuring out how to integrate their field staff if and when they create a park:

Program Design: The evaluation found that there were some challenges pertaining to the clarity of roles and responsibilities, in part in regard to the transition from establishment to operation of the park. Furthermore, there is inconsistency in the way field unit staff are integrated in the national park proposal and the Agency could benefit from clearer guidance in this area.

How is it that Parks Canada has been around for more than a hundred years yet they have difficulty quantifying how much they spend to establish their parks; they don't have a "how-to" policy for establishing a national park; and they don't have a workable policy to figure out what to do with their field staff? All things being equal, their internal audit doesn't paint a terrible picture, but it suggests they may be studying proposals they cannot manage.

Establishing a National Park is the first step. Then comes annual maintenance. Those costs include fire suppression; weed and invasive plant control; fence maintenance; road maintenance; cattleguard maintenance; maintenance of any fire lookout cabins; and watershed

protection to name a few. Every community in the South Okanagan and South Similkameen gets its drinking water from water that flowed downhill. That water flowed downhill from the uplands.

If the Government of British Columbia hands over the tracts of land identified in the 2010 Parks Canada proposal; and if Parks Canada takes over management of the tenures and leases currently managed by the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, there will indeed be overhead costs. Parks Canada will need to employ staff to oversee the list of grazing tenures (10-year term); hay-cutting tenures (10-year term); grazing permits (1 to 5-year term); hay-cutting permits (1 to 5-year term); grazing leases (20-year term); water licenses; registered traplines; guide outfitter permits; electrical, pipeline and utility right-of-ways; and communications tower easements. They will also need to negotiate separate agreements to maintain the area for helicopter training, a practice that has been ongoing for many years. And they'll hopefully protect all the benign activities that one can already do in the great outdoors where the proposed national park zone is.

Being that there is currently no allowances for domestic animals in a Canadian National Park, money and resources will need to go to establishing federal legislation similar to the laws and regulations such as:

BC Range Act http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/04071_01#section55

BC Forest And Range Practices Act

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02069_01

BC Livestock Act http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96270_01

Here's one for you: since 2012, Parks Canada has been trying to get "for-profit" enterprises to run Radium Hot Springs, Banff Upper Hot Springs and Miette Hot Springs. The town hall meetings in those communities have been vocal enough that Parks Canada backed down - for now.

Back to the 2010 phone survey. Question #4 in the 2010 phone survey is the one all of the proposed national park propaganda is based on. It gave the park proponents the leap of faith they were looking for. From question #1 in the phone survey where only 2% of respondents felt a National Park was a priority, we move to question #4 where apparently 63% of respondents were in favour of establishing a national park. Whoa there!

How is that? There was a 61% increase in expressed interest for establishing a National Park in less than two minutes? Are people really that gullible? Did the telephone respondents suddenly decide that all their other concerns mentioned in question #1 were suddenly trumped by a potential National Park? Apparently so! Or at least that is what we are supposed to believe. Such a rapid change of direction seems to me like a double-double, whopper, "Super Size Me" leap of faith. Perhaps the employees of McAllister Opinion Research should be in sales, not surveys.

As far as reliable, clinical data, a conclusion cannot possibly be reached from question #4 in the 2010 phone survey. The variables – the respondent’s awareness and knowledge of the topic – are not qualified nor quantified. The respondent’s blissful ignorance of any “negative” outcomes for a new national park is apparently not relevant:

Q4. Given what you presently know, please tell me if you would FAVOUR or OPPOSE protecting a portion of the South Okanagan-Similkameen in a National Park? [PROBE: would that be STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT]

Here’s the responses to phone survey question #4:

Strongly Favour 43%
Somewhat Favour 20%
Depends/Neutral 4%
Somewhat Oppose 8%
Strongly Oppose 18%
Don’t Know/Not Applicable 7%

One must give the folks credit who wrote the questions for the 2010 phone survey because they aren’t suggesting that knowing anything at all about the topic is relevant. In fact, they are giving ignorance full reign, because question #4 begins with “Given what you presently know...”. If the respondents had never read even ONE of the references included here in my commentary then they likely didn’t know very much at all. But apparently that didn’t matter.

The truth needs to be considered.

