

A STUDY of PUBLIC ACCESS to the WILDLANDS of VANCOUVER ISLAND

as seen through the DAILY COLONIST newspaper in VICTORIA BC

search site: BRITISHCOLONIST.ca
search term: "public access" (in date order; 1124 results filtered herein for - access to wildlands)
date started: 23.2, date completed: 23.4.24
date of last edit: **24.5.26**

research note: public access was also a problem with access to municipal and provincial, parks and beaches on Vancouver Island. That also created a need in real estate ads to advertise "public access". This problem made up more than 50% of the search term hits.

OPEN THE GATES is an organization with a SINGLE PURPOSE:

To regain access to the privately owned wildlands of Vancouver Island. This is a basic human right. The right to access and experience nature.

contact: info@OpenTheGates.ca

PURPOSE of THIS DOCUMENT:

Although "OPEN THE GATES" is only concerned with free public access to the PRIVATE wildlands, this document contains information on access to both private and government wildlands. And so, is an interesting history of the struggles the citizens have faced with accessing their right to enjoy nature on Vancouver Island.

3 LEVELS of HIGHLIGHT have been used in this document to help with wading through the information. In order of importance they are:

BOLD text; YELLOW highlight; ORANGE highlight

disclaimer: This document is meant to be a reference. Each newspaper article is paraphrased herein in point form. If you are interested in a certain article, refer to the date and page number on the left, and go to BritishColonist.ca to read the full article. This will give you the accurate information and context of each article.

SYNOPSIS: Logging up to the 1940s was predominantly by steam locomotive. In the 1950s truck logging took over and logging roads were built, which created easy access to the forest lands. Prime hunting and fishing was open to elite "friends" of logging companies only. By 1960 forest companies were being pushed to allow access, and a trial system began. Fish and game clubs would man the gates and allow only their members into the wildlands. This system slowly converted to all public access by 1965. That access was still controlled by forest companies ie: non-operational hours only and closed for fire season. By 1969 public access was 24/7 in the inactive logging areas. Note: with this access the public could now see the destruction of unregulated logging practices (articles: Colonist 72.5.28 p 29; 76.11.28 p 35)

Also by 1962 a BC gov Public Access Committee was struck to make recommendations and write a public access act. The process was complicated as it needed ammendments to 4 other acts. This slowed the process; the gov for now, favored the easier route of pushing the forest companies for cooperation. Also, the forest companies fearing a public access act, because of what it contained, were quick but careful to allow public access, starting with the trial fish and game only system.

KEY PLAYERS: The main players responsible for getting public access were: Victoria Fish & Game; Nanaimo Fish & Game; BC Wildlife Federation. OTHER PLAYERS were: Dan Campbell MLA; Alec Merriman reporter; Earle Westwood rec minister; Ray Williston forest minister

| date | page | |
|----------|------|---|
| 46.6.27 | 3 | Province reserves access to Arrow lake. (This is the start of the push for public access, as logging moves from steam locomotive to truck logging.) |
| 54.10.7 | 1 | Construction of 4 public access roads to west coast of VI: Jordan R to P Renfrew; P Renfrew to Cowichan Lk; P Alberni to Tofino; Campbell Riv to Tahsis. These roads to go through blocked company logging territory and so the companies need to agree. (these are the current public highways of today) |
| 56.6.21 | 30 | Merriman: Chambers of Commerce Assoc. VI (Vancouver Island) ask forestry to influence logging companys to allow public access |
| 58.3.25 | 17 | concern Elk River Timber company would be liablile for what happens on their roads, since they are giving permission to use them |
| 59.4.26 | 13 | MLA Dan Campbell, forest minister Ray Williston: gov highway to north end of VI (again needs logging companies to agree) |
| 59.5.6 | 6 | MLA Dan Campbell: locked gates to Strathcona Park is wrong |
| 59.5.6 | 7 | Provincial Recreation dept: asked for a 1 yr delay tree farm licence to setup system of Recreation Survey & Planning first. |
| 59.6.28 | 4 | public road P Alberni to Tofino; completion expected by September |
| 59.10.28 | 1 | MLA Dan Campbell: open up north island to more than logging |
| 59.10.29 | 4 | MLA Dan Campbell: northern VI in isolation, needs roads |
| 59.11.10 | 12 | Merriman: forest min Ray Williston, highways min Gaglardi, prem Bennett. Master plan for northern VI development before highway |

