

THE RECREATION/ECOLOGY/ HERITAGE TRIANGLE:

Developing Bowen Island's Crippen Regional Park, 1978-2005

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CANADA'S PARKS HISTORIANS have focused mostly on national and provincial parks,¹ but it is particularly in the country's regional protected spaces, as historians Keith Thor Carlson and Jonathan Clapperton point out, "that important issues about the meaning of ecology, bio-diversity, human activity and even heritage, are being negotiated."² As in the United States, where the rapid postwar expansion of suburbia fostered the open-space movement,³ the growing population of British Columbia's Lower Mainland led to the creation of a regional parks system in 1967.⁴ In the words of the executive director

* My thanks to Ben Bradley for sharing his extensive knowledge of BC parks history; to the journal's two readers for their helpful comments; and to Bowen Island's Sue-Ellen Fast, Will Husby, David Smith, Maureen Nicholson, and John Rich for their responses to my questions; as well as to Cathy Bayly of the Bowen Island Museum and Archives and Janice Dudas of the Metro Vancouver library for their generous assistance.

¹ On national parks, see, for example, the essays in Claire Elizabeth Campbell, ed., *A Century of Parks Canada, 1911-2011* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011). On British Columbia's provincial parks, see James D. Anderson, *British Columbia's Magnificent Parks: The First 100 Years* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2011); and *BC Studies* 170 (Summer 2011), special issue on provincial parks. As an atypically large urban park, Stanley Park has also received considerable attention from historians. See Robert A.J. McDonald, "'Holy Retreat' or 'Practical Breathing Spot'? Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1910-1913," *Canadian Historical Review* 65 (1984): 127-53; Jean Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2005); and Sean Kheraj, *Inventing Stanley Park: An Environmental History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

² Keith Thor Carlson and Jonathan Clapperton, "Introduction. Special Places and Protected Spaces: Historical and Global Perspectives on Non-National Parks in Canada and Abroad," *Environment and History* 18, 4 (2012): 476.

³ See Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chap. 4; Richard A. Walker, *The Country in the City: The Greening of the San Francisco Bay Area* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), chap. 3; and Jeffrey Craig Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), chap. 3.

⁴ *Metro Vancouver Regional Parks Plan, 2016*, 4, at www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks/ParksPublications/RegionalParksPlan.pdf. The GVRD park system was actually built on the initial work of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, established in 1948. See

of the Regional Planning Board, “there is no point in creating a major urban-industrial-port complex in the Lower Mainland without proper attention being paid to livability [*sic*], aesthetic values, and the opportunities for rewarding leisure activities in the Region.”⁵ Furthermore, his report predicted: “On the average, everyone will have more leisure time, more money, and more education – all of which point to the need for greatly expanded recreational opportunities.”⁶

The goal was to create forty parks that would “sample the natural features of the Region – the seashore, the mountains, the lakes and rivers, and the valley lands.” For the price of a movie, the “man in the street” would have access to “a different park for almost every weekend of the year.”⁷ Responsibility for the parks system was transferred to the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) in 1972. Now known as the Metro Vancouver Regional District, its board of directors is selected from the municipal councils whose interests it therefore represents. The Parks Committee members of what one authority refers to as a “relatively weak and flexible upper-tier of municipal government” are, in turn, selected from the Metro board by its chair and vice-chair.⁸

Within Metro Vancouver there are now twenty-three parks, three park reserves, two ecological conservancy areas, and five greenways totalling 14,500 hectares and attracting over 11 million visits per year.⁹ These parks are funded by a formula that ensures that those in less populous and less affluent municipalities are not neglected. But because British Columbia’s regional districts do not have independent taxing authority, and because

Peter Oberlander and Patrick J. Smith, “Governing Metropolitan Vancouver: Regional Intergovernmental Relations in British Columbia,” in *Metropolitan Governance: American/Canadian Intergovernmental Perspectives*, ed. Donald N. Rothblatt and Andrew Sancton (Los Angeles/Kingston: University of California, Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies Press and Queen’s University, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1993), 334, 350.

⁵ V.J. Parker to Reeve Taylor, Chairman, Regional Parks Committee, New Westminster, 25 May 1966, in “Summary Report: A Regional Parks Plan for the Lower Mainland Region,” 1966, at www.metrovancouver.org/about/library/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/about/library/HarryLashLibraryPublications/Regional-Parks-Plan-for-the-Lower-Mainland-Region-Summary-Report-1966-May-25.pdf&action=default.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ Andrew Sancton, *Governing Canada’s City-Regions: Adapting Form to Function* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1994), 59. The number of board directors from each municipality, and the number of votes each director is allowed in board meetings, are both based on the municipality’s population size. See C. Richard Tindal and Susan Nobes Tindal, *Local Government in Canada*, 6th ed. (Scarborough: Thomson/Nelson, 2004), 87; www.metrovancouver.org/boards/membership/board-members/Pages/default.aspx.

⁹ Metro Vancouver consists of twenty-one municipalities, one electoral area, and one Treaty First Nation. See www.metrovancouver.org/about/Pages/default.aspx; www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks/Pages/default.aspx.

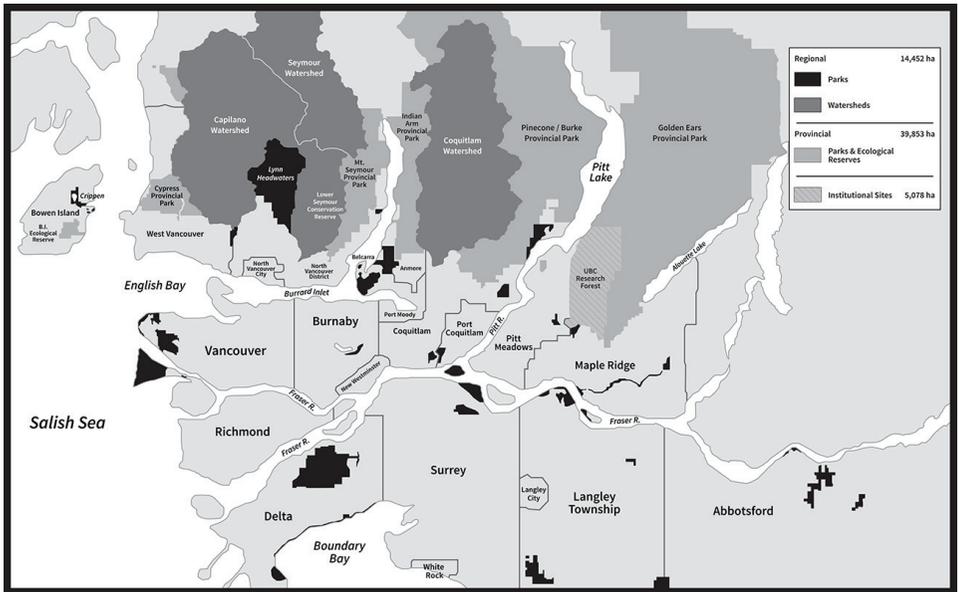


Figure 1. Regional Parks, Provincial Parks, and Protected Areas in Metro Vancouver Regional District. *Source:* Based on http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks/ParksPublications/Regional_Parks_Greenways_Municipal_Provincial_Parks_Protected_AreasMap-2015May11.pdf.

provincial cost sharing ended in 1982, financial support for the regional parks system has been much more limited than has that for the federal, provincial, and even municipal parks.¹⁰

The original Regional Parks Plan defined regional parks as for “such ‘day-use’ activities as swimming, strolling, picnicking, boating, hiking, fishing, sightseeing, and nature study.” They were therefore ideally “within one hour’s driving time” and were to have “size and features capable of absorbing large numbers of people” as well as being “capable of providing for a wide variety of activities.”¹¹ The stated goals became more philosophical in 1979 when they included the encouragement of “regional residents to seek self-fulfilment and self-expression through participation in outdoor leisure time activities.”¹² Nature conservation received barely a mention, aside from the statement that “[a] regional

¹⁰ Oberlander and Smith, “Governing Metropolitan Vancouver,” 351-52. In 1998, households within the GVRD were taxed fifteen dollars to support the parks, which were visited at least once a year by 80 percent of the population. See Metro Vancouver Harry Lash Library (hereafter MVHLL), Greater Vancouver Regional District Regional Parks Committee, “Regional Parks: Protecting Greenspace, Enriching Communities – Service Growth and Funding, 1998-2006” (April 1998).

¹¹ “Summary Report: A Regional Parks Plan,” 5-6.

¹² Bowen Island Museum and Archives (hereafter BIMA), GVRD History (Bert Elliott) Collection, Policy Master Plan, GVRD Parks, Preliminary Draft, May 1979, 5.

park possesses superior natural qualities or some natural feature representative of the region.”¹³ The focus in that regard had changed radically by 2016, however, when Metro Vancouver’s *Regional Parks Plan 2016* declared that “Regional Parks protect large scale landscapes in their natural state (usually larger than 100 hectares) with sensitively sited opportunities for access and trails.” The chief distinction between regional parks and municipal parks, according to this publication, is that the latter “are often highly modified from their natural state to support active recreational opportunities.”¹⁴ The land set aside as Bowen Island’s Crippen Regional Park had, nevertheless, been highly modified in the early twentieth century as a summer picnic, camping, and cottage site, and, as we shall see, the GVRD board was more than eager to have it continue to be a popular recreation area.¹⁵ Furthermore, in the fiscally conservative climate of the 1980s, and with a parks committee dominated numerically by development-oriented directors from the suburbs, ecological protection proved to be vulnerable to private development.