Let’s fast-forward to 2015, when another telephone survey was sanctioned, this time by SOSNPN-South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Network. Perhaps there was a rumour amongst park proponents that McAllister Opinion Research does a bang-up job, or perhaps the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Network understands about “If It’s Not Broke Don’t Fix It.” In any case, they didn’t secure another research company (there are several national companies that do phone surveys). They went with the tried-and-true McAllister Opinion Research.

It would seem that if one asks a question often enough, you might get an answer that you want. Children do it all the time. “Can I go to the movies?” will be repeated until the parent either gets mad or says, “Okay, you can go.” The 2010 phone survey tries to make the national park topic important when in fact, only 2% of the respondents saw it as relevant in the first place.

Exactly like the 2010 study but with even less credibility, the 2015 phone survey questions and conclusions are skewed because the variables – the respondent’s awareness and knowledge of the topic – are apparently not relevant. The respondent’s blissful ignorance of any “negative” outcomes to a national park proposal are disregarded. It seems the double-double, whopper,

“Super Size Me” leaps of faith are getting bigger

<https://sosnationalpark.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/poll-briefing-note-final-2015-study.pdf>

When one breaks a promise to a child, the child knows it and they resent it. Thus-far, the general public is not aware of negative outcomes to a proposed national park. There will be broken promises.

Armed with misleading statistical data, CPAWS-Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society took their sideshow on the road. In their 2012 roadshow, CPAWS twisted facts and presented misinformation. Their 2012 roadshow featured community powerpoint presentations in Osoyoos, Cawston, Okanagan Falls, and Princeton. In Osoyoos they stated the National Park would bring more tourists. In Cawston the National Park would bring more tourists to local wineries and to the Historic Grist Mill And Gardens. In Okanagan Falls the National Park would bring more users to the Penticton airport. In Princeton it would bring doctors and tourists because Princeton will be the “Gateway To The National Park”. (Wait a minute, in 2003 Senator Ross Fitzpatrick didn’t say Princeton would be a “Gateway”, he said that Hedley, Keremeos, Osoyoos and Oliver would be the “gateway communities” to the National Park. What gives?! Have we been duped with a double-double, whopper, “Super Size Me” sales pitch?!!!)

In each of the powerpoint presentations that CPAWS gave, the National Park was going to be the pill, the remedy. Osoyoos was trying to figure out how to keep their residential condos from emptying out by October of each year; TOTA-Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association was launching a pilot project, partnering with the Chamber of Commerce in the South Similkameen; the Province was considering mothballing the Historic Grist Mill And Gardens; there was an active campaign to bring Westjet to Penticton; and Princeton was struggling to bring even one doctor to their community.

What of now? Osoyoos still hasn’t figured out how to keep its affluent tourist condos from emptying out after the dog days of summer; the TOTA regional tourism strategy is expanding and is touted as a darling child to other tourism boards throughout the Province; wineries in the Similkameen, Oliver and Osoyoos area continue to win international prizes for their wine; businesses in Osoyoos still complain about the dwindling tourists; there are still empty businesses in downtown Oliver; the OIB secured an agreement for construction of a provincial prison on their lands; in early 2015 the Province announced they would provide seed money for 10 years to help the Historic Grist Mill And Gardens stand on its own two feet; the LSIB-Lower Similkameen Indian Band has built a state-of-the-art community building; Westjet decided not to come to Penticton; and Princeton has succeeded in attracting doctors. CPAWS, the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Network, and Western Canada Wilderness Committee did not assist with any of these efforts. Huh!

I don’t disagree that protecting our environment is important; I have no doubt that all “No National Park” signs were made by someone who cares about the environment; and I laud the progress in protecting the environment:

Sagebrush Slopes (protected 2012)
Sparrow Grasslands (protected 2012)
South Block (protected 2014)
Kit Carr (protected 2015)

Mankind and Mother Nature both impact nature positively and negatively. As of today, August 20th, wildfires rage near Oliver, Osoyoos, Midway, Rock Creek and Greenwood. Homes, businesses, livestock, RV's, parkland and undoubtedly wildlife have succumbed to the flames. First Nations believe that wildfires happen "when the land is sick". Humankind has a responsibility to protect the planet so there is something left for future generations.

The truth needs to be considered.

Currently, much of the proposed national park area is already protected in one way or another. Years before the 2012 CPAWS roadshow, local ranchers, farmers, politicians, business people, concerned citizens and provincial ministries drafted regulations to protect the wilderness that might otherwise comprise the national park. They did it because they care, and they did it because ranching and wilderness go hand in hand. Google "Biodiversity Ranching".

