

FOOTPRINTS ON



THE VI TRAIL



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KUDOS to ALBERNI TRAIL FOLKS



The Alberni Trail Crew have been busily completing a project to install 12 interpretive trail signs along the Alberni Inlet Trail. The signs are placed at scenic or interesting locations along the trail. One sign at the start of stage 1 of the trail acknowledges the role of forestry in the Alberni area and also acknowledges the cooperation and support of the Regional District of Alberni Clayoquot and of Island Timberlands and Western Forest Products in the construction of the trail. Further along stage 1 is a sign showing a panorama of the mountains to the north of Port Alberni and naming them. It tells hikers caught in a November Alberni fog what they would otherwise be looking at. Signs at Scout

Beach relate stories of the Tseshaht and Hupacasath First Nations. Each story links a frog to the location but they differ in details. In more recent times Scout Beach was the location of a Boy Scout cabin, since destroyed, and is the location of a trail leading up Mt. Hankin, locally called Copper Mountain. This trail leads to viewpoints that have magnificent views south along Alberni Inlet and north over the city of Port Alberni all the way to the mountains near Courtenay. The Scout trail also provides alternate loop routes to return to the stage 1 parking lot. Although Scout beach is rocky it is a surprisingly warm swimming spot as the water flowing into the Alberni Inlet has been warmed by time spent in either Sproat or Great Central Lake.

The Alberni Inlet Trail is one of the more spectacular sections of the end-to-end Vancouver Island Trail. Stage 1 is the most scenic of the three stages, but because of the need to detour around cliffs an elevation profile of the stage has a sawtooth pattern. The trail is of good quality but still a challenging workout. Near the south end of stage 1 the bridge over the crystal-clear waters of China Creek can tempt hikers into an icy swim. China

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ALBERNI TRAIL FOLKS..... (Continued):

Creek has been the site of much placer and hard rock mining activity beginning in the 1860s. A sign at the China Creek crossing sets out some of the extensive history of early mining on the creek. Judy Carlson, the Alberni Historical Society and the Alberni museum have provided the information and photographs for this and other historical signs along the trail. Mining structures along the creek are steadily rotting away, but a large cedar log dam on the Cataract claim depicted on the sign still exists and appears as solid as when it was built in 1896. Good wood, that cedar. Other signs located closer to the Stage 2 parking lot deal with bird life, plant life and general ecology.



The various stages of the Alberni Inlet Trail are described in detail on the Vista Blog. Starting from the stage 2 parking lot the trail descends steeply over scenic rock bluffs to Underwood Cove. A short side trail leads to a pleasant little beach at Underwood Point. Underwood Cove is as far as the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway got as it worked its way north from Victoria to compete with the Canadian Pacific Railway for the riches of the Alberni Valley. It was very close to its final destination when WW1 intervened to halt construction and the rails intended to complete the line were shipped to the front in France. A major concrete culvert marked with the date of construction, 1913, is located at Underwood Creek and marked with another historical sign. Before the Inlet Trail was opened it sat alone and forgotten in the forest for nearly 100 years. There is at least one other concrete culvert dating from 1913 just past Bell's Bay. Another sign dealing with the history of railroad construction is located at Nina's beach. Note this beach is correctly pronounced Nine-a's, not Neena's, because it is named after a Katimavik volunteer from Newfoundland where English as we know it is not widely spoken. As it is a railroad grade south from Underwood Cove, stage 2 is generally flat, except where many creek valleys intersect it. Near the south end of stage 2 there is a scenic viewpoint over the

historic site of Franklin River Camp A, now the location of Franklin Forest Products whose generous support of the trail is appreciated. A sign with historic photographs depicts the history of railway logging at this location.

To access stage 3 of the trail safely from the north end it is necessary to wade across the Franklin River, to use some sort of inflatable boat, or to use road access to the south side of the river using Hawthorne Main. The south entrance to stage 3 is accessed by the Headquarters Bay road. To the north of the Franklin River the rail grade was never completed, but to the south it was recommissioned as a logging railway which operated for many years starting in 1934. As the railway logging extended further into the forest, Franklin River logging camps were moved to new locations along the tracks. That explains the confusing fact that the final major Franklin River camp, still shown on some maps, is nowhere near the Franklin River. Confusion also arises from the fact that stage 3 has not been officially opened and lacks interpretive signs. That does not mean that there is not an adequate trail however it is one that has not been completely groomed to the standards of the other stages and one that lacks a safe bridge crossing the Franklin River. There are several crumbling trestles dating from the days of railroad logging and care must be taken while walking beneath them. Stage 3 ends at Headquarters Bay so named as it was the headquarters of the contractor retained to build the CNPR. Although the railroad builders had horses and dynamite and the trail builders have chainsaws, hand tools and hard labour were fundamental to both periods of construction.

The Vancouver Island Trail carries on from Headquarters Bay to Victoria. A short section of trail on the southeast side of Parsons Creek was recently logged and the trail through this cutblock has since been restored by Terry Lewis, David Webb, Steve Stirling and the Alberni Trail Crew. Terry, Dave, Steve & his wife Joan along with Ivan Whitticase have also recently undertaken maintenance on the Tuck Lake section which crosses the divide between Alberni Inlet and the Nitinat valley. From there to Lake Cowichan town the VI Trail follows along logging roads, and then the "Great Trail" (former Trans Canada Trail) to Victoria.

Big thanks to Stephen Stirling, Our Mid – Island Board Member for the above contribution!