Yet the standard binary between pro-development and pro-preservation interests takes us only so far in this case, first because what was developed on the park’s foreshore as a privately owned marina had long been polluted by sewage runoff and, second, because the preservation of Crippen Park’s heritage structures was (and is) threatened not by development but by a mandate that has downplayed or ignored their cultural value. Thus, Metro Vancouver’s 2016 parks vision statement fails – entirely – to take into account the distinctiveness of a park that surrounds a village with a unique history. Some of the cottages within Crippen Park continue to stand, however, because they are valued by local residents as well as visitors from the mainland who remember the era of the Union Steamship Company (USSC), when Snug Cove was known as Vancouver’s playground.¹⁶ It was, in fact, the local initiative to save a large former USSC building slated for destruction in the village of Snug Cove that set the path for the creation of Crippen Park. The history of this relatively new park therefore not only reflects the tension

¹³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴ Metro Vancouver, *Regional Parks Plan 2016*, 5, at www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks/ParksPublications/RegionalParksPlan.pdf.

¹⁵ On this theme, see, for example, John Sandlos, “Nature’s Playgrounds: The Parks Branch and Tourism Promotion in the National Parks, 1911-1929,” 53-78; and C.J. Taylor, “Banff in the 1960s: Divergent Views of the National Park Ideal,” 133-52; both in Campbell, *Century of Parks Canada*.

¹⁶ The peak of 101,000 passengers on Union Steamship vessels to Snug Cove was reached in 1946 when Vancouver’s population was only 365,000. See J.I. Little, “Vancouver’s Playground: Leisure and Sociability on Bowen Island, 1902-57,” *BC Studies* 171 (Autumn 2011): 60.

between ecological protection and the development of industry (the tourism industry in this case) but also sheds light on the uncertain place of heritage (in this case, ironically, that of the local tourism industry) within a park system dedicated primarily to “nature” and recreation while operating within what had long been a cultural landscape or humanized space.¹⁷

Although Bowen Island, lying at the mouth of Howe Sound, is a mere twenty-minute ferry ride to the mainland, housing development did not begin there in earnest until after 1957 when a car ferry service was established from West Vancouver’s Horseshoe Bay. The goal was to serve the commuters who were purchasing lots marketed by the USSC after it terminated its long-established summer resort operation at Snug Cove.¹⁸ Beginning in the 1960s, however, the people of Vancouver and its surrounding region began to question the development ethos that had for so long been the hallmark of W.A.C. Bennett’s Social Credit government.¹⁹ In 1969, when controversial developer Stan James purchased the USSC’s remaining 1200 acres (486 hectares) with the aim of establishing what would essentially be a densely settled suburb, the question that confronted permanent and seasonal residents concerned the population size that Bowen could ideally accommodate.²⁰ Once Stan James’s ambitious housing project had been blocked by zoning regulations, local support developed for converting much of the former USSC land into a park. Finally, in 1983, the GVRD purchased the block located between the ferry terminal at Snug Cove and Killarney Lake, naming it Crippen Regional Park.²¹

The challenge that faced the GVRD Parks Committee was to design a facility that would attract people from the district as a whole, and even beyond, while meeting the needs and wishes of the island’s residents, both permanent and seasonal. Added to that challenge was the fact that Bowen did not become a municipality until 1999, and that public opinion

¹⁷ The term “cultural landscape” comes from John S. Marsh, “Introduction,” in John S. Marsh and Bruce W. Hodgins, eds., *Changing Parks: The History, Future, and Cultural Context of Parks and Heritage Landscapes* (Toronto: National Heritage/Natural History, 1998), xv; the term “humanized space” is from Margarida Queriós, “Natural Parks in Portugal: A Way to Become More Ecologically Responsible?” *Environment and History* 18, 4 (2012): 590. Only 50 percent of those surveyed by GVRD Parks in 1998 favoured restoring heritage buildings. See MVHLL, Greater Vancouver Regional District Regional Parks Committee, “Regional Parks.”

¹⁸ See Little, “Vancouver’s Playground,” 37–68.

¹⁹ See J.I. Little, *At the Wilderness Edge: Blocking Big Development in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland during the 1960s and 1970s* (forthcoming).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

²¹ “Snug Cove,” <http://bowenislandmuseum.ca/snug-cove/>.

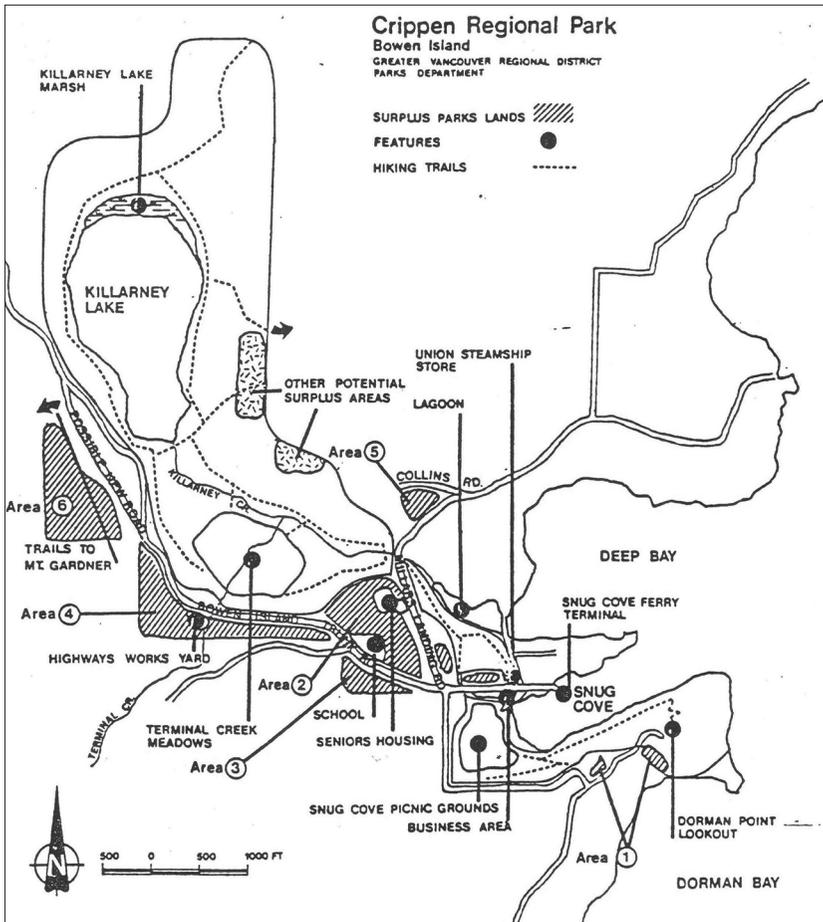


Figure 2. Crippen Regional Park, ca. 1983. *Source:* BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, MS23, Collected Reference Materials, Plan for the Snug Cove Area of Crippen Regional Park.

concerning the island's development was sharply divided. Thus, while one group had lobbied for transforming much of the former USSC property into a park, another warned against the return of visiting hordes from the mainland. And, once the park was established, the old cleavage between pro-developer and slow-growth forces was reflected in the battle between those who favoured the addition of income-generating amenities and those who argued that the park and waterfront should remain as natural as possible. The GVRD board might have been able to ignore the environmentalist advocates on an island with fewer than two thousand full-time residents had its projects not been subject to veto by provincial authorities as well as the Islands Trust, which had



Figure 3. Group celebrating the post-restoration opening of the Old General Store, n.d.
Source: BIMA, photo no. 6050.

been established in 1974 to regulate development on the Gulf Islands. In short, the early history of Bowen Island's Crippen Park was marked by administrative complexity and political contention as the GVRD Parks Committee attempted to harmonize the conflicting forces within the recreation/ecology/heritage triangle.

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The driving force behind the idea of converting the undeveloped USSC land into a public park was the Bowen Island Park and Store Use Society, which was formed in 1978 when residents learned of the imminent demolition of the abandoned USSC store, an attractive 1920s Arts and Crafts building with Tudor Revival elements.²² By linking the preservation of Snug Cove's most important historic building (known locally as the Old General Store) with park status for the land that surrounded the village, the Park and Store Use Society ensured that the island's built heritage would be an important element of the park. The case made to the provincial minister of lands, parks, and housing by the Park and Store Use Society – which claimed to have more than one hundred members – was that a sizeable block of the former USSC land was available for less than half its assessed value. This meant that the

²² Author interview with David Smith, who initiated the society, 14 October 2016.

obstacle to assembling land that complicated park creation elsewhere in the regional district did not apply to Bowen. The society also noted that the park would include foreshore at Snug Cove; a sandy swimming beach at neighbouring Deep (Mannion) Bay; a lagoon with opportunities for canoeing and fishing; a trail passing picturesque Bridal Falls to Killarney Lake, which lay within the USSC block and contained a cutthroat trout fishery; farm fields south of Killarney Creek that could be leased to the public for allotment gardens or community pasture; open areas in the village of Snug Cove that had formerly been used as USSC picnic grounds; nearby Dorman Point with its elevated view of Howe Sound; and the former company store, which could serve as an information centre as well as park headquarters. Furthermore, the park trails would provide access to Crown-owned Mount Gardner, which offered spectacular views of Collingwood Channel, Howe Sound, and Vancouver. Finally, the scenic ferry ride from Horseshoe Bay on the mainland to Snug Cove would also attract park visitors. In short, the site proposed for the park offered variety as well as accessibility.²³ Campaigning with the motto, “Bowen Island Park 1990,” the Park and Store Use Society claimed that, within little more than a decade, the park would be paying for itself as “an outstanding tourist attraction for all out-of-province visitors.”²⁴

The society’s restoration and lobbying efforts – financed in large part by a flea market in the Old General Store – led in 1981 to the Bowen Island Park Review, initiated by the provincial Ministry of Land, Parks, and Housing, with the cooperation of Islands Trust. The report of the Park Review’s Technical Review Committee noted that in the midst of competing demands for land “[lay] Bowen Island which, to date, ha[d] survived the rapid development of the Lower Mainland, and remain[ed] in a relatively natural, unspoiled state.” Further, “[due] to the shallow nature of the soil for sewage disposal and limited supply of water on the island, the potential for housing [was] extremely limited.” For this reason, Bowen could not be “easily converted to a significant residential area, even if the problems of access could be overcome,” but its “diversity of landscapes and shorelines” meant that “many potential park sites exist[ed] there.” Furthermore, the “potential for parks and outdoor recreation” was rapidly climbing with the growth of Vancouver’s population and

²³ BIMA, Bowen Island Park and Store Use Society Fonds, MS 27, box 1, Society Materials: Meetings, Proposals, Photographs (hereafter Park and Store Fonds, box 1), “Bowen Island Park Proposal, A Submission to the Hon. James Chabot, Minister of Lands, Parks and Housing,” 1979, 1, 5-13.