Almost a dozen laws and regulations – many of which are 10 and 20 pages long – have been referenced in this document for your reading pleasure. The strength and number of regulations that ranchers must follow when they put their cattle out on crown land for grazing is no small feat.

The provincial crown land in the proposed national park area is critical grazing land for the region's beef industry. Thousands of cattle range in the timber, grasslands, streams, logging roads and back country of the BC Southern Interior. The handful of ranches in the South Similkameen and South Okanagan would simply not survive if a national park was imposed. Those same ranchers already truck some of their cattle more than 300 km to get them to and from summer pastures because there is more demand than available grazing land. The rich valley floors are used to grow hay for those same cattle to eat during winter: BC Southern Interior enjoys three, sometimes four cuts of hay each year.

I have done the research, and according to Statistics Canada, each beef cow in Canada contributed \$1768 to the Canadian economy in 2006. Logic suggests that same impact has likely increased another 20 or 30% since. To take that piece out of the local economy will have a huge detrimental spinoff effect: the local bank, restaurant, grocery store, mechanic and countless other businesses would feel the hit. The beef cattle industry in the South Okanagan and South Similkameen contributes money to the local economy 365 days a year and has done so since the mid 1800's. If you want more info on the history of ranching in the South Similkameen and South Okanagan Google "Richard Lowe Cawston"; "Tom and Elizabeth Daly"; "William H. Lowe"; "Francis Xavier Richter"; "Barrington Price"; or "Emanuel Barcelo". Those names are but an introduction.

CPAWS essentially says, “Build A Park And They Will Come”. There is even a fancy word for it: “Amenity Migration”. CPAWS says that people would rather live close to a national park than anywhere else if they had the chance. If that were true, Canada’s largest urban centres would have evolved “because of” proximity to a national park. If that were true, both Edmonton, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta would have evolved just outside the boundaries of Jasper and Banff National Parks. It just isn’t so. With rare exceptions, people migrate to where they can get a job and raise their families. In 1851, 87% of Canada’s population was rural: 2,118,218 of Canada’s 2,436,297 people DID NOT live in a town or city. In 2011, a mere 19% of Canada’s population was rural: 6,329,414 of Canada’s 33,476,688 people DID NOT live in a town or city <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62a-eng.htm>

If you care to do any research on Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan, and if you care to Google the communities near to that park, there are few amenities close to Grasslands National Park. The park itself has gravel roads. And a campground. There are no amenities inside the park, no hotels, no restaurants, no towns. Within a few miles of the park boundary are a couple of towns with a couple of paved streets, possibly an older motel, maybe an older cafe. That’s it. There is no “Amenity Migration” near Grasslands National Park, nor to practically all of Canada’s 44 National Parks http://www.pc.gc.ca/listing/np-pn/recherche-search_e.asp?p=1

The park proponents also try to tell us that domestic animals such as cattle are allowed in at least one of Canada’s National Parks.

The truth needs to be considered.

Regulation 16. (1) (u) of the Canada National Parks Act states: “(u) the control of domestic animals, including the impounding or destruction of such animals found at large;”. Domestic animals – including dogs – are not permitted to roam in a Canadian National Park. According to the National Parks Act, parks staff can simply destroy them

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-14.01/FullText.html>
<http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=5&ved=0CDQQFjAEahUKEwisztXdbHHAhWGOIlgKSh9ARM&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pc.gc.ca%2Feng%2Fpn-np%2Fab%2Fjasper%2Fvisit%2F~%2Fmedia%2Fpn-np%2Fab%2Fjasper%2Fpdfs%2Fvisit%2FBrochures%2Fregulations-brochure-ENG-FINAL-lowres-Accessible.ashx&ei=SljSVayBGYbxoASo-oWYAQ&usg=AFQjCNFLpZ3fhuImtKPe-BIpoI1hyWSRyA>

The only park in Canada that has permitted cattle to graze is Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. The cattle are part of a temporary experiment to study the environmental impact that reintroducing bison to the park might have. Both cattle and bison are hooved creatures, and cattle are a lot easier to transport and herd than bison. The average weight of a beef cow and a bison cow are similar, around 1100 lbs. What sets the bison apart is their

bigger-than-life attitude: in Yellowstone Park, Bison are considered to be the most aggressive animal.