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| 60.5.14 | 9 | forest min Ray Williston: "gov reserves right to withdraw from Nimpkish tree farm any portion deemed good for recreation" |
| 60.5.25 | 2 | Gaglardi: road Kelsey to P Hardy, P Alice |
| 60.7.14 | 4 | Gaglardi: northern VI roads |
| 60.7.22 | 17 | Fish and Game Association requesting increased public access to woods surrounding the Albernis, John Squire, MLA, reported here after a meeting with Lands and Forests Minister Ray Williston and Recreation Minister E. C. Westwood. |
| 60.9.4 | 7 | rec min Earle Westwood: TFLs will be open to the public by 1961 |
| 60.9.22 | 12 | magistrait Haig-Brown keynote speaker: the importance of all waterways for all public recreation |
| 60.10.22 | 9 | recreation minister Westwood: moving on access to TFLs |
| 60.12.11 | 11 | Merriman: public access negotiations stepped up: Western Forestry & Conservation Assoc: private companies must furnish rec areas . . . ; BC Forest Serv distributes 31000 copies calendar themed "harmony w rec and forestry". |
| 61.1.17 | 1 | ERT locked gate to Gold River |
| 61.2.1 | 1 | Dan Campbell: public access should be gov not feudal system (land owner over peasant) |
| 61.2.1 | 5 | letter to editor: no picknicking allowed signs |
| 61.2.2 | 1 | ERT (Scott Paper) may lift gates |
| 61.2.3 | 10 | American T R Sheldon, manager Scott Paper is given Industrial Road Act (states that public may use industrial roads). ERT has been criticized for its lack of cooperation in public access. |
| 61.3.1 | | Koksilah river access |
| 61.3.16 | | related article |
| 61.4.20 | 34 | Dan Campbell: increased access to private roads expected this yr |
| 61.4.27 | 36 | A Merriman: campers barred from Buttle Lake |
| 61.4.28 | 12 | access may be given to Gold River area |
| 61.8.17 | 31 | ERT negotiates access Gold R, Forbidden, Buttle after boycott of Scott Paper products |
| 61.8.30 | 1 | fire closure announced - (forest companies still control policy around public access; fire closures are normal in the summer and are announced in the Times Colonist newspaper) |
| 61.10.1 | 11 | Merriman: adjust the boundaries of Strathcona Park to gain public access by land swap with ERT; also Spider lake land swap to get public access there. And negotiations with CPR to get public ownership of Forbidden Plateau. |
| 61.12.31 | 11 | Merriman: Victoria Fish & Game Club - fishing chapter has established SPECIAL ACCESS COMMITTEE of their own |
| 62.2.3 | 10 | Officials want move on Access - rec minister Westwood - will call for a LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE on ACCESS |
| 62.2.22 | 18 | A SPECIAL PUBLIC ACCESS ACT may be presented in the 1963 session |
| 62.3.4 | 11 | Merriman: lots of discussion on access |
| 62.3.10 | 11 | TFLs used as private hunting preserves |
| 62.3.11 | | Merriman: Access Committee has only done hearings and not addressed the problem yet. Forest companys are making plans for access |
| 62.3.21 | 10 | Dan Campbell holding to account: the selling off of E&N LAND to logging companies (depletes public access). Also the closing of Fanny Bay shingle mill. The E and N land grant has been a source of grief for Lands and Forests ministry. |
| 62.3.24 | 5 | PUBLIC ACCESS ACT URGED for 1963 session |
| 62.3.25 | 9 | Merriman: lots of info. Speare (Public Access committee chair) has made good start in getting the 2 sides together. It is hoped legislature sees fit to call this committee together again if not as a year round committee, then as a special committee next year. |
| 62.3.27 | 15 | 2 MLAs: immediate action to open Gold R road |
| 62.5.30 | 13 | Merriman: access to Spider Lake given by Oympic Logging Co (Scott Paper) |
| 62.6.1 | 5 | Scott paper hampers Dan Campbell's political campaign by refusing entry to Gold River |
| 62.6.20 | 6 | special inter-departmental committee (chair: A W Hobbs) to draft Public Access Act |
| 62.8.12 | 11 | Merriman: what its like to take the allowed bus to Gold River |
| 62.8.29 | 9 | all public access on weekends for the whole island starts on Saturday (announced last night) |
| 62.8.31 | 11 | Merriman: more on the opening of logging roads |
| 62.10.17 | 12 | Merriman: Vic Plywood Sooke Lake Lumber denying access |
| 62.11.8 | 1 | Germans buying parts of VI |
| 62.12.11 | 30 | portion of Tofino road taken from Mac Blo Powell co. (in reference to a small section where the road wasn't wide enough between Kennedy lake and the cliff. The gov gazzetted a short section of MBP road) |
| 63.1.23 | 9 | Tony Bristowe, Vic Fish & Game - member of the year for his work on access |
| 63.1.29 | 14 | Nanaimo ski club leases Green mountain from E&N. Has 3 tows. Still gated w watchman. |