²⁴ BIMA, GVRD collection, Pat Rich, “Bowen Park Plan Ready by February?” (unidentified newsclipping).

the increase of leisure time. The report also mentioned that, while “recreational opportunities in Howe Sound [were] closely associated with the waters of the Sound,” there was a “shortage of public lands for access to the Sound and as destination areas for boaters.” Finally, with the remaining structures of the Union Steamship era clearly in mind, the report stated that “historical significance” would be a major attraction for the park site.²⁵

The committee’s concept plan suggested that access to the park should be primarily for foot passengers and cyclists from the ferry terminal at Snug Cove, and that activities should “focus on day-use outdoor family recreation, with a walk-in camping area for those individuals and groups who wish to participate in dispersed recreation activities such as hiking, climbing and nature study.” Development costs would be limited by having all activities “make the best possible use of existing natural and man-made features.”²⁶ Of the estimated \$2 million that would be required, \$1.8 million would be devoted to Snug Cove, with potential developments listed as group picnic and camping areas, viewpoints, cascading waterfall, beaches, floats, mooring buoys, a trail to Killarney Lake, bridal paths, and a community/administration centre. The remaining \$200,000 would be spent as development costs for Dorman Point, Killarney Lake, and Mount Gardner. Some of this money would be recouped by the sale of the sixty-four hectares that was either considered to be surplus land because it lay outside the area suited to become a park or whose park value had been reduced by “developments.”²⁷

Although the relatively small Bowen tract conformed more closely to that of a regional park than a provincial park, which was supposed to encompass “vast areas of land in order to attain a wilderness experience for park users,” the Technical Review Committee recommended that most of the land known as Union Steamship Properties be converted to a Class A provincial park, which was the highest level in terms of ecological protection. The reasoning was that the provincial parks division had the resources and expertise “to manage this park to the high standards expected by the residents and visitors alike.” Observing that the Lower Mainland’s 14,937 hectares of provincial park land fell far below the required 25,630 hectares, as measured by the provincial park standard

²⁵ British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), series GR-1496, Correspondence and Reports Concerning Historic Sites on Bowen Island, BC, Bowen Island Study, 1981 (hereafter Bowen Island Study), 4-8, app. 1.

²⁶ Bowen Island Study, 14. A concept plan, the GVRD later noted, “serves a basis for the more detailed master plan and site design work.” See BIMA, GVRD Collection, Concept Plan for Crippen Regional Park (hereafter Concept Plan for Crippen), draft, July 1988, 1.

²⁷ Bowen Island Study, 15-19.

of 21.49 hectares per 1,000 people, the Technical Review Committee also pointed out that this shortfall would be mitigated significantly by including in the new park the two Crown-owned blocks that lay adjacent to the former USSC property.²⁸

The members of the Bowen Island Park and Store Use Society unanimously approved of the study's recommendations,²⁹ but no steps were taken until 1983, by which time the re-elected Social Credit government was cutting back on public services, including provincial parks, to focus its expenditures on megaprojects such as Vancouver's giant BC Place stadium, the "SkyTrain" light rapid transit system, and the Coquihalla Highway.³⁰ Despite the Technical Review Committee's strong recommendation, therefore, it was not the province but a somewhat reluctant GVRD, with its limited operating budget, that paid \$1.7 million for the 600 acres (243 hectares) to be named Crippen Park.³¹ The GVRD chair predicted that islanders would be "tickled pink," but the information officer for the island's chamber of commerce nevertheless claimed that local opinion was split fifty-fifty. Island business owners were strongly in support, but two years earlier Sam Dumaresq of Deep Bay (adjacent to Snug Cove) had circulated an anti-park petition garnering 230 signatures, and he now complained to a newspaper reporter that it was "a lot of damn nonsense." Claiming that people arriving from the city were "drunk and disorderly," and that "they fornicate and everything else right out in plain view," Dumaresq asked: "Why on earth would you want a 600-acre park for kooks from Vancouver to come and raise hell and smoke pot?" Local resident Eileen Dorman's cautious support was perhaps more representative, for she told the reporter that the park "should go over all right" provided it was well supervised and that there was no overnight camping. Aside from concerns about increased ferry traffic and policing, the potential for forest fires during the dry summers

²⁸ Ibid., 13.

²⁹ BCA, series GR-1496, Bowen Island Park Study Policy Review Committee Chairman Mayor D.A. Ross to Chairman and Members GVRD Parks Committee, Vancouver, 17 June 1981; Don Toffaletto to Russell Irvine, Bowen Island, 30 June 1981.

³⁰ Patricia Roy and John Herd Thomson, *British Columbia: Land of Promise* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168-69; Anderson, *British Columbia's Magnificent Parks*, 162-63.

³¹ BIMA, GVRD collection, *Real Estate Weekly, North Shore*, 13 May 1983, 1; Donna L. Erickson, *MetroGreen: Connecting Open Space in North American Cities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), 202; author interview with John Rich, former chair of Islands Trust, Bowen Island, 26 October 2016. The original asking price had been \$2.8 million. See Park and Store Fonds, box 1, Kevin Dunne to Dr W. Gibson, Vancouver, 2 February 1983. The property owner as of 1979 was North Hamilton Holdings of North Vancouver, whose president was G.E. Crippen. See BIMA, John Rich Fonds, Bowen APC folder, G.E. Crippen to Georg Helenius, North Vancouver, 6 April 1979.

appears to have been the chief reason for opposing camping and, indeed, the park itself.³²

In order to gain local support, financial as well as moral, one of the GVRD Parks Committee's first steps in 1983 was to enter into cooperative agreements with a number of Bowen recreational and conservationist groups. This was in keeping with the Lower Mainland Regional Parks Plan drafted in 1966 with its focus on outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and cultural heritage programs in partnership with local citizens' groups.³³ The Bowen groups included the Rod and Gun Club, which would operate a small salmon hatchery in the park; the baseball association, whose field in the village of Snug Cove would be enlarged and provided with bleachers; the Teen Centre, which would be located in the Old General Store; the Horse Owners and Riders Association, which was allowed to use a ring in the Terminal Creek Meadow; the Nature Club, which would hold its regular meetings in the Old General Store; and the recycling volunteer group, which was given permission to operate its depot within Crippen Park.³⁴

Furthermore, in order to reassure Bowen residents concerned about the dreaded return of the visiting summer hordes, the GVRD Parks Committee stated that there would be no "sudden rush" to develop public facilities. Before opening the park to the public in 1984 there would be a cleanup of the "litter and remnants of old buildings" that had accumulated over the years. As for the remaining cottages from the USSC era, the department would work with their occupants "so that rentals [could] continue as long as possible." Meanwhile, first priorities included a picnic shelter, tables, and toilets as well as the prevention of further tree cutting, possibly by gating the roads leading to more isolated parts of the property. The plan was also to repair and maintain the Old General Store as a heritage site. When fully developed, the park would consist mostly of the existing forested landscape as well as four main activity sites: the Deep Bay lagoon and Snug Cove, Dorman Point,

³² BIMA, GVRD collection, Gillian Shaw, "New Park on Bowen Splits Island Residents" (unidentified news clipping), 30 April 1983. Dumaresq's petition suggested as alternatives the construction of "baseball facilities, a soccer pitch, tennis courts and a swimming pool, together with some picnic facilities and rest rooms in the Snug Cove area." See BIMA, GVRD collection, Sam Dumaresq to Property Owners of Bowen Island, Bowen Island, 27 November 1981; Comments Regarding Bowen Island Park Study, 1981. The Bowen Island Improvement Association had also expressed reservations in 1981 but under the assumption that it would be a small local park with most of the land developed for housing. See BIMA, Bowen Island Improvement Association Fonds, MS 1, box 2, *Bowenian*, Supplement, October 1981.

³³ <http://www.elderscouncilforparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Richard-Hankin-Poster.pdf>.

³⁴ BIMA, GVRD directors, G. Budge onward, October 1986 Newsletter, 3-4.



Figure 4. Hotel cottages in orchard, 1920s. *Source:* BIMA, photo no. 919.

