

### **General Concept**

Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park's recreational values are only of moderate significance. On its own, the Park does not offer provincially significant visitor opportunities or make a significant contribution to satisfying provincial recreation goals. Features and backcountry opportunities such as Cream Lake, Bedwell Lake, and Phillips Ridge which are key to Strathcona Provincial Park and of high provincial significance, lie just beyond the Park boundaries.

Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park has an important function as an access point to backcountry opportunities of Strathcona Provincial Park and provides features and viewpoints in the travel corridor.

### Local Recreation

Primary recreational features of Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park are Lower Myra Falls, remnant old growth forests and the riparian zone along the lower Thelwood Creek. Facilities have been developed to present and protect some of these recreational opportunities offered by these features; other features still require development to allow realization of the feature's potential. Mining operations within the Park inhibit full development of the area's recreation potential.

Paved roads, Highway 28, and the Buttle Lake Road, provide easy access to day use opportunities. Day use activities associated with recreational features include nature appreciation, fishing, and short walks. The visual quality of the surrounding landscape is an important contributor to this experience. For local residents and visitors from Strathcona Provincial Park these features including the mine, are day-use destinations.

Access to the following backcountry destinations originates in Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park:

- Arnica Lake, Mount Phillips, Marble Meadows, The Golden Hinde and backcountry routes to the Elk River Trail and Highway 28;
- Upper Myra Falls;
- Tennent Lake, Mount Myra and Mount Thelwood, and
- Bedwell Lake, Bedwell Valley, Cream Lake, Mount Septimus, Big Interior Mountain and Mount Tom Taylor.

### Backcountry Recreation

While Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park has few opportunities for backcountry recreation, features in adjacent areas of Strathcona Provincial Park are important. The Park's role is to ensure that access remains available to these features. While indirect, this role is very significant.

One backcountry destination, Arnica Lake, is significant for its backcountry camping potential. It is the first stop on the backcountry routes to Marble Meadows, the Golden Hinde, and the Elk River Trail, and Highway 28. Mount Myra is a backcountry destination on the south side of the Park.

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## **Access Strategy**

The mine is the southern terminus of the Buttle Lake Road. As access to the backcountry is an important function of the Park, roads leading to trailheads must be maintained to a standard suitable for passenger vehicles during the hiking season. Westmin Resources Ltd. maintains the road leading to one of the key trailheads, that of the Bedwell Lake Trail. Use by the public has not been impeded by mining operations. BC Parks will work to maintain the cooperative support of Westmin Resources Ltd. for unrestricted public access.

The use of aircraft, in particular helicopters, to access and work in the Park is a concern. To enter the Park, aircraft must cross Strathcona Provincial Park. As a consequence, aircraft entering the Park will have to abide by the strategy for air access established in the Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan. This strategy states:

*"An Air Access policy process will develop voluntary guidelines to control military, commercial and private overflights and their effect on the wilderness experience of those travelling on the ground. The popularity of aircraft access over and in the vicinity of the Park has affected the enjoyment of wilderness for many visitors."*

The mine has an operational need to use helicopters and is permitted to do so under its Park Use Permits. In some cases, helicopter use is encouraged to avoid road building. As the majority of the mining activities are road accessible, use of helicopters is expected to be rare. Westmin Resources Ltd. is committed to working with BC Parks to support the air access strategy for Strathcona Provincial Park.

### **Objective:**

- To minimize the impact of aircraft on park visitors and wildlife.

### **Actions:**

- Work with Westmin Resources Ltd. to minimize the impact of helicopter use on wildlife and recreational values.

- Encourage Westmin Resources Ltd. to time their use of helicopters to low public use periods.
  - Include the Park in the comprehensive air access policy for Strathcona Provincial Park.
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### **Information Strategy**

Trailheads for the Price Creek/Cream Lake, Myra/Phillips, and Upper Myra Falls trail systems are located in the Park. BC Parks has constructed a short trail and viewing facility to Lower Myra Falls.