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| 63.2.26 | 10 | Access act may be passed at next session. Gives gov power to change private roads to public. |
| 63.3.3 | 11 | Merriman: draft bills mailed to interested parties. Hearings set for later in March |
| 63.3.7 | 23 | difficult to write legislation because the road system is complicated, and there's no deadline (committee chair: S C Speare) |
| 63.3.14 | 7 | amendments to 4 acts needed to write the Public Access act |
| 63.3.17 | 11 | Merriman: Access act will be abandoned or delayed in favor of changing existing legislation favoring forest companies and enticing them to give access. |
| 63.3.23 | 5 | amendments to 3 acts proposed as temp measure for next 12 months til Access Act next year is passed. |
| 63.4.6 | 17 | 2 sides to the question of road access: Public needs access, and forest companies concerned about cost of: theft, vandalism, fire, and accident liability. |
| 63.4.11 | 13 | no access to Gold R this weekend. Gov says the bill it passed last month will pave the way for public access but there are a few technicalities to iron out. |
| 63.4.28 | 23 | Bristowe (Vic fish and game): available roads should be published for recreationists |
| 63.6.16 | 19 | Ted Barnsby, Nanaimo Fish & Game: 2 companies stalling on providing access after recent legislation requiring them to. |
| 63.6.21 | 8 | Gold River road opens to public today. |
| 63.7.10 | 11 | Port Alberni council fights M&B for access |
| 63.8.11 | 11 | Crown Z and Mac Bloe Powell have produced maps for the public |
| 63.8.27 | 8 | same as above |
| 63.9.13 | 11 | Merriman: gen info |
| 64.2.25 | 5 | the Access committee drew up a bill a year ago to ensure public access, instead forest companies pledged cooperation. |
| 64.3.10 | | Forest firms fight road act; willing to provide access, but wants control over guest list |
| 64.3.19 | 40 | forest companies protested - the Public Access Bill is unnecessary |
| 64.5.2 | 1 | Cefir Forest Prod Ltd offers rec min Kiernan public use of private road to access Botanical Beach |
| 64.5.16 | 17 | Botanical beach still barred to public |
| 64.6.13 | 17 | mine approved for Strathcona Park. Road must be public. |
| 64.7.3 | 25 | concerns over use of logging roads on north island |
| 64.8.4 | 21 | CanFor Nimpkish valley access program |
| 64.8.12 | 10 | Merriman: gen info |
| 64.8.26 | 9 | Merriman: Western Forest, Cowichan - fish & game member access plan - gates manned by fish and game club members require 240+ man hours /YR. (fish & game membership is huge because its the only way to access fresh water fishing). This fish & game self-policing has been running about a year. It's a first step in all public access. |
| 64.9.9 | 19 | tofino access coming |
| 64.9.18 | 13 | Merriman: trend to all public access after trial period of fish and game members only |
| 64.10.25 | 12 | logging companies blackmail - if gov insists on Access law then they will close off the E and N land grant area to public. |
| 64.10.30 | 17 | Merriman: gen info |
| 64.11.13 | 40 | Merriman: fish and game posts reward for vandalism in woods |
| 64.11.18 | | Merriman: currently gates manned by fish and game club members require a lot of man hours, and area first step in access |
| 64.12.30 | 11 | Merriman: gen info; forest companies build campsites for public use |
| 65.2.3 | 9 | Merriman: Mac Blo Pow roads built and maintained by MBP, but all public access; vandalism |
| 65.4.15 | 25 | End Isolation, Highway needed to North VI |
| 65.5.7 | 16 | Merriman: Pacific Logging (CPR) Sooke - only spot on VI w access problem. Pacific Logging working on it. |
| 65.8.11 | 13 | Merriman: Pacific log sooke opening more roads |
| 65.8.20 | 16 | highways dept changed access hrs to Bamfield |
| 65.8.25 | 13 | 10 log companies Sooke Leechtown join to open roads to public on weekends |
| 65.8.29 | 19 | Merriman: BCFP cowichan weekend access approved |
| 65.9.3 | 17 | Merriman: Cowichan lake open for rec weekends |
| 65.9.10 | 11 | Merriman: no more fish and game access only areas on VI. Its all public access. (Remember it was fish & game that won this for us). But still non-operational hrs only (by forest company policy) |
| 65.9.11 | 12 | forest closed for potential fire |
| 65.9.12 | 10 | Merriman: logging rd scenic trip with gen info |
| 65.9.15 | 19 | Merriman: couple violations of the limited access |
| 65.9.26 | 8 | Merriman: companies generally pleased with the "HONOR" SYSTEM of public access (no manned gates; just be respectful) |
| 65.10.29 | 26 | Merriman: Tahsis co to rebuild campsite on Muchalat lake public |