Killarney Creek, and Killarney Lake. But the budget was very limited, the Parks Committee noted, for GVRD development priorities were Belcarra Regional Park, the University Endowment Lands, and several other mainland sites, leaving only \$50,000 for Crippen Park during the next five years.³⁵

Three years later, in 1986, the GVRD established the Bowen Island Special Committee to examine the growing problems it faced on the island.³⁶ One of those problems was the status of the remaining cottages, which were being rented from month to month in order to provide a “minimum level of maintenance and patrol” in the park. In fact, the GVRD’s policy for all its parks was to continue leasing residential and other property until it was needed for recreational uses. The Special Committee reported, nevertheless, that eight of the twenty-five remaining cottages (there had originally been two hundred) – including the five located on the south side of the lagoon – had been demolished

³⁵ BIMA, GVRD collection, memo to Bowen Island Residents re Crippen Regional Park, GVRD Regional Parks Department, Vancouver, 17 May 1983. Restoration and relocation of the store at a cost of approximately \$200,000 was partially funded by a \$42,000 BC Heritage Trust grant, \$50,000 from the GVRD, and a \$10,000 donation from the Bowen Island Park and Store Use Society. Operating costs were offset by rental payments from the local post office, the Bowen Island Recreation Commission, the local theatre group, and associations requiring meeting space. See *Undercurrent*, 9 March 1983; BIMA, Park and Store Fonds, R.A. Hankin to Residents of Bowen Island, Vancouver, 2 November 1983; BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, Collected Reference Materials, R.A. Hankin and R.E. Gibson to Chairman and Members GVRD Park Committee, Burnaby, 13 September 1989.

³⁶ Gail Taylor, “Report from Regional Director,” *Undercurrent*, 7 March 1986.

because “inspection revealed repair was uneconomical.” After “clean-up, painting and repairs,” the majority of the remaining cottages met minimum safety standards, but “some Bowen Island residents” still complained that they were “unsightly” and that they reduced the land value of adjacent properties as well as contributing to the sewage problem in Snug Cove.³⁷

The 1986 Special Committee report also expressed concern about Rondy Dike’s proposal to expand his recently purchased Snug Cove marina. This concern had to do with the impact it would have “on the adjacent foreshore lands in Snug Cove which the GVRD claim[ed] because of its riparian rights as upland owner” (see Figure 5).³⁸ Dike, an architect and yachting enthusiast from Seattle, had proposed a \$3 million marina village that would triple the number of berths in his operation to 300, though he soon reduced the number to 225. The GVRD Parks Committee had applied to lease the same water area for park purposes, claiming that its aspirations to restore beach activities and swimming “were an important factor in the purchase of the former Union Steamships lands for a Regional Park.” GVRD Parks Committee staff also noted that the steep slope created by dredging the cove would eliminate safe, attractive beach access from the picnic area and make it difficult for canoes and kayaks to gain access to the park shoreline. Furthermore, “the oils, grease, sewage and potent chemicals” that would be produced by the marina would preclude swimming in the cove, and the dredging of the foreshore would “eliminate all life within the intertidal flat.” Finally, the large boats moored at the marina would obscure the distant view, thereby “changing the atmosphere of the lower Snug Cove picnic area.” In short, the staff report concluded: “the Snug Cove waterfront is a vital recreational resource – one that should be preserved and used by all the people of the Greater Vancouver Region – as part of Crippen Regional Park.”³⁹

Dike argued, in turn, that his proposed development would not only improve the appearance of Snug Cove and the park (a corner of the cove

³⁷ BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, Report of the Bowen Island Special Committee (Greater Vancouver Regional District, November 1986), 5. On the condition of the cottages, see also Park and Store Fonds, R.A. Hankin and G.M. Thomas to Chairman and Members of the GVRD Park Committee, Vancouver, 15 February 1984. On a history of the cottages following the Union Steamship era, see Felix Caleb, “Island News,” *Undercurrent*, 22 May 1987.

³⁸ Report of the Bowen Island Special Committee, 1986, 9. For details on Dike’s zoning negotiations with Islands Trust and the Ministry of Lands, Park, and Housing, see Rondy Dike, “Snug Cove Marine Village: Summary of Marina Zoning to Date,” *Undercurrent*, 8 August 1986; and Judi Gedye to editor, *Undercurrent*, 8 August 1986.

³⁹ BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, R.A. Hankin and F. Schade to Chairman and Members of GVRD Park Committee, Vancouver, 15 January 1986.

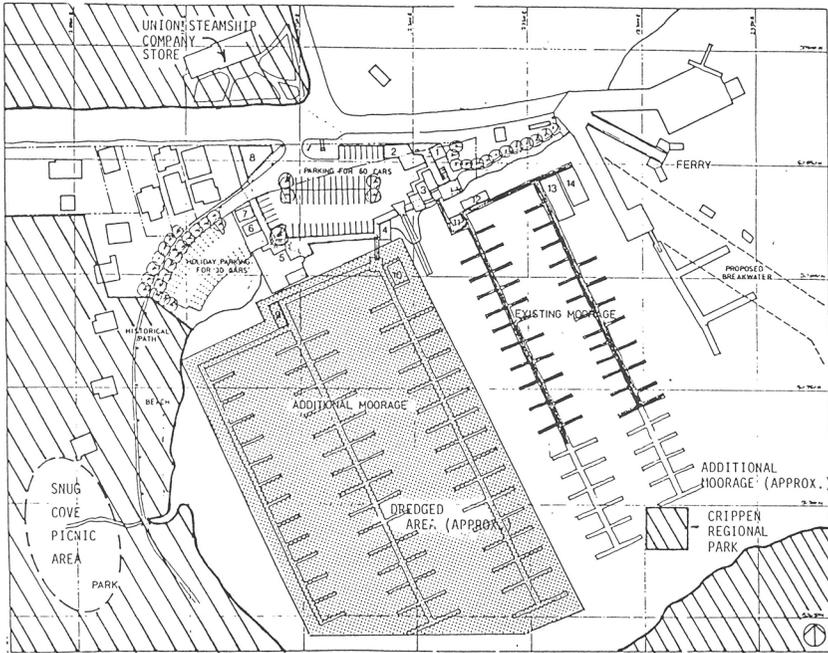


Figure 5. Snug Cove, 1986. *Source:* BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, R.A. Hankin and F. Schade to GVRD Park Committee, 15 January 1986.

was then used as a log salvage facility) but also provide employment for local residents. Furthermore, he claimed that Snug Cove was not appropriate for a beach because of the ferry dock, existing marina, and heavily polluted foreshore, but he promised to restore the historic promenade leading from the ferry dock across his property to the picnic grounds. Finally, Dike noted that his marina would be eligible for provincial tourism and federal small-craft harbours grants or low-interest loans that could also be applied to services such as recreational facilities in the park and a sewage system for Snug Cove.⁴⁰

The promise of a sewage system (funded 50 percent by the province, 25 percent by the GVRD, and 25 percent by the user group, including Dike) was seen as a major benefit by those who supported Dike's project,⁴¹ and he charged that those who opposed his marina were secretly concerned that resolving the sewage problem would result in more people moving to the island. According to Dike's inflated rhetoric: "They want

⁴⁰ Rondy Dike, "Snug Cove Marine Village," *Undercurrent*, 7 February 1986.

⁴¹ See, for example, Felix Caleb, "Island News," *Undercurrent*, 24 January 1986, 7 February 1986, 12 December 1986.



Figure 6. Snug Cove mud flats. *Source:* BIMA photo no. 5801.

to pull up the drawbridge. They want to halt all progress.”⁴² That was the standard accusation made by those who favoured large-scale development on the island, and one of the columnists in the local newspaper pronounced: “After years of being a shameful, run-down and deteriorating ghost town, echoing with memories of days long past, Snug Cove now has an excellent opportunity to be revitalized for modern-day living.” She also warned: “should the proposed plans for the Cove fall through due to apathy on the part of the silent majority and others who with constant and concentrated protests hope to delay, if not stop entirely, *any* development, Snug Cove could quite possibly be completely closed down due to pollution.”⁴³

Concerned citizens had, in fact, formed the eighteen-member Save the Park Committee to fight what they claimed would be the destruction of the park’s entrance.⁴⁴ In addition, the 240-member Bowen Island Improvement Association protested to the provincial Department of Lands, Parks, and Housing that Dike’s proposal was in violation of thirty-one separate paragraphs in the island’s Official Community Plan. Focusing on the environmental impact, the brief noted that tidal flats

⁴² Timothy Renshaw, “Sewage Blamed for Bowen Controversy,” *Undercurrent*, 21 February 1986.

⁴³ Felix Caleb, “Island News,” *Undercurrent*, 17 July 1987. The regional director of medical health had made such a threat two years earlier. See BIMA, GVRD History, Bert Elliott Collection, *Beacon*, 11 April 1985.

⁴⁴ “Bowen Island Save the Park Committee,” *Undercurrent*, 7 February 1986; Renshaw, “Sewage Blamed.”

“offer highly productive habitats for a variety of marine organisms” and are therefore extremely valuable as fish and bird habitat. Furthermore, the tidal flat at the head of Snug Cove was “a potential educational resource for the future use of the region.” Finally, the association claimed, the construction of a breakwater would interfere with tidal flushing of the cove. A study of five marinas in Puget Sound had shown that they had resulted in the accumulation of heavy metals from boat paints as well as petroleum products from fuelling and bilges. Even more damaging, according to the research, was that, during late summer and early fall, dissolved oxygen was reduced to “levels considered fatal to some bottom organisms.” This reduction was caused by the accumulation of organic material, raising concerns about the potential impact of the sewage outfall system proposed for Dike’s laundromat, showers, washrooms, rental units, restaurant, and pub.⁴⁵

In reaction to this, one person commented in the local newspaper: “anybody talking about ‘reclaiming’ this piece of shoreline for pristine recreation use is dreaming.” It was, he claimed, “a rather grimy foreshore to an area that has long felt the impact of bilge oil, wood preservative leachates, and faecal coliform from a saturated septic tank strata.”⁴⁶ A protest rally organized by the Save the Park Committee nevertheless featured a skit in which the person pretending to be Dike was pelted with raw eggs. Protesters also carried signs with slogans such as “Remove the pollution, not the beach” and “Support a beachcomber, not a beachwrecker.”⁴⁷

Despite such protests, the GVRD’s Bowen Island Special Committee went a long way towards accommodating Dike by supporting “some limited commercial uses on GVRD land at the head of Snug Cove.” The “marine orientation” of Crippen Park would be restricted to nearby Deep Bay, meaning that Snug Cove would be excluded from “water contact recreation, viz. swimming.” And even though the Special Committee’s recommendation was that none of the park property in the Snug Cove area be designated as surplus for the time being, it added that park land might be sold or leased, depending upon “the use proposed for the property.” As a concrete step towards orienting the park more towards business, and in keeping with the free enterprise spirit of the time, the committee also recommended a proposal for an inn and restaurant in the

⁴⁵ *Undercurrent*, 24 January 1986. See also BIMA, John Rich Fonds, Marina Park folder, Judi Gedye to P. Chamut, Director General, Pacific Region, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Bowen Island, 5 June 1987.