**Objectives:** (from Strathcona Provincial Park Master Plan)

- To create an awareness of the role of the Park in achieving the goals of the provincial park system.
- To promote an understanding of and appreciation for the natural and cultural resources of the Park and surrounding region.
- To instil a sense of stewardship for the Park and the Park system.
- To provide visitors with information that will enhance their use and enjoyment of the Park's facilities and services.

### **Actions:**

- Develop a communication plan to include: interpretation and information signs at trailheads and interpretive strategies for the Lower Thelwood Valley.
- Encourage Westmin Resources Ltd. to adopt, where not prohibited by the *Mines Act* or Occupational Health and Safety Standards, BC Parks' sign standards for all interpretive, warning and directional signs.
- Review the concept and need for a visitor centre to interpret the geology, mining activities and natural history of the Park.

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### **Marketing and Promotion**

Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park will be marketed as part of Strathcona Provincial Park.

## **Management Services**

### Park Operations

The operation of the Park will be fully integrated with Strathcona Provincial Park.

### Public Consultation

In carrying out its stewardship responsibility, BC Parks recognizes the value of consulting the public to ensure that the public's concerns and interests regarding the management of this Park are understood and taken into consideration in the decision making process. As Strathcona-Westmin and Strathcona Provincial Parks are operated as a single unit, the existing Strathcona Provincial Park Public Advisory Committee will provide a forum for discussing issues of concern to the public and identifying suitable public consultation processes.

For purposes of discussing technical issues relating to the mine, a special annual meeting of the Strathcona Provincial Park Public Advisory Committee will be scheduled. Westmin Resources Ltd., the general public, and other resource people will be invited to this meeting to discuss the current and future mining operations.

Should a need for public input on mining issues arise sooner than the annual meeting, a special meeting of the Public Advisory Committee will be called.

### Technical Consultation

To supplement and support the public consultation process, BC Parks will require technical and scientific information and advice on issues involving Westmin's mining operations. The Vancouver Island Mine Development Review Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources (EMPR's) will be used to provide advice and recommendations for technical aspects of the mine's operation. EMPR's mandate covers mining activities in the Park. BC Parks will use this committee to review any proposed changes to the current mine operations. This technical review will become part of background information used by the Public Advisory Committee in its consideration of the public interests.

Day to day routine monitoring is undertaken by BC Environment, Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources; and BC Parks. These agencies are responsible for advising and providing direction to Westmin Resources Ltd. In most cases this is Ltd. to authorized, by permit or licence, and based on the conditions of permits issued by the

agencies. This plan will not change this working relationship.

### **Objectives:**

- To ensure effective and efficient delivery of management which is in compliance with the guidelines established by this and the Master Plan for Strathcona Provincial Park.
- To ensure a high level of public involvement through an open and appropriate public advisory

group and public consultation process.

- To maintain access to technical and scientific advice and knowledge.

**Actions:**

- Add Strathcona-Westmin Provincial Park to the terms of reference of the Strathcona Provincial Park Advisory Committee
  - Maintain the role of the Vancouver Island Mine Development Review Committee to provide scientific and technical advice.
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**Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**

The primary recreation role of the Park is related to its function as an access route to the backcountry. Some opportunities are specific to the Park, such as day use associated with riparian habitats (especially wetland, mouths of creeks and waterfalls). These will be developed to support the objectives of Strathcona Provincial Park.

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Angling

Buttle Lake is open to angling. Areas near the mouth of the Myra and Thelwood Creeks are popular for angling. All rivers and creeks entering Buttle Lake are closed to fishing by regulation.

**Objectives:**

- To ensure that angling does not adversely impact native fish stocks.
- To ensure that anglers have safe access to fishing opportunities.

**Action:**

- Monitor angling use.
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Boating

Other than Buttle Lake, the waters of the Park are not conducive to boating. There is some potential for canoeing and kayaking to occur on lower Thelwood Creek; however, this may have a negative impact on wildlife.

**Objective:**

- To ensure that boating does not affect other Park values.