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/nature/eep-sar/itm11/itm11k.aspx>

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/sk/grasslands/visit/visit7.aspx>

Not only does CPAWS suggest, "Build A Park And They Will Come", they are adamant that international tourists will visit the proposed national park, too. They fail to mention that most of Canada's National Parks have few amenities, and because of that, tour buses don't go there. In keeping with that, CPAWS has stated there will be no amenities in the proposed national park. Without motels, hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, gas stations, marked walking trails, ski lifts, canoeing, and campgrounds, few international tourists would visit tourist traps Whistler, Jasper, Banff, Radium Hot Springs, West Edmonton Mall, the beach, whitewater rafting, wine tours, Starbucks, their tablet... How is it, then, that the proposed National Park will be so radically different, such a draw, such a big deal?

In contrast to the 365-day-a-year spinoff from ranching, tourism in the BC Southern Interior contributes to the economy chiefly in June, July and August. Tourism does indeed inject millions of dollars into the Southern Interior economy every year, but it doesn't do much of that outside of the peak summer season. Businesses that cannot survive through the slow season simply cease altogether. It happens all the time.

What, then, of other National Parks like Jasper and Banff? Don't they matter? Yes, of course they matter. They are international attractions that offer up nature, convention centres, arts, exotic spas, hot springs, skiing, golf and a slew of other things to do. But Parks Canada is already trying to sell off the hot springs that many of us have fond childhood memories of.

The truth needs to be considered.

Jasper and Banff were created by reserving hundreds of square miles of wilderness. Prime Minister John A. MacDonald set aside the first 10 square-mile parcel in 1885. The parcel surrounded a natural hot springs. Acts of Parliament succeeded in reserving the rest of what was for a time called "Rocky Mountains Park". Between 1890 and 1920, the Stoney (Assiniboin) Indians were unceremoniously removed from what would become Banff National Park. There was little "cost" and most certainly, no currency changed hands. And the premise of protecting that 10 square-mile parcel back in 1885 was to keep the hot springs out of the hands of profiteers who realized that rich folks don't mind bonding with the great outdoors as long as they can do it in style!

The proposed South Okanagan Similkameen National Park would be made up of non-contiguous chunks of land, and many of those chunks would be surrounded by private land. Filling in the blanks will literally take millions of dollars and generations.

Parks Canada will need to buy up private land if and when property owners decide to sell to Parks Canada. There is no law enacted that says once a national park is established adjacent property owners must first consider selling their property to Parks Canada if and when they are ready to sell. Whereas Jasper and Banff were created with the stroke of a pen and some creative negotiations with First Nations, the proposed national park could well take generations and millions of Canadian tax dollars to take shape.

Parks Canada is not willing to disclose exactly “who” wants to sell their land to form the proposed park. I tried that. I had to send Parks Canada a personal cheque for \$5. to get them to pen a letter denying my request. The letter stated Parks Canada cannot disclose that information.

They are only saying that “some” adjacent property owners want to sell their land to Parks Canada. It begs the question: are there people in the South Okanagan and South Similkameen who are currently vocal in supporting the national park because they want to sell their land to Parks Canada? If so, that would be deemed to be a legal “Conflict Of Interest”.

In 2012, 2013 and 2014, Parks Canada suffered unexpected budget hits. Apparently things haven’t improved much, because as of late, the Canadian Government isn’t budging much on its parks budget.

Dare I ask whether Parks Canada has or will have the money to buy all the desired private properties for the proposed national park? Canadians want national parks but they may not want to pay millions of tax dollars to create them. The park proponents and Parks Canada have not been forthcoming with projections of the actual “cost” of creating the proposed national park. Oh ya, I almost forgot: Parks Canada doesn’t have a policy paper on how to establish a national park.

Being that domestic animals and domestic livestock are not permitted in a National Park, who will pay the cost of fencing literally thousands of linear miles of park so that the park area is kept apart from the private land – or so that the private land is kept apart from the park area? Who will pay to maintain those fences?

If we put up fences, wouldn’t we be trapping migrating wildlife like prisoners? Wild animals are territorial, and those territories can be a couple of square miles to 20 or 30 square miles. Much like cattle either wander down or are brought down from the uplands and timberland in the Fall, many wild animals come out of the hills in the Fall, too, in search of food. Fencing small parcels of national parkland will prevent those that can’t go over or under the fences from migrating. They will simply starve. When wildfires erupt, they will perish at the fenceline. I have personally seen the remains of a moose that perished while entangled in a barbed wire fence. It was a slow and frightful death for the moose.