⁴⁶ A. Neimers, “That Marina!” *Undercurrent*, 7 February 1986.

⁴⁷ BIMA, Development and Sub-division, box 2, Stan James File (hereafter SJF), Charles Fidelman, “Marina Plan Still Lays Eggs with Islanders” (unidentified newsclipping), 10 February 1986.

village orchard (known as Davies Orchard) where most of the remaining cabins were located “as the first test of the market for investment in tourism in Crippen Regional Park.”⁴⁸ Finally, reflecting the changing tide in local opinion, Bowen Island elected two pro-development members to Islands Trust, which then supported the Special Committee report.⁴⁹

At the heated public meeting of the Islands Trust Board held on Bowen Island in April, however, the two government-appointed trustees opposed final reading of the bylaw that would have permitted an ocean outfall for Snug Cove’s sewage of 20,000 gallons (75,700 litres) per day. The Environment Ministry’s Waste Management Branch had initially approved of only 8,860 gallons (33,500 litres), which was slightly under the limit recommended for sewage receiving primary treatment only (namely, a community septic tank), but then it succumbed to the appeal for the larger capacity on the grounds that the pub, orchard cabins, and empty lots had been overlooked. Nevertheless, the two government-appointed members of the Islands Trust board argued that it would be premature to approve of the larger capacity until the engineering design had been completed to the Trust’s satisfaction. In the end, the general trustee, who was also government-appointed, reluctantly succumbed to pressure exerted during the raucous meeting by supporting the motion, thereby breaking the tie vote.⁵⁰

Then, in March 1988, local opponents launched an appeal challenging the legality of ignoring the provincial guideline for primary sewage treatment. In response, local columnist Felix Caleb (a pseudonym) asked: “Does that mean the end of the hoped for plans of a library, museum, community centre, and various other improvements in Snug Cove?”⁵¹ The stakes were indeed high as the GVRD had already threatened that,

⁴⁸ Report of the Bowen Island Special Committee, 1986, 11, BIMA, GVRD Collection.

⁴⁹ The two Bowen trustees were Peggy Rose and Don Leigh. See Gail Taylor, “A Report from the Regional Director,” *Undercurrent*, 27 February 1987. Pro-development candidates also won the election for the Advisory Planning Committee the following year. See Felix Caleb, “Island News,” *Undercurrent*, 8 July 1988.

⁵⁰ A.H. Elliott, “As I See It! Democracy at the Crossroads,” *Undercurrent*, 24 April 1987; Jean Jamieson to Nick Gilbert, Chairman, Islands Trust, *Undercurrent*, 8 May 1987; Wolfgang Duntz, “Certain Things Are Terribly Wrong,” *Undercurrent*, 19 February 1988; John Rich to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 18 March 1988. The liquid sewage would be dispelled at the entrance to Snug Cove into the waters off Dorman Point. See Felix Caleb, “Island News,” *Undercurrent*, 25 September 1987; Judi Gedye to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 9 October 1987; Deborah Daws, “Island Issues,” *Undercurrent*, 4 March 1988; Don Leigh to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 18 March 1988.

⁵¹ The appeal was entered by the Ratcliff and Company law firm on behalf of John Rich, Royce Rich, and Jeremy Howe, and by Judi Gedye on behalf of the Bowen Island Improvement Association. See Felix Caleb, “Island News,” *Undercurrent*, 4 March 1988; “A Report on the Snug Cove Improvement District Proposed Sewage Disposal System,” *Undercurrent*, 4 March 1988.

if a secondary treatment plant were mandated (at an estimated extra cost of \$100,000 per year), it would withdraw its promised 25 percent contribution towards operational costs. The threat proved unnecessary, however, for the court appeal was denied a couple of months later on the grounds that ten thousand gallons per day for primary treatment was an objective rather than a requirement.⁵² A major obstacle to Rondy Dike's ambitious development plans had thus been overcome.

In the meantime, in June 1987, the GVRD Parks Committee acted quickly on its Bowen Island Special Committee's recommendations by issuing an official memo proposing a "heritage-style" small inn and restaurant in the orchard. The memo added that the Parks Committee had agreed in principle to the marina expansion into the Snug Cove foreshore and, clearly to compensate for the effective loss of the Snug Cove waterfront for public-use purposes, it also suggested that a water-oriented recreation site on neighbouring Deep Bay would be a desirable long-term objective. However, responding to residents' concerns about expropriation, the GVRD decided in October that no further action would be taken to develop a public swimming beach in Deep Bay. As for the remaining orchard cottages, the Parks Committee memo simply stated that the GVRD felt they had "no particular heritage value."⁵³

Prominent local developer and former *Vancouver Sun* publisher Donald Cromie agreed, writing: "the pretty flowers around an old low rent cottage are a poor excuse for opposing the further tidying of squalid Snug Cove at Vancouver's west doorstep";⁵⁴ however, irate Bowen Islanders complained that they had not been consulted, and that the recommendations had a pro-developer bias. Furthermore, in contrast to Cromie another Bowen developer wrote that it was "absurd" to deny the heritage value of the remaining cottages, adding: "If the Bowen Island of the future is to be anything more than a nicely forested dormitory to Vancouver, it must retain its individual character of which its unique history is possibly the most important aspect."⁵⁵ Local residents also protested that the island's "precious green areas" were falling into the hands of "developers and

⁵² G.F. Farry, Spec. Advisor to the Regional Manager, GVRD, to Bill Riddell, Chairman, Snug Cove Improvement District, 16 November 1987, in *Undercurrent*, 20 November 1987; W.F. Kimmett, Chief Public Health Inspector, North Shore Health Department, to Mr. Riddell, 3 November 1987, in *Undercurrent*, 20 November 1987; Felix Caleb, "Island News," *Undercurrent*, 27 May 1988; A.H. Elliott, "As I See It," *Undercurrent*, 27 May 1988.

⁵³ BIMA, GVRD Collection, Don Bellamy, Chairman GVRD Parks Committee to Bowen Island Residents, Burnaby, 24 June 1987; Betty and Sam Black to Editor, and John Sbragia to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 3 July 1987; Felix Caleb, "Island News," *Undercurrent*, 9 October 1987.

⁵⁴ Donald Cromie to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 14 August 1987.

⁵⁵ Douglas M. Berry to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 19 June 1987.

profiteers” and that “development-backed politicians” were allowing commercial interests to “grab the prime seacoast parkland right at the entrance of Bowen Island.”⁵⁶ Don Bellamy – Vancouver councillor and chair of the GVRD Parks Committee – charged, in turn, that Bowen was “Peyton Place with a moat.” Reporting that he would visit the island in an attempt to smooth the community’s fears, he added: “If I had my druthers, I’d walk away from the whole damn thing.”⁵⁷

But Bowen residents were not the only ones to be concerned about the proposed developments. Anna De Bakker wrote to the *Vancouver Sun* that, as a “middle-aged, harassed, city-dweller,” she was appalled to learn that “a group of cabins in a charming orchard in Crippen Park [was] slated to be demolished for a hotel, and [that] the quiet cove [was] going to have a new marina complete with another pub and a ‘shopping mall.’”⁵⁸ *Vancouver Sun* columnist Pete McMartin struck a similar chord, asking: “What is a quasi-governmental body whose mandate it is to supply the Lower Mainland with parks doing spending tax dollars to develop commercial interests? Why is it in the business of business?”⁵⁹

Popular sentiment aside, Patrick Frey – assistant director of historic programmes for the province’s Ministry of Tourism, Recreation and Culture – also had reservations about the dismissal of the cottages’ heritage value. He suggested to the senior planner for GVRD Parks that the “remaining elements of the old Union Steamship resort contribute[d] positively to a unique cultural landscape at Snug Cove / Deep Bay” and that the orchard cottages were “clearly a component of this cultural landscape.” Considered separately, Frey conceded, the cottages were “simply modest undistinguished resort structures ... not unlike dozens of other beach cottages of similar or more recent vintage dotting the Gulf Islands, the Sunshine Coast and the East Coast of Vancouver Island.” Collectively, however, they were “the only surviving cluster of cabins that continue[d] to visually convey their original function and historical association with the Union Steamship Resort.” As “arguably the most prominent beach resort on the coast,” Frey continued, the Union Steamship property was “reflective of a particular phase in the growth of social forces influencing recreation and tourism activity in

⁵⁶ BIMA, SJF, Edythe Hanson to Editor, *Vancouver Sun*, 15 July 1987; John Sbragia to editor, *Vancouver Sun*, 16 July 1987.