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| 65.11.19 | 17 | Merriman: company truck shot up; BC Wildlife Federation helping to find perpetrators |
| 66.2.20 | 11 | new road Buttle Lk to Gold River complicated access w Pinkerton guards. Western Mines now barring access |
| 66.3.25 | 13 | Merriman: Wolf & Council lakes owned and closed by India company Kapoor, but road to Council is gazetted. |
| 66.3.30 | 8 | special legislative committee (to review how its going): "no serious problems, and present voluntary programs continue; another assessment should be done in 2 yrs" |
| 66.4.28 | 11 | oldtimers say "Horn lake road built with public money" |
| 66.5.7 | 21 | tofino road native land claims |
| 66.5.17 | 45 | Public Shares Forests: an account of which companies are sharing what areas. 4/5ths of VI is forest (rec) land. |
| 66.5.25 | 24 | public access road to Gold R pulpmill. Unrestricted public access to Gold River expected this summer |
| 66.6.3 | 12 | Sooke logging companies considering opening roads to public access |
| 66.6.12 | 12 | 60 acre China Beach park donated by M&B |
| 66.8.10 | 13 | the plan in the Sooke and Cowichan areas is to have all gates open on weekends as was last yr |
| 66.10.12 | 18 | Sooke Leechtown: 10 companies provide access but one is not |
| 66.12.14 | 14 | Merriman: Ken Kiernan flop as rec minister - mining in Strathcona park. William Speare steps down as Access Com chair to Robert Bonner |
| 67.5.2 | 2 | Victoria Fish & Game Club keeps an eye on Public Access Committee; and is attending those meetings |
| 67.5.2 | 6 | BC boasts finest provincial campsites in Canada. 25% are on VI |
| 67.5.2 | 10 | BC Wildlife Federation (17000 members) helped open logging roads over the yrs. |
| 67.5.2 | 12 | Ted Barsby, BC Wildlife Federation does a lot for public access |
| 67.5.2 | 13 | Crown Zellerbach Nanaimo lakes give road access |
| 67.8.2 | 11 | Merriman: report on Sooke area access |
| 68.1.21 | 58 | Rec minister Kiernan "public has a right to access all forests in BC" (at TLA convention) |
| 68.1.31 | 8 | Merriman: companies report improvement over last years losses from public access (theft, fire, vandalism) |
| 69.4.9 | 13A | shared use of forests for 6 yrs now (week-ends only, still controlled by forest companies) |
| 69.8.24 | 24 | Merriman: inactive logging areas open 7 days a week for the first time. |
| 69.9.10 | 11 | Merriman: public access act may be needed; public locked out of Nimpkish area |
| 69.11.5 | 10 | merriman: Crown Z gives access to Nanaimo Courtenay |
| 70.1.15 | 24 | Vandalism Concerns forest companies |
| 70.1.16 | 4 | Spoilers In The Woods; companies suffer heavy losses |
| 70.3.25 | 29 | BC Land Giveaway (selling to foreigners); land use committee ensure public access to water bodies in BC |
| 70.8.28 | 14 | merriman: recap of public access to date. |
| 70.9.6 | 7 | outdoors: Council of Forest Ind (rep forest companies) comes up with new Road Access Policy - regulations for public access. |
| 70.10.3 | 11 | Western Log haulers assoc. \$200k reward for vandalism conviction |
| 71.2.14 | 29 | Merriman: Needed New Policy on timberlands: need 24/7 public access, and policy on ecology and watershed protection. |
| 71.2.26 | 14 | Merriman: new 4 wheeler club finds gate locked at Weeks lake inspite of open gate policy |
| 71.2.28 | 31 | BCFS enters into recreation; rec officer HARRY MARSHALL improvements in the 77 public sustained yield units (in the 90 million acres of productive forests). TFLs required to submit rec plans. BCFS negotiating the GAZETTING of PUBLIC RIGHT of WAYS in PRIVATE LANDS. Clearcutting will never be allowed again. |
| 71.3.31 | 21 | Nitinat triangle public access |
| 71.4.11 | | Nitinat gate locked |
| 71.4.14 | 15 | M&B Cameron Arrowsmith public access |
| 71.4.30 | 15 | Sierra club urges Nitinat rec. CFI opposes |
| 72.1.23 | 29 | Merriman: logging protests are now starting. Recreationists and logging companies for 10 yrs have been battling it out before the public access committee. BCWF, Victoria Fish & Game, and Nanaimo Fish & Game did the fighting. Forest companies received concessions (forest fire & liability) for sharing under new industrial roads act. |
| 72.3.12 | 35 | Merriman: Newly formed Mac & Blo Properties will NOT sell land with rec value. Proud of cooperation w rec. |
| 72.3.14 | 21 | CPR not interested in the E&N rail line |
| 72.4.2 | 7 | Merriman: BCFP first time new concept - there will be no more gates except active logging. 24/7 public access now on all land including their private land. |
| 72.5.28 | 29 | outdoors merriman: ERT (US company) still locking gates, possibly to hide wrongful logging practices! |
| 72.6.28 | 11 | Merriman: campfire permit program abolished |
| 72.8.16 | 13 | Merriman: Crown Z more public access as it switches logging trucks from left side drive to right side of road. |
| 72.9.1 | 16 | Merriman; gen list of access |
| 72.12.13 | 13 | Merriman: Steelhead Society of BC pressuring gov for a 50' green strip along all waterways |
| 73.1.10 | | Merriman: Nanaimo fish and game ask for legislation access strip along all waterways to be gazetted. |
| 73.1.14 | 7 | Merriman: TLA and ecologists |