**IN THIS ISSUE, WE CONTINUE OUR FOCUS
ON ONE of VISTA's BOARD MEMBERS:**

Stephen Stirling



Steve is a retired law trade worker who was born and raised in Duncan. He attended the University of Victoria and the University of Alberta. In the course of his education and employment he has lived in Duncan, Victoria, Campbell River and for the last 40 years in Port Alberni. His father was an ardent outdoorsman and in his later years a dedicated trail builder. As a result of his influence, a supportive wife, two large and very persuasive dogs, and a long extinct passion for distance running, Steve has spent a large part of his life messing about on Vancouver Island trails and mountains. In recent years, he has been working with Harold Carlson and the rest of the Alberni Trail Crew in building and maintaining trails in the Alberni Valley.



PROGRESS ON PRIVATE FOREST LANDS

As most of you know, access to and permission for a trail across private forest lands south of Strathcona Dam is critical to the completion of our Vancouver Island Trail (north of Strathcona Dam is overwhelmingly Crown land). Of course, VISTA also seeks the permission and involvement of First Nations in the crossing of traditional FN territories; this engagement is on-going.

The two main remaining gaps in the trail involve private forest lands between the Alberni Valley and Cumberland and between the north boundary of Strathcona Park and the Strathcona Dam just north of Highway 28 to Gold River. Private forest land owners include mostly TimberWest, and Island Timberlands, and to a minor extent the Hancock Group (yes, the insurance company). VISTA has been talking/engaging with TimberWest and Island Timberlands for several years.

This on-going dialogue has recently borne fruit. VISTA very much appreciates that TimberWest has agreed to negotiate agreements for access/trail across their private, fee-simple lands. We have also been working with the four Regional Districts involved – Alberni-Clayoquot, Nanaimo, Comox Valley and Strathcona.

The arrangement we are working on involves a primary land use agreement (or similar terminology) between the private forest land owners (first TimberWest) and the Regional Districts; and, a secondary agreement between VISTA and the Regional Districts dealing with trail maintenance, communication with (e.g. closures for fire hazard, safety etc.) and education of (e.g. leave no trace ethics) trail users.

The first such agreement (1 of the 7 needed) between TimberWest and the Comox Valley Regional District is now in draft form and is currently being reviewed by the affected parties. VISTA would like to recognize the efforts of Domenico Iannidinardo of TimberWest and Doug DeMarzo of CVRD for all their work on the agreement. This first agreement will involve trail between Tsable Lake (north end of Beauforts) and Cumberland and some trail up to Forbidden Plateau (Strathcona Park boundary).

PRIVATE FOREST LANDS Continued.....

We anticipate that this first agreement will become a template for subsequent agreements, which would reduce the administrative burden/workload going forward for the other companies and RDs involved. The second agreement will most likely be between TimberWest and Strathcona RD, involving trail from south of Upper Quinsam Lake to the Strathcona Dam.

It is indeed great to see TimberWest stepping up to facilitate additional managed recreational use of their private lands. VISTA hopes that Island Timberlands will also see its way clear to enter into similar agreements allowing us to fill the last gaps in the Vancouver Island Trail.

Tsable Lake Area



Your Editor wishes to thank VISTA's Director of Operations, Terry Lewis for this update on Private Forest Lands negotiations.

**We Once Again Close This Edition of "Footprints"
With Some Examples of the Sights You Will Experience Along the VI Trail – Enjoy!**

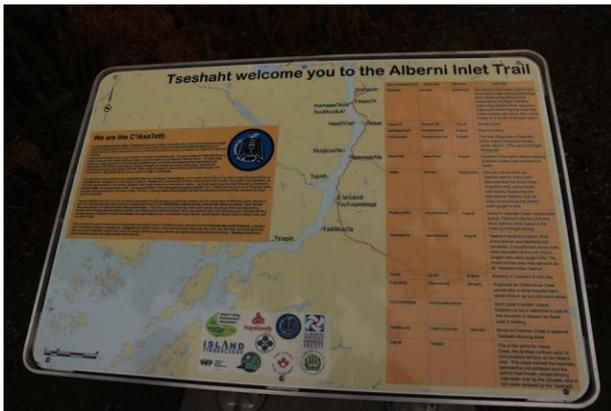
Nitinat Waterfalls



Kokummi Pass Wetlands



First Nations Welcome



Flora Along The Trail



As Always - An Important Reminder To "Be Safe"!!:

"VISTA wishes to remind and warn all those considering visiting the VI Trail that the Trail is a "Work in Progress" and that certain portions have yet to be completed, and in some instances may not even be accessible. Travel on the planned Trail is completely at the risk of the individual doing so. Please realize that some sections of the VI Trail are through unpopulated areas where users must be self-reliant with respect to maps and the use of directional equipment, and where wild animals may pose a risk to some types of activities."

VISTA'S Vision For a Homegrown Adventure:

A signature recreation destination in Canada, the Vancouver Island Trail will span more than 770 km from Victoria to Cape Scott. Traversing both ancient and working forests, and wild coasts, while joining island communities, the Trail in its entirety will be a 2-3 month-long journey. Not just for long distance hikers, day hikers will enjoy many access points. By 2020, Vancouver Island will have a unique recreational opportunity and a showcase for its communities, including highlighting First Nation's Art, Culture, Language, and History.

We hope you will visit our website at: www.vispine.ca

Interested in our map of the VI Trail and links to the various sections: <http://www.vispine.ca/map/>

Once again, your feedback and offered input is encouraged and valued –

Please feel free to contact the Editor, Scott Henley, at:

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Want to Get Involved?

There are two main ways to help VISTA complete the VI Trail:

If you have the time, [Become a Volunteer](#)

If you don't have any spare time, become one of the

[Friends of the VI Trail](#)

And help us out with a tax deductible donation