⁵⁷ Quoted in BIMA, GVRD Collection, Pete McMartin, “Bowen Latest GVRD Battleground,” *Vancouver Sun*, 8 July 1987 (mistakenly identified as 1978). *Bowenian* (June 1987) claimed that, at the May 23 “open house,” there was “no open opportunity to listen to the ideas of neighbours or share in larger discussions with the government representatives and other residents.”

⁵⁸ BIMA, GVRD Collection, Anna De Bakker to Editor, *Vancouver Sun*, 3 July 1987.

⁵⁹ McMartin, “Bowen Latest GVRD Battleground.”

the province.” According to Frey, a technical survey had found that the general condition of the cottages was “fair to good,” though most of them required “foundation stabilization, roof replacement and repairs to verandahs, stairs and other features.” That said, there was “considerable evidence of tenant repairs and improvements.” Frey therefore suggested that the GVRD should “consider possibilities for the preservation and rehabilitation of the Orchard Cabins,” funded largely by rental options that incorporated “private sector investment and/or continuing revenue potential for the GVRD.”⁶⁰ When the tenant of one of the cottages moved out that fall, however, the GVRD Parks Committee elected to board it up, leaving it – in the words of one letter to the local newspaper editor – “to deteriorate, unheated, over the winter.” The correspondent then asked if the GVRD members had made up their minds “long ago, behind closed doors and without the consensus of Bowen Islanders, to bulldoze these historic cottages to erect a hotel[.]”⁶¹

Meanwhile, a month after the GVRD had released its controversial June 1987 memo, a local organization known as the Bowen Island Golf Association submitted a proposal to build a nine-hole course on twenty hectares (fifty acres) of land within the Killarney Creek watershed of Crippen Park.⁶² Having learned from the backlash against the marina, this time the GVRD Parks Committee held an open house on Bowen, at which it distributed a questionnaire regarding recreation preferences for the park. Of the sixty-seven responses, 69 percent were from Island residents, 18 percent from Vancouver, and 9 percent from other GVRD municipalities. Over 50 percent of the respondents favoured walking/hiking, picnicking, swimming/beach activities, and canoeing/non-motor boating. In addition, 49 percent thought toilet facilities were important, 45 percent favoured habitat enhancement, and between 40 percent and 45 percent wanted to have facilities provided for group picnics, launching canoes and kayaks, playing baseball and softball, a children’s playground, and cycling. As for golf, it was a secondary preference, at best, as were tennis, horseback riding, fishing, and a float/wharf, all of which were roughly in the 30 percent range. In addition, 16 percent favoured a charter boat dock and 19 percent were opposed, 18 percent thought walk-in

⁶⁰ BIMA, GVRD Collection, Patrick Frey to Ms Frieda Schade, Senior Planner GVRD Parks, Victoria, 5 August 1987.

⁶¹ BIMA, SJF, John Sbragia to Editor, *Vancouver Sun*, 5 October 1987. For examples of other protest letters, see *Undercurrent*, 25 September 1987. The editor’s sardonic comment was: “When these wonderful letter writers have done with Cabin 18 we sincerely hope that they will concentrate upon the ending of the nuclear threat.”

⁶² See “Letter to the Greater Vancouver Regional District Parks Committee,” in *Undercurrent*, 17 July 1987.

camping was very important while 21 percent felt that it should not be provided in the park, and 10 percent favoured group camping while 25 percent did not.⁶³

In its draft Concept Plan, released nearly a year later in July 1988, the GVRD dropped the previous year's inn and restaurant idea because professional consultants had reported that it was not economically viable.⁶⁴ The draft also included a letter from the head of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) habitat management unit opposing the golf course. He wrote: "local residents in cooperation with the Salmonid Enhancement Program have strived over the last seven years to establish a coho salmon run in these creeks." Enhancements included "an elaborate series of fish ladders" to allow coho to migrate to "the high quality spawning and rearing habitats which exist within Crippen Park." In addition, the DFO had sponsored a coho hatchery during the previous four years, and a larger more efficient one was currently being constructed in Crippen Park in preparation for the first adult return in the fall. Total expenditure by the DFO equalled \$340,000, and over 32,500 hours of labour – much of it volunteer – had been devoted to the goal of a self-sustaining fish population in the only salmon streams on Bowen. Drainage to construct a golf course on what was a low-lying floodplain, the DFO noted, would put an end not only to the provision of nutrients and fish food organisms to the salmon streams but also to refuge areas for fish during storms, not to mention the impact of fertilizers and pesticides during runoffs.⁶⁵

The Bowen Island Nature Club and the Bowen Island Rod and Gun Club echoed these concerns, as did the habitat protection technician for the provincial Ministry of Environment and Parks. The proposal also attracted the attention of the province's Save Our Parkland Association and the Lower Mainland branch of the Sierra Club of Western Canada, but, at an open house held by the GVRD on Bowen in November, golf course supporters outnumbered opponents by thirty-one to eleven.⁶⁶ As for the island's pro-development Advisory Planning Committee, it supported the concept of a golf course in the park, though it did express concern about the site designated by park staff.⁶⁷ Anxious to appease

⁶³ Concept Plan for Crippen, 1, 4-5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12; John Rich to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 19 February 1988.

⁶⁵ Concept Plan for Crippen, app. 4, S.A. Macfarlane, Head, Land Use Section, Habitat Management Unit, DFO, to Bev Ramey, Park Planner, GVRD, New Westminster, 12 July 1988.

⁶⁶ The open house held in North Vancouver was evenly divided with five on each side. See MVHLL, "Crippen Regional Park, Responses to Concept Plan," November 1988, 9-18, 37-43, 47.

⁶⁷ MVHLL, "Responses to Concept Plan," 54-55.

local demands, the GVRD was still sending encouraging signals in December.⁶⁸ It had suggested an alternate site further from Snug Cove and closer to Killarney Lake, but this proved unsatisfactory to the golf club promoters, and – after more than 650 people signed a petition circulated by the Crippen Park Preservation Association – the GVRD finally withdrew its conditional approval in June 1989.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, opposition to the expansion of Dike's marina had remained strong, as is illustrated by the GVRD Parks Committee meeting held on Bowen Island in October 1987. The great majority of the forty-four speakers and twenty-two written submissions criticized the project, as did a petition with 253 signatures.⁷⁰ Dike stated that he had further reduced his requested area, pulling it out of the GVRD Parks area of concern in order to avoid further delay, but that this alternative was undesirable because it would retain the mud flat and exclude "the most flexible and needed transient boater usage and access that serves the Park and Village."⁷¹ Rezoning to expand the Snug Cove marina and eliminate the mud flat did proceed, however, despite the DFO's statement that it "contain[ed] high numbers per square metre of fish food organisms" as well as the Canadian Wildlife Service's statement that the intertidal foreshore was "a valuable food production site for wildfowl."⁷² In addition, biologist Michael W. Dunn had submitted a brief to the GVRD Parks Committee pointing out that tidal flats and estuaries constituted only 0.5 percent (135 kilometres) of the BC coastline and were equally rare in the Howe Sound region.⁷³ (In creating the Deep Bay lagoon, the construction of the causeway in 1925 had destroyed Bowen's other tidal mud flat.) Finally, the federal New Democratic Party spokesperson for fisheries had also brought the matter to the attention of the Minister for Fisheries and Oceans.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Ibid., "Responses to Concept Plan," 59-63; Charles Wallace, "It's Full Steam Ahead for Bowen Golf Course," *Undercurrent*, 16 December 1988.

⁶⁹ *Bowenian*, October 1988; MVHLL, "Responses to Concept Plan," 77-78, 80-82, 85. A local expert had also reported that the park's uncommon western red cedar – Sitka spruce – swordfern community would be threatened by the golf course. See "Crippen Regional Park: Proposed Golf Course," *Undercurrent*, 17 March 1989; D.G. Blair-Whitehead to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 24 March 1989; "A Letter to R.A. Hankin, GVRD," *Undercurrent*, 21 April 1989; BIMA, GVRD Directors, G. Budge onward, *Bowen Island Director's Report*, June 1989.

⁷⁰ MVHLL, "Bowen Island Crippen Regional Park: Park Committee Meeting, October 3, 1987. Delegations and Briefs." See pp. 12-16 for a tabular summary of the submissions.

⁷¹ MVHLL, "Park Committee Meeting, October 3, 1987," 2.

⁷² Deborah Daws, "Island Issues," *Undercurrent*, 5 February 1988.

⁷³ MVHLL, "Park Committee Meeting, October 3, 1987," 73-82.

⁷⁴ BIMA, John Rich Fonds, Marina Park folder, Jim Manley to Hon. Tom Siddon, 15 October 1987. Also expressing opposition were the Bowen Improvement Association and BC Ferries, the latter's being concerned about congestion in front of its dock. See BIMA, *Bowenian*, October

In fact, as early as the 1960s, the remarkable productivity of tidal flat ecosystems (ten times more productive than a typical grassland, forest, or wheat field) had been widely trumpeted by popular American periodicals such as *Life*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Geographic*, and the DFO had prevented the destruction of the Squamish estuary for a coal port in 1972.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, with the benefit of a \$1 million federal subsidy, Dike was given the green light to dredge up to eight acres (3.2 hectares) of the cove, including the Crippen Park foreshore. The DFO had apparently had a sudden change of heart as one of its biologists stated that the new gravel and sloping of the Snug Cove intertidal area would provide “habitat compensation.”⁷⁶ No mention was made of the radically diminished expanse of that area or of the potential impact of increased pollution from boats, particularly given the fact that holding tanks were still not legally required on pleasure craft.⁷⁷

Dike was also able to convince the federal government to replace the federal float on Snug Cove with a breakwater float to protect his marina (and reduce public moorage) at an estimated cost of \$1.2 million.⁷⁸ Pointing to Dike's promise to invest more than \$2 million in his project, now downsized to berths for 160 boats, Bowen's pro-developer GVRD representative Gail Taylor – who sat on the GVRD Parks Committee and had close connections with the province's Social Credit government – claimed that the park was expected to attract up to 200,000 people a year (park visitation in 1989 was only 75,000)⁷⁹ and that the island needed the amenities. Furthermore, tourists would no longer be subjected to the “awful” smell of the mud flats at low tide.⁸⁰

1988; BIMA, Bowen Island Improvement Association Fonds, MS 21, box 2, *Bowenian*, “Do You Want This to Happen to Snug Cove?” (undated 1988 flyer).

