

Cortes Island (Area I) Regional Director's Report

I hope everyone enjoyed a pleasant and peaceful festive holiday season. One of my memorable experiences was the drive from Pt. McNeill to Campbell River the morning of December 24. We ran with a storm the entire time—encountering snow, at times mixed with rain, from Hoomak Lake to just north of Sayward. At times the swirling snow was mesmerizing and beautiful. However, road conditions slowly deteriorated and traveling became tense. The worst conditions were just before we started the descent into the Sayward Valley. A number of cars were off the road—some intentionally, others not. Brian and I decided to carry on hoping the snow would turn to rain as we dropped into the valley—which thankfully, it did. From there onward we had only to contend with heavy rain and wild winds. These weather forces did abate and enabling the last ferry to sail. We did make it home for Christmas—which was most delightful.

This was just one of the many storms to hit our area this season. It has been approximately 10 years since we last experienced a relentless storm season. That was when Brian and I finally succumbed to the fear of losing everything in the freezer and bought a generator. I understand many island residents have made similar investments this year. It is handy to have some form of back-up power when storms knock out hydro service with such regularity or for long periods of time. Most report they were pleased with the timely response by BC Hydro to the severe damage to power lines/poles.

Shortly after New Year's celebrations I started to hear from folks who had lost their phone service during the December storms. Isolated and pocket outages are scattered across the island—many without phone service for over a month. Since then I have been in regular contact with Telus stressing that such lack of service is unacceptable and poses a huge safety risk for those unable to contact emergency services. WE are not alone in this situation. In response to the many phone calls, and letters written, Telus dispatched 5 technicians to Cortes January 10 and had a projected goal of completing all repairs by January 12. This was not possible and crews continued to repair telephone service through the weekend. I was told a line truck would be on the island today-- January 15 but have been unable to confirm that. I have been keeping track of phones repaired and those still waiting—it enables me to have current, accurate information when communicating with Telus representatives or Claire Trevena.

A Public Meeting with BC Hydro was cancelled by the first major storm in November. The concept of the meeting has expanded to include Telus representatives. Current plans are to hold a joint Hydro/Telus meeting after storm season has passed. I have verbal confirmation that representatives from both service companies will attend. Ideally the meeting will take place sometime between March and late May. An announcement will be made when a date is confirmed.

The 7 km trail system associated with Siskin Park and surrounding area was also affected by the severe windstorms. Trees were windblown across trails throughout the network. A contractor has been contacted and cost assessments are underway. Regular users of the trail system can be assured this particular situation is being addressed.

As you might have gathered from this report, one of the side effects of the storms has been to turn me into the proverbial “squeaky wheel.” I do hope everything will be

restored shortly and that we are not troubled by another disruptive storm for some time. I am one of the many looking forward to the end of this storm season.

Surrounded by snow and cold my thoughts turn to pruning, seed orders, and plant starts. I anticipate snowdrops, primroses and crocus' bursting forth at the earliest opportunity. Until then, there's always a seed catalog to curl up with by the fire and dreams of gardens yet to be. Stay warm.

Feel free to contact me at 935-6488 Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4 pm. If you get the answering machine try my cell phone -- 202-6488. You can also email me at brijen@oberon.ark.com anytime.

Respectfully submitted by Jenny Hiebert—Regional Director Area 'I' (Cortes)