**Action:**

- Restrict boating on Thelwood Creek to non-motorized vessels
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**Backcountry Hiking**

While very few backcountry hiking opportunities exist in the Park, access to important opportunities in Strathcona Provincial Park is through the Park. These include Phillips Ridge, Cream Lake, Bedwell Lake, Tennent Lake, Mount Myra and Upper Myra Falls trails (Figure 6).

The Jim Mitchell Lake access road is a key to access to the Bedwell Lake trail system and destinations. Some sections of the road, such as the steep pitch just beyond the road to the Powerhouse, must be maintained to a high standard to ensure public access to this trailhead.

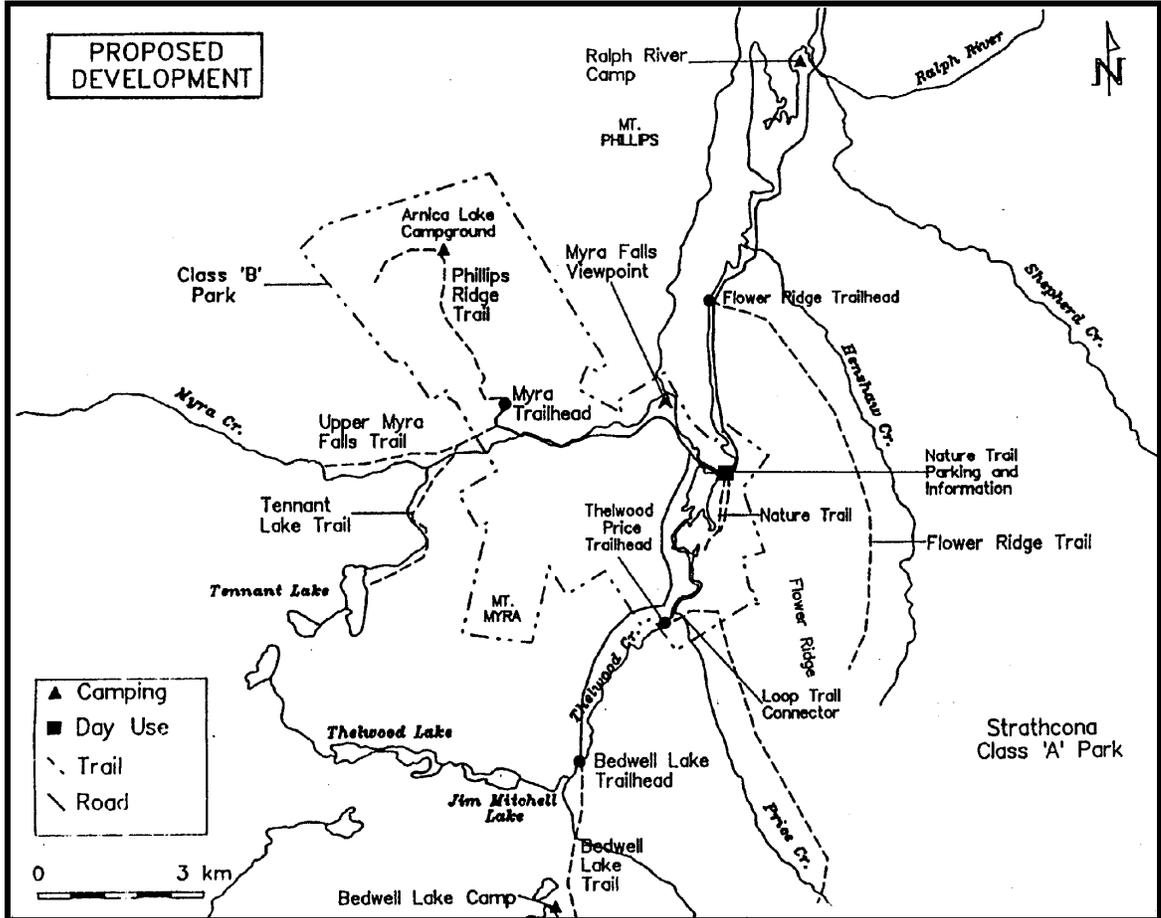
**Objectives:**

- To provide facilities and information at all trailheads in the Park.
- To work with Westmin Resources Ltd. to ensure access to these opportunities is not adversely impacted by mining activities.