⁷⁵ Rome, *Bulldozer*, 160-65; Little, *At the Wilderness Edge*, chap. 4. On the campaign, beginning in the 1960s, to preserve and restore some of the San Francisco Bay tidal flats, see Walker, *Country in the City*, chap. 5.

⁷⁶ BIMA, SJF, “Fate of Bowen Project Hinges on Trustee's Vote,” *Vancouver Sun*, 1 June 1988. A DFO official referred to the “upgrading” of “the remaining intertidal area of the cove bottom substrate for marine plant life and animal organisms.” See BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, Collected Reference Materials, Otto Langer, Head, Habitat Management Unit, DFO, New Westminster, to R. Dike, 10 March 1988; Langer to B.D. Strongitharm, Senior Planner, Islands Trust, New Westminster, 6 May 1988.

⁷⁷ Mike Humphries, “Islands Trust,” *Undercurrent*, 18 April 1986; BIMA, John Rich Fonds, Marina Park Folder, John R. Rich to Chairman and Members, GVRD, North Vancouver, 23 October 1989, 16 November 1989 and 27 November 1989. On what is referred to as non-point source pollution in marinas, see www.env.gov.bc.ca/wat/wq/nps/NPS_Pollution/boating/Boating_Main.htm.

⁷⁸ Deborah Daws, “Island Issues,” *Undercurrent*, 29 April 1988.

⁷⁹ “Crippen Park Attracts 75,000,” *Undercurrent*, 16 December 1988.

⁸⁰ BIMA, SJF, Daphne Branham, “Ottawa to Help Make Bowen Island Vision,” *Vancouver Sun*, 29 March 1989. Taylor had been a member of the GVRD's Bowen Island Special Committee

The GVRD was now completely behind this project, agreeing to Dike's use of a twenty-five-metre strip of its leased water lot, which thereby reduced it by half,⁸¹ and passing motions that asked the DFO, Transport Canada, the provincial Minister of Crown Lands, and Islands Trust to support it. As for compensation, Dike had promised a 110-lineal-metre easement for public access across his property from the ferry access road to Crippen Park at Davies Creek. He also offered to construct the walkway along this path, but he refused further contributions on the grounds that his marina would provide transient moorage and other visitor amenities to park visitors (at a price), that it would increase park visitations as well as the value of GVRD property to be sold as surplus land, that it would have a positive impact on the economic development of Bowen Island, and that it would enhance the recognition of the recreational and tourist potential of Howe Sound. As a result, in September 1989 the GVRD's Snug Cove Negotiating Committee recommended that outstanding issues be resolved by binding arbitration while conceding at the outset that there was "some evidence to suggest that imposition of an additional financial liability in the initial years would be fatal to the marina expansion, which would also terminate the dredging, public access and other improvements which make up the harbour revitalization project," thereby sacrificing more than \$2 million in federal funding.⁸²

The arbitrator was kind to Dike, who would not have to make any payments to the GVRD for the first four years, and none after that unless his operation realized a "reasonable profit."⁸³ Demonstrating further that funds for developers were plentiful in that era of government austerity, Dike received a \$600,000 low-interest tourism development loan the following year, in May 1990.⁸⁴ It was reported that his marina would be expanded to 300 berths and docks, as he had originally proposed, thereby sacrificing the view to Howe Sound that GVRD Parks staff had claimed was essential.⁸⁵ An angry Lois-Meyers Carter, president of

as well as being the author of the Snug Cove revitalization proposal endorsed by the Park Committee and the GVRD Board in October 1988. BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, Collected Reference Materials, Snug Cove Negotiating Committee to Chairman and Members GVRD Park Committee, Burnaby, 13 September 1989, 1.

⁸¹ Deborah Daws, "Island Issues," *Undercurrent*, 13 May 1988; Felix Caleb, "Island News," *Undercurrent*, 27 May 1988.

⁸² Snug Cove Negotiating Committee to Chairman and Members GVRD Park Committee, Burnaby, 13 September 1989, 1, 5, app. A.

⁸³ BIMA, SJF, David Stone, "Bowen Residents Criticize Marina-Expansion Talks," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 September 1989; Tom Arnold, "Snug Cove People Aghast at Proposed Resort Development" (unidentified newsclipping, 30 May 1990).

⁸⁴ "Development Okayed, Says Michael," *Undercurrent*, 15 June 1990.

⁸⁵ "Marina Eyed as Tourist Resort," *Undercurrent*, 1 June 1990.

the 200-member Bowen Island Heritage Preservation Society, stated in response: “they (Ottawa and Victoria) gave Snug Cove away to become a one-man empire without even asking or notifying islanders.”⁸⁶ Subsequently, however, the provincial minister of tourism announced that the number of berths would remain at 170.⁸⁷ (The marina now claims to welcome more than 200 vessels ranging in length up to 200 feet [61 metres].)⁸⁸ The aim of the marina development – according to the federal minister of tourism – was to make Snug Cove a destination resort for American boaters,⁸⁹ but the result was that a tidal flat ecosystem and view corridor from the park shoreline was sacrificed in order to serve yacht owners who would provide limited economic benefits to the island.

Also slated for sacrifice, due to their septic system failures, were five of the orchard cottages.⁹⁰ Although one argument for construction of the controversially large primary-treatment sewer system had been that the cottages would be served by it, the GVRD Parks Committee now claimed that connecting them would require secondary treatment for the village at the prohibitive cost of \$100,000.⁹¹ Two “deteriorated” cottages were demolished in the spring of 1990, resulting in a mock requiem and wake attended by 175 people. When the chair of GVRD Parks claimed that he was simply following the recommendations of the region’s health committee, a local resident responded that islanders had offered to provide free labour “to bring the cottages up to snuff but the GVRD gave a flat-out ‘no.’”⁹² One angry correspondent asked: “How can you expect to develop a sense of historical understanding in children, when the only examples of what could be the past is in the Hollywoodian image of Fantasy Garden [Premier Vander Zalm’s recently built theme park] and Disney-type of buildings [a reference to Dike’s ‘heritage-style’ structures] mushrooming in Snug Cove?”⁹³

Supporters of the cottages could take some comfort, however, from the statement in the GVRD newsletter that, “subject to the structural

⁸⁶ Arnold, “Snug Cove.”

⁸⁷ *Undercurrent*, 15 June 1990.

⁸⁸ www.unionsteamshipmarina.com/marina.

⁸⁹ Arnold, “Snug Cove”; “Marina Eyed.”

⁹⁰ BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, Collected Reference Materials, R.A. Hankin, R.E. Gibson, and G. Patching to Chairman and Members GVRD Park Committee, Burnaby, 13 September 1989.

⁹¹ Gail Taylor, “GVRD Report,” *Undercurrent*, 17 November 1989.

⁹² BIMA, SJF, Kathy Ramsey, “Bowen Demolition Protest Planned” (unidentified newsclipping), 21 April 1990; Kathy Ramsey, “Heritage Society Mock Requiem and Wake Set for Sunday,” *Undercurrent*, 27 April 1990; Edythe Hanen, “175 Protest Cabin Demolitions,” *Undercurrent*, 4 May 1990.

⁹³ André H. Chollat to Editor, *Undercurrent*, 4 May 1990.

assessment, all or some of the remaining cabins [would] be preserved” and that they might “then be put to uses which support[ed] Park or Village activities.” Ideas from a meeting with Bowen Island associations and clubs concerning potential uses for the cottages had been passed on to consultants. Residents would have opportunities to comment on the series of options at public meetings in June and August, then the Snug Cove Planning Committee would make a more formal assessment on behalf of the community. In the meantime, from the \$420,000 budgeted for Crippen Park development, the lagoon causeway was to be repaired and the Killarney Lake dam replaced. Finally, in keeping with the suggestions of the Bowen Island Nature Club, the environmental inventory of the Killarney Lake Management Unit had recommended that most of the lake be preserved in its current condition “for wildlife habitat, nature observation, and interpretive opportunities.” There were no plans to promote or intensify fishing, and swimming and non-motorized boating would require further investigation.⁹⁴

No action appears to have been taken during the following year, but finally, in 1992, the provincial government announced that it was giving \$94,444 to the GVRD as the first two payments of a \$141,667 GO BC grant to develop Crippen Park. As a result, the Parks Committee proceeded with the improvements already announced,⁹⁵ but there was presumably no money for the cottages. The GVRD did, however, join forces with the Bowen Island Heritage Association to establish a community-based management unit for those cottages that remained as well as for the restored Old General Store and the recently refurbished causeway, collectively viewed as the “historical precinct at the gateway to the Island.”⁹⁶

Investment in Crippen Park had been limited by the failure to sell to private interests the forty-hectare parcel identified as surplus lands, a failure blamed on the need to resolve community land requirements as well as Islands Trust’s control over zoning and development proposals. Finally, in 1998, the GVRD announced that it would be selling what it claimed was “some of the most valuable potential commercial and

⁹⁴ BIMA, GVRD Collection, *Crippen Regional Park Newsletter*, May 1990, 1–2. For a sharp and detailed critique of the consultants’ report, see BIMA, GVRD Collection, Snug Cove Picnic Area Redevelopment, Comments on a report prepared by dm Group Landscape Architects and Park Planners, submitted by Katherine Dunster, BRE, MLA, to Gordon Smith, Park Planner (GVRD Parks – West Area), 28 February 1991.

