

PAS, CORE, LRMP, LRUP planning processes

Frances Vyse: January, 1993

At the last Executive Meeting I expressed my opinion on the need to be better informed about the various planning processes that are going on throughout the province. And, of course, the response was that I should make a clear and concise report fulfilling exactly that need. I have included some comments on how I think the Federation and club members can participate or make comments on the various processes.

The Protected Areas Strategy (PAS):

PAS was initiated in 1992 with the publishing of the map: *Towards a Protected Areas Strategy for B.C.* on which 112 large study areas and 72 small study areas were identified in four categories according to date for designation. The map was a continuation of various processes that had taken place since the mid-1980's, including Parks & Wilderness for the 90's (PW90) and the Old Growth Strategy (OGS) of the previous two years.

PAS is directed by Warren Mitchell, who spoke at our Fall General Meeting. The PAS document *A Protected Areas Strategy for British Columbia* was made public with little fanfare in June, 1993 and copies can be found at local Parks or Forest Service offices. The document outlines the goals of the Strategy, the criteria for identifying and evaluating areas, the process towards actual protection of areas, other resource issues, legislation changes needed. The best way to understand the Strategy clearly is to pick up a copy of the document and find out just what it hopes to achieve. Being informed will help you ask the right questions when public meetings are held in your part of the province.

PAS has two goals:

1. *to protect viable, representative examples of natural diversity in the province, representative of the major terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems, the characteristic habitats, hydrology and landforms, and the characteristic backcountry recreational and cultural heritage of each ecosection.*
2. *to protect the special, natural, cultural heritage and recreational features of the province, including rare and endangered species and critical habitats, outstanding or unique botanical, zoological, geological and paleontological features, outstanding or fragile cultural heritage features, and outstanding outdoor recreational features such as trails.*

An **Ecosection** is an area of land defined by its physiography, vegetation, climatic and wildlife characteristics. Ecosections are further divided into biogeoclimatic zones, subzones and variants. There are 174 Ecosections in the province, some of which are already over-represented in present protected areas (Parks, Ecological Reserves and Wilderness Areas). Many ecosections have little or no representation at all. The provincial goal is to represent 12% of each ecosection.

There are three components in PAS: Conservation, Recreation and Cultural Heritage. New areas to be considered for future protection are identified through a process called

Gap Analysis. Simply put, this is the process of identifying where the present protected areas are (Parks, etc.), which biogeoclimatic subzones have no representation in those protected areas, and possible areas that would fill the gaps identified. A similar process is followed for Recreation and Cultural Heritage, with all three components being melded together in identifying the proposed areas. In *B.C. Naturalist*, Nov/Dec, 1993 (page 29), Suzanne Rautio of Earthlife Canada Foundation, in her article *Update on the Protected Areas Strategy*, explained the methods of Gap Analysis and how they are being used in the Protected Areas Strategy process in the seven regions of the province; and in *ORC News* (Fall, 1993) there was a long article about the process and outcomes for representing recreation values in proposed protected areas, also by region. Both articles have good explanations of the planning process and lists of people to contact if you want more detail about your local area.

Areas are being identified by Regional Protected Areas Teams (RPATs), based on the seven Forest Service Regions of the province and Vancouver Island (part of Vancouver Region). Each RPAT is headed by a senior bureaucrat from one of the land-based Ministries (Forests, Lands, Parks), started at different times and has developed its own method of going about the process. Some have been very scientific, using GIS data (e.g. Nelson), others have been more subjective and knowledge-based (e.g. Kamloops). Some have had the luxury of working without a pressing deadline, while those in the CORE regions have been under the gun to produce maps with little time for any research. All have used conservation values as the base for defining areas, with recreation and cultural heritage values superimposed. Nowhere has there been thorough research, and nowhere is there anything like a complete data base of any of the values (except perhaps recreation) to use for decision-making.

Public participation in the PAS process has been minimal to date. Some RPATs have made an effort to go out and talk to local special interest groups; some RPATs are now involving the public in the Special Features part of the Strategy, by asking for information about the small areas we are interested in. In most regions, our participation is supposed to come later this year when areas have been refined to take into consideration other resource users. In CORE regions, a variety of types of public participation has taken place.

Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE):

CORE was set up in 1992 to *develop and implement a world-leading strategy for land use planning and management, as a part of a larger commitment to sustainability*. It includes regional planning processes with community involvement and decisions based on consensus. It has three levels of planning: provincial goals and policies; regional negotiations for broad land use allocations; local processes for managing environmental and resource issues. Economic, environmental and social issues must be considered, with active participation by Aboriginal peoples.