Here’s one for you: Did I mention that Jasper Park was never ratified by First Nations?

Apparently Parks Canada has had huge infrastructure deficits for many years. The debt load of its Hot Springs Enterprise Unit simply rolls over from one budget to the next. Parks Canada's \$15-billion in assets are in a poor state of repair.

As a result of the April 29, 2015 federal budget, Parks Canada forecasts expenses of about \$737.3 million in 2015-16. In 2014-15 Parks Canada expenses were \$736 million. A decade ago in the 2005-06 season, Parks Canada spent \$525 million.

Parks Canada continues to establish more parks each year. Rouge National Urban Park near Toronto is slated to cost \$14 million a year until 2022.

Parks Canada publishes its financial statements. What it can't pay for, our Federal Government picks up the tab: In 2014-15 expenses are expected to exceed revenues by \$614 million. In 2013-14 expenses exceeded revenues by \$547 million. In 2012-13 expenses exceeded revenues by \$540 million. In 2011-12 expenses exceeded revenues by \$611 million. You get the idea.

I'll bet that neither Parks Canada, CPAWS, CPWC nor OSPS did the math for you. There will be broken promises.

I could throw myself into my work, or choose to watch TV, or go camping (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or go 4-wheeling (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or go hunting (currently allowed in some of the proposed National Park area), or go horseback riding (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or watch wildlife (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or stargaze (Mt Kobau is one of the best stargazing mountains in Canada), or work to protect the environment (there are many protected areas in the proposed National Park area), or otherwise not speak up. I think you get the picture.

I am not afraid of those who support the national park. But I am afraid of destroying the ranching industry and sporting pursuits (yes, international sportsmen spend money here); I am afraid of lies because once a lie perpetuates, it just keeps getting bigger; I am afraid of people's egos, because most honest folks won't want to admit that they've been duped; I am afraid of Parks Canada not being up to the task because they don't have proper policies in place and they don't have the money; and I am afraid of betting tourists will bring millions of dollars to the local economy when there won't be any paved roads up the mountain to draw them away from Whistler, Jasper, Banff, Radium Hot Springs, West Edmonton Mall, the beach, whitewater rafting, wine tours, Starbucks, their tablet... I am a bookkeeper by trade and I am not in favour of biting off my hand to spite my arm.

You owe it to yourself. If you buy the "Gateway To The National Park" shtick of Senator Ross Fitzpatrick and Chloe O'Loughlin of CPAWS; if you believe that there hasn't been a darned good effort at protecting the uplands; if you believe there is more biodiversity in the uplands than the valleys; if you believe the bad guy is the business owner or the rancher; and if you don't believe we all have an ulterior motive, you are guilty of being a sheep.

Speaking of sheep, here's one for you: Domestic sheep and wild sheep must not make contact with each other. The former carries pneumonia and diseases that kill wild sheep. That's just another "truth" to give you pause when it comes to pacifying your sense of guilt.

My comments are my own and are not sanctioned or otherwise endorsed by anyone else. I have offered this information to you because my ulterior motive is the truth. It's very liberating. Thousands of years ago, somebody said, "Truth Will Set You Free".

Deception and one-sided propaganda prevail because our egos attach to them. For those who want to give voice using truth and research, I tip my hat, whatever "side" they might be on. To throw insults to your detractors touting a half-baked, spin-doctored phone survey that takes double-double, whopper, "Super Size Me" leaps of faith, you're barking up the wrong tree.

If you want to do your own research, drop me a line [replace "(at)" with the "@" symbol here and send me an email]: aarlow(at)telus.net and I'll send you a list of resources to get you started.

Or you could throw yourself into your work, or choose to watch TV, or go camping (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or go 4-wheeling (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or go hunting (currently allowed in some of the proposed National Park area), or go horseback riding (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or watch wildlife (currently allowed in the proposed National Park area), or stargaze (Mt Kobau is one of the best stargazing mountains in Canada), or work to protect the environment (there are many protected areas in the proposed National Park area), or otherwise not speak up.

You have until October 12, 2015 to respond to the BC Government's "Policy Intention Paper"
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/protected-areas-framework-s-okanagan.html>