

Vancouver Island Spine Trail Association 2014 Annual General Meeting

Swan Lake Nature Centre, Victoria, B.C.

April 10, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by VISTA president Gil Parker with 25 people in attendance. The minutes from the 2013 AGM, held in Victoria on Sept. 22, 2014 were circulated and approved.

Financial Report: Treasurer Bill Feyrer reported that VISTA raised just over \$21,000 in donations for the year compared to \$26,000 the previous year. This was achieved without any major corporate donations other than a grant from B.C. Hydro to help stage the June 1, 2014 trails conference near Courtenay. Two major activities accounted for most of our spending during the year — the trails conference which cost \$8,400 and trail feasibility studies, which now cover the entire route, for \$5,200. VISTA ended the year with a \$2,100 surplus and \$15,000 in the bank. We have a similar amount in the bank as of the AGM.

Board officers and directors: In his role as vice-president, Bill Feyrer also gave the report of the nominating committee which proposed the following members be elected:

- President: Gil Parker
- Secretary: Andy Ogle
- Treasurer: Bill Feyrer
- Directors:
 - o Terry Lewis – Operations
 - o Jodi Appleton – Administration
 - o Ross Collicutt – Communications
 - o Peter Berrang
 - o Leigh Robinson
 - o Dave Gilbert

There were no further nominations and the slate was declared elected.

The Committee also recognized the contributions of former members of the Board and others whose advice and contributions have been invaluable.

- Chris Causton
- Kathleen Birney
- Andrew Pape-Salmon
- Charles Burnett

As a note of interest, four of the board's nine officers and directors are from outside of Victoria. Ross Collicutt lives in Nanaimo, Dave Gilbert in Port Alberni, Terry Lewis in Cumberland and Leigh Robinson hails from Port Hardy.

President's Report: Gil Parker explained that the AGM was held earlier this year to better correlate with our calendar fiscal year. He also noted the success of the Trails Conference which attracted 80 outdoor enthusiasts working to combine efforts to promote trail development and use.

Since the conference, the overriding objective of the board has been to put in place a program to construct the Spine Trail. Feasibility studies carried out by third-party consultants have now been done for all of the gaps between existing trails. Now our emphasis has to be to put a marked path on the ground, a trail that could be followed by any experienced backcountry hiker.

Vista continues to work towards gaining access through privately-owned forests that has been denied to date, but our best success will be on Crown forests most of which are between the Strathcona Dam and Port Hardy. The obvious strategy is to complete a walkable line through the challenging and interesting North Island forests, lakes and mountains to provide over 220 km of trail to citizens and tourists.

Other initiatives of trail builders, such as the Capital Regional District and the Cowichan Valley Regional District should see completion of the Malahat segment of the Trans-Canada Trail, resulting in a trail that VISTA will share from Victoria to Lake Cowichan by 2017.

Together these initiatives, once completed, will leave only four significant gaps in the overall plan for the V.I. Spine Trail, and will provide a walkable path comprising about 70 per cent of the overall length of the trail. The board has set an objective of 2017 to complete the North Island trail, a significant undertaking that will require greater fundraising efforts and volunteer labour and time.

Operations: Terry Lewis described the V.I. Spine Trail concept, the progress to date and plans for the coming year. We are working on a continuous trail linking Victoria to Cape Scott. It will be a non-motorized trail for a range of users including hikers, runners, cyclists and equestrians but not for all in all places. We're talking a light trail, that is marked, with brushing and deadfall removal but little excavation, often in medium to high elevations allowing fording of streams and use of existing logging bridges where needed to cross rivers. It will also, at least in the short term, use old roads and some active roads in places, although as little as possible.

Progress to date is roughly 400 km, much of it existing trails, for example the Galloping Goose in Victoria, the Trans Canada Trail to Cowichan Lake, a series of trails to Port Alberni, the Log Train trail out of Alberni, some trails with gaps to the Beaufort Crest and on to Cumberland and existing trails in Strathcona Park. After that, there are few trails to the north other than in Schoen Park and the North Island Trail.

This coming year, the emphasis will be on work north of Campbell River, mostly on Crown land. But this will require seeking agreements with several First Nations including the Kwakiutl and Namgis bands.

The route can be broken down into sections with the northern two from Port Hardy to Port McNeil and Port McNeil to the head of Nimpkish Lake the first priority. Both are contingent on getting First Nation agreement and fund-raising as more work will need to be contracted out rather than relying on volunteers.