**Actions:**

- Upgrade the Upper Myra Falls trailhead to Park standard including parking and information packages.
- Maintain the portion of the Jim Mitchell Lake Road in the Park to a standard suitable for passenger vehicles during the hiking season, May to October.
- Work with Westmin Resources Ltd. to ensure that recreational access to trailheads is not impeded, including access to the Bedwell Lake Trailhead.

Figure 6



Upgrade trails within the Park to the same standard as their extensions in Strathcona Provincial Park.

- Develop a backcountry campsite at Arnica Lake.
- Construct the Powerhouse - Cream Lake connector trail.

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### Resource Appreciation

The Park has several opportunities to enhance visitor experience. The lower Thelwood Valley provides diverse habitats suitable for presentation to the visitor. Utilization of these opportunities could conflict with resource conservation objectives, especially interference with wildlife use of the area.

#### **Objectives:**

- To protect park wildlife from any negative impacts resulting from recreational activities.
- To promote appreciative uses that do not conflict with conservation of natural resources.

#### **Actions:**

- Develop interpretive programs and information about the natural features of the Park.
- Monitor human interactions with elk and bears.
- Westmin Resources Ltd. offers tours of its mining operations. BC Parks will work with the company to ensure that these tours remain available.
- Provide interpretation programs on geology and geological processes that created the conditions for mineral deposits.
- Carry out an assessment of the impact of the proposed interpretive trail in the lower Thelwood Valley as described in the Wildlife Viewing Plan for Strathcona Provincial Park; if impacts are negligible, develop the trail.
- Develop a bear management plan with Westmin Resources Ltd. to minimize impact of human activities on bears.

### Sightseeing

The slopes surrounding the lower Thelwood Valley are a focal point from the Buttle Lake Parkway. Mining activities could impact this view. Lower Myra Falls represents a highly significant viewing feature from the road.

Some key view points in the Park are the Buttle Lake Parkway where it enters the Park, the bridge over the Thelwood Creek, the gravel pit on the Jim Mitchell Lake Road, and the Price Creek Trailhead. Development of these view points would provide expanded opportunities for day use and a focus for information exchange.

#### **Objective:**

- To ensure that new industrial activities give adequate consideration to aesthetics and protection of views from key viewpoints, such as Flower Ridge and Price Creek Trail to Cream Lake in the Park.

#### **Actions:**

- Work with Westmin Resources Ltd. to protect the visual qualities of the Park.
  - Confirm location of key focal points and inventory visual qualities of each.
  - Pursue reclamation of the Price Mine adits and access roads to improve aesthetics.
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### Day Use Opportunities

Day use activities by both residents of the area and tourists are significant. Fishing and viewing are the primary activities. Viewpoints and parking are required to accommodate this use.

#### **Objectives:**

- To accommodate and encourage day use and ensure that mining activities do not unduly impede these uses.
- To ensure that day use activities do not endanger the distribution and abundance of flora and fauna of the Park.

#### **Actions:**

- Provide parking and trailhead facilities in the lower Thelwood Valley adjacent to the Buttle Lake Parkway.
- After an impact assessment, develop an interpretive/wildlife viewing trail to accommodate appreciative uses in the lower Thelwood Valley.

- Upgrade existing facilities at Lower Myra Falls and Upper Myra Falls including interpretive/educational opportunities in the remaining valley bottom old growth along Myra Creek.
- Monitor human/wildlife interactions to ensure that the present species distribution and abundance is preserved.
- If feasible, and after an impact assessment, develop viewpoints along the highway as it enters the Park, near the highway bridge over Thelwood Creek, at the old gravel pit on the Jim Mitchell Lake Road and at the Price Creek Trailhead.