

Cortes Island (Area I) Regional Director's Report

The summer seemed bereft of sun and the seemingly fine summer days usually found me attending some sort of meeting. However, over time I've noticed that the weather generally improves when kids head back to school. That sure happened this year and I'm hoping good weather holds through Thanksgiving. It would be nice to have some fine weather to harvest the last of the garden, put it to bed, and prepare the garlic bed for fall planting. So while visions of garden tasks float through my thoughts, I'll share updates on items of ongoing interest to the community.

BC Hydro Update

A small group of island residents attended the public meeting with BC Hydro and Telus representatives in June. Discussions have continued since that meeting and some positive outcomes are beginning to take place.

BC Hydro has successfully found a location to construct a new equipment storage building in the desired Gorge Harbour area. They have entered into a lease agreement for "Melnechenko's overgrown horse field", across from the Gorge Hall. The field has been cleared of broom and culverts installed. The field will soon be seeded in grass and construction of the equipment shed started.

The protected waters of the Gorge Harbour offer better, consistent landing opportunities for floatplanes during stormy weather. Ideally, this will facilitate better response time during power failures. The field also allows for the safe landing of a helicopter and BC Hydro may utilize this potential to bring crews and/or materials to the island under **extreme circumstances**. Use of a helicopter is the least cost effective means of reaching Cortes and is utilized only when there is no other viable option available. It should be noted that BC Hydro does not intend to develop this site as a "helipad."

At the June meeting it was generally recognized that the communication system within BC Hydro did not work well during last year's extreme storm season. The system has been reworked and ideally communication within the organization has improved so crews actually have necessary "on the ground" information.

Lack of telephone service continues to be the main concern during power outages. The battery backup system is supposed to work for up to 24 hours. I hope everyone is aware that any phone that plugs into an electrical outlet, (i.e.: phone/fax machines and cordless phones) does not work during a power failure. Everyone should have a simple phone that plugs directly into the phone jack as a back up. This is only this type of phone that functions when the power is out.

Beach Access Update

Development of beach access trails has moved forward. The Hayes Road access has been completed except for signage. Moon Road has been legally surveyed and the trail alignment is being finalized.

The beach access off Seascapes Road became overly complicated by the construction of an unauthorized trail by the "trail gremlins." While well intentioned, the construction of that trail did not meet Comox Strathcona Regional District (CSRD) standards that increased liability issues and the legal survey determined a significant

portion of the trail was in trespass on private property. Understandably, this complicated the working relationship with adjacent landowners. This, in turn, required more staff time and increased the costs of the trail. Despite the various set backs outlined above, CSRD staff continue to work on the design for a safe, long lasting trail to suit the steepness of the Seascape beach access. However, any further unauthorized development on any of the four CSRD beach access tenures may result in the loss of tenure for that access. A lot of community time, energy, and money have gone into the development of these trails. It would be most unfortunate if a few impatient individuals were to jeopardize this community-based initiative.

Feel free to contact me about these or any other concerns at 935-6488 Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4 pm. (No early morning, late night or weekend calls, please.) 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