⁹⁵ BIMA, GVRD Collection (*North Shore News*, 22 January 1992); *Undercurrent*, 21 February 1992.

⁹⁶ *Undercurrent*, 14 February 1992, 26 June 1992; MVHLL, Bowen Island Heritage Preservation Association, “Business Plan” (draft), March 1993.

residential lands” on Bowen and that it would donate a percentage of the money received to the island for a much-needed community centre. Announcing that a consultant would be hired to end the fifteen-year impasse, the GVRD’s top official suggested: “whoever gets this assignment will have earned their money.”⁹⁷ Again, however, nothing happened for several more years, until 2005, when – under the strong urging of Bowen’s GVRD representative, Ross Carter – the surplus lands were sold to the six-year-old municipality of Bowen Island for \$2 million.⁹⁸ As for the remaining orchard cottages, restoration work had been done on several of them,⁹⁹ but the fate of most still remains in limbo.

CONCLUSION

Not only is British Columbia’s regional parks system unique within Canada,¹⁰⁰ but Crippen Regional Park is unique within the Metro Vancouver park system because it surrounds a village on an island inhabited largely by middle-class families who have made a conscious decision not to live in the city or the suburbs. The relatively short history of Crippen Park nevertheless does shed light on the pressures and constraints experienced by the GVRD Parks Committee as well as on the role played by Islands Trust, the provincial Heritage Branch, and even the federal DFO. When the GVRD Parks Committee reported in 1987 that “the enthusiasm of regional residents for this ‘park on an island’ has resulted in large and unanticipated recreational demands,” it was largely because of the continuing “popularity of large group picnics and events.”¹⁰¹ It would seem to follow, then, that “recreational demands” consisted mostly of building picnic shelters, mowing the grass, maintaining the trails, and cleaning up the beach. Left unsaid was the fact that the GVRD clearly

⁹⁷ BIMA, GVRD Collection, Glenn Bohn, “GVRD Moves to Sell Park Land,” *Vancouver Sun*, 11 March 1998.

⁹⁸ Carter had argued as early as 1993 that this land would be a good public investment once sewage disposal requirements had been met and that it would provide a relatively inexpensive site for arts and library facilities, seniors’ and public health facilities, indoor sports, and affordable housing. See BIMA, GVRD Directors, G. Budge onward, *Report of the GVRD Director*, July 1993.

⁹⁹ MVHLL, Dan Matsushita, “Overall Budget Cost Estimate for the Davies Orchard Project, Snug Cove, Crippen Regional Park, Municipality of Bowen Island” (May 2000).

¹⁰⁰ The reserved areas identified as regional parks in Saskatchewan are managed by volunteer boards, and many are not near densely settled communities. See <http://saskregionalparks.ca/accreditation-program>.

¹⁰¹ BIMA, Ross Carter Fonds, Collected Reference Materials, Plan for the Snug Cove Area of Crippen Regional Park: Summary of GVRD Policies and Planning Principles Affecting the Plan, draft, August 1987.

felt political pressure to allow, and even invite, commercial development in the park.

That pressure came, first of all, from the fiscal restraint imposed during an era of government cutbacks, suggesting that even status as a provincial park might not have prevented the expansion of the Snug Cove marina. Second, there was also pressure from pro-development forces within Bowen itself – forces that gained popular support because of the polluted nature of the Snug Cove foreshore and the stagnating state of the village surrounded by the park.¹⁰² The Islands Trust, with its mandate to “preserve and protect” the “unique amenities and environment” of the Gulf Islands,¹⁰³ should have been an impediment to development pressures, but it generally succumbed to the wishes of the elected local representatives, and, during the 1980s, those from Bowen were mostly pro-development. Furthermore, even though the DFO vetoed the proposed golf course near Killarney Lake, it clearly must have bowed to political pressure when it permitted the dredging of the Snug Cove mud flats without an environmental impact study. Polluted the intertidal zone obviously was, but early settlers had reported herring a foot deep behind sand bars when the tide receded,¹⁰⁴ and the new sewage treatment plant would replace the village’s antiquated septic tanks. As one local resident pointed out, the alienation of the Snug Cove foreshore went “directly against the stated policy of Crippen being a multi-use park” because it effectively ended the possibility of water contact recreation.¹⁰⁵ As for the benefits of the greatly expanded marina, owner Rondy Dike argued: “the modern day equivalent of the old excursion steamers, full of picnickers, will help ease the visitor ferry traffic to Bowen Island’s parks.” But the main result has been to provide a marine parking lot for boats owned by affluent non-island residents.¹⁰⁶

The marina is a *fait accompli*, but heritage remains a controversial issue on Bowen, as it does in Belcarra, which is another Metro Vancouver park with a small number of cottages (though they are still inhabited).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Gail Taylor was re-elected as GVRD representative by a strong majority in November 1987. The off-island vote was quite evenly divided (96-91), but the on-island vote was decisively for Taylor (526-347). See Felix Caleb, “Island News,” *Undercurrent*, 4 December 1987.

¹⁰³ www.islandstrust.bc.ca.

¹⁰⁴ Edythe Hanen, “Tidal Flats Dredging Plan Is Questioned,” *Undercurrent*, 21 September 1990; Irene Howard, *Bowen Island 1872-1972* (Bowen Island, BC: Bowen Island Historians, 1973), 38.

¹⁰⁵ Submission by Graeme A. Dinsdale to “Park Committee Meeting, October 3, 1987,” 86.

¹⁰⁶ Rondy Dike, “Small Craft Harbours Branch Participates in Revitalization,” *Undercurrent*, 7 April 1989. The initial agreement stipulated a fifteen-consecutive-day- and thirty-days-per-calendar-year maximum. See Gail Taylor, “GVRD Report,” *Undercurrent*, 17 November 1989.

¹⁰⁷ See Jennifer Saltman, “Eight Residents Face Eviction as Metro Vancouver Parks Committee Considers Plan for Belcarra South,” at www.michaelkluckner.com/bciwibelcarra.html.

Metro's Regional Parks Plan for 2016 makes no mention of heritage, but the Parks Committee could learn from the example of the regional parks system in France, which celebrates both human occupation and the ecology that has resulted from human intervention.¹⁰⁸ Certainly, Bowen Island reveals how strong the desire for heritage preservation can be, even in a quite recently settled community lying in the shadow of a fast-growing urban metropolis. And Bowen is not unique in this respect, for approximately one hundred privately owned cabins have survived on nearby Hollyburn Ridge public recreation area in large part because of their historic status.¹⁰⁹ Yet the GVRD has consistently attempted to restrict its preservation mandate to the lagoon causeway and the Old General Store, and not only is the former largely the responsibility of the DFO but the latter was off-loaded to the municipality in 2005 to serve as the island's public library. (Metro Parks retains an upstairs office space.) Even though the GVRD Parks Committee did not move ahead with its plan for a privately owned inn and restaurant in the Davies Orchard area, it has done little to preserve the orchard's historic cottages.

The fact that these structures have consistently been viewed as embarrassing nuisances despite their tangible and evocative link to the Union Steamship era when thousands of Vancouverites flocked to Snug Cove each summer week is clearly not because historic sites fail to draw tourists; after all, Canada's government agencies have been promoting historic sites tourism for well over a century.¹¹⁰ In contrast to England, however, in Canada the history of tourism itself is still not considered to be of great historic value or interest, despite the fact that it is the world's fastest-growing industry.¹¹¹ There is little official support for the preservation of old cabin courts, motels, drive-in theatres, dance halls, fruit stands, and other fast-disappearing vernacular structures that were once central to automobile tourism in Canada as well as the United States.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ See Constanza Parra, "The Vicissitudes of the French Regional Park Model Illustrated through the Life History of the Morvan," *Environment and History* 18, 4 (2012): 561-83.

¹⁰⁹ To express its appreciation of the heritage value of these vernacular structures, the District of West Vancouver awarded the Hollyburn Ridge Association a Heritage Achievement Award in 2007 and again in 2011. See "The Cabin Community on Hollyburn Ridge," <http://www.hollyburnheritage.ca/mtn-cabins>.

¹¹⁰ See Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Alan Gordon, *Time Travel: Tourism and the Rise of the Living History Museum in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016); and Ben Bradley, *British Columbia by the Road: Car Culture and the Making of a Modern Landscape* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

¹¹¹ For a brief overview of Canadian tourism history, see Ben Bradley and J.I. Little, "Introduction: Canadian Tourism History," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 49, 99 (2016): 235-57.

¹¹² My thanks to Ben Bradley for this observation.

That said, there are signs of a changing attitude, including the fact that Parks Canada has recently repurposed Banff National Park's long-closed Cave-and-Basin hot springs and swimming complex as a large museum of park tourism. Restoring Crippen Park's abandoned orchard cottages would be considerably more costly than simply maintaining its picnic grounds and park trail system, but persistent popular pressure has ensured that an evocative reminder of steamship tourism survives, at least for the time being, as more than a token feature of the Crippen Park recreation/ecology/heritage triangle. What the Crippen Park example reveals in the final analysis, however, is the vulnerability of heritage preservation and (at least until recently) environmental protection to development pressures, particularly within an underfunded, decentralized parks administration system.