The provincial *Land Use Charter* can be found in the *Report on a Land Use Strategy* put out in August 1992. The Report also outlines the processes to be followed in the regional

and local land use planning. The *Land Use Goals Workbook* has now been produced and it defines more clearly the goals of the strategy. We have had input into this document through Bob Purdy's involvement. As with the PAS document, read both through and become familiar with them so you are better informed in discussions or as a participant.

Another mandate of CORE is to come up with a Land Use Strategy for each of the regions it works in. They must consider all aspects of the plan, economic and social as well as protection. Decisions are all made through a consensus process, which means being prepared to make compromises in some places to make gains in others.

CORE has been a little more in the public eye than PAS, particularly if you are from the Island, the Cariboo or the Kootenays, the three regions for which there are CORE tables. Various sectors have been defined in each region and representatives for those sectors sit at the table. Other representatives of each sector sit in support of their sector, but don't have an actual voice at the table. A time limit for negotiations was set by the government. The Federation and local Clubs have representatives at the CORE process in each of the three regions. In two of the regions we are in the Recreation sector and in the other we are in the Conservation sector. The comment has been made by many groups and individuals that too much time has been spent on process rather than action. Unfortunately, that is the big drawback to consensus decision-making: all the participants need time to get to know each other and where they fit in. Also, the process can be aborted by groups prolonging the time it takes to come to consensus, forcing poor decisions, uninformed decisions, wrong decisions or no decision at all.

CORE is chaired by Stephen Owen; one of his staff, Bill Bourgeois, spoke at our Conservation Day last February. No two regions of the province is functioning the same way under CORE, so it is difficult to make general statements about how the process is working. Vancouver Island has wrapped up its table sittings, the Cariboo and Kootenays are close to their deadline

Local Resource Management Plan (LRMP)

LRMPs are sub-regional Integrated Resource Plans and, in part, are replacing the Forest Service's old system of establishing their Annual Allowable Cut under their 5-year plans. They are more local and specific in nature, with public participation, including naturalists, an important part of the process. LRMPs are in many ways mini-CORE processes as they include socio-economic considerations in their deliberations. In non-CORE regions the LRMP will be the avenue for making decisions on PAS areas for protection.

Ask at your local District Forest Service office if there is an LRMP process underway in your area, and try to get involved: the process is usually driven by the Forest Service timelines, and conservation is not necessarily anywhere near the top of the agenda.

Local resource Use Plans (LRUP):

Local Resource Use Plans are usually initiated by the Forest Service District offices in response to increasing management problems in an area where conflicts are arising between user groups. It might be cattle-ATV-forestry issues or horseback riding-mountain biking-hunting-forestry and hang gliding - the combinations are endless. This Plan is driven by the Forest Service under the theme of Multiple Use and the process and outcomes differ from District to District, depending on the person assigned to be the leader. Again, representatives from user groups are involved, and that should include spokespeople for conservation, an item that doesn't necessarily get a lot of attention. Ask at your District office to find out what LRUP's are active in the District, and try to get involved.

Some general comments:

Despite the lofty statements about conservation in these processes, it seems to be getting short shrift in many of the processes, for two reasons. One is the woeful lack of information about many areas of the province; the other is the lack of people at the tables and on the committees with a real understanding of conservation. The lone voice of the FBCN or Club representative is often drowned out by other groups who espouse conservation while trying to protect their real interests, e.g. access for guide-outfitting, hunting, mountain biking, hang gliding, stocked lakes for fishing, etc., etc.

There is a definite inconsistency between the processes in the various parts of the province, and decisions are being arrived at from different bases of information. Let's hope a consistent decision-making process can be found before the exercise is completed.

Communication, particularly in the PAS process, has been poor to say the least. The interconnections between the various processes has not been clearly explained to the public, or even to the participants. A lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings have arisen that could have been forestalled with a well-thought out communication process.

These processes seem to be forestalling decisions on some of the areas that FBCN has worked on for many decades. Most have been identified as study areas, but few have been declared as protected areas.

The mixes of experience and personality of the leaders and participants of these processes seems to have a lot of influence on the outcomes. In many cases their personal experience and expertise precludes objective decision-making.

The issue of management of new protected areas has not been addressed. It will be up to organizations like FBCN to press the government for the budgets needed to manage the new areas without jeopardizing the management of the existing ones.

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