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| 73.2.23 | 11 | Merriman: VI Wildlife Assoc asking for footpath along waterways |
| 73.3.14 | 21 | Merriman: M&B stats on public use proves the public needs are being met |
| 73.4.29 | 34 | Merriman: Campbell R to Kelsey locked gates |
| 73.7.15 | 24 | Merriman: Crown Z does more for public rec incl road extensions to rec. |
| 73.7.18 | 1 | immediate construction starting CR to north island - highways min Graham Lea |
| 73.10.21 | 33 | M&B logging roads wide open; going overboard to provide public access; incl Northwest Bay division; Iron River; pics of their signs showing public access status |
| 73.10.28 | 26 | merriman: using the 17 M&B maps to make use of the wide open public access policy |
| 74.8.30 | 13 | Merriman: all logging rds closed for fire hazard. (not gated) but rather fire patrols on duty to enforce. Logging companys still maintain this right to close for hazards. |
| 75.3.9 | 13 | public asks for more conservation in Tsitika Schoen |
| 75.3.23 | 14 | public should have access to Tsitika Schoen by logging rds. Steel mill opposed in Qualicum |
| 75.3.23 | 29 | Merriman "reported on Tofino and Long Beach in the 40s; started his Outdoors column in 1960; only reporter to consistently cover the legislative public access committee hearings. Actively involved in conservation since 1945 when he and Haig-Brown were the first writers to fight for Buttle lake." |
| 75.7.20 | 19 | old railway track Victoria to Youbou sought for rec. Can Nat Railway |
| 76.2.11 | 17 | Merriman: ORC Outdoor Rec Council of BC called for review of all access to rec trails and land in BC for motorized and non-motorized |
| 76.7.28 | 12 | BC Parks to study development of hiking trails |
| 76.10.5 | 34 | Highways min Fraser - access to Arrowsmith |
| 76.11.18 | 1 | Fair Slice Urged for Small Forest Firms |
| 76.11.28 | 35 | Merriman: early 60s with access the public could now see the destruction by logging companies. Also watersheds should not be closed to rec. |
| 77.8.28 | 32 | timber companies should seek help of recreationists on vandalism; if they put up gates they risk legislation against them. |
| 78.4.27 | 55 | Rec and Conservation min Sam Bawlf: we will increase water access |
| 78.5.21 | 34 | Merriman: loop road trip Gordon River Cowichan |
| 78.11.1 | 1 | gov promised Tsitika watershed access 4 months ago but is not doing so |
| 79.6.13 | 16 | public access threatened by new financial forest fire fighting regs |
| 79.6.29 | 17 | Merriman: gov amends fire fighting cost on private lands to: owner pays if owner starts fire, otherwise gov pays |
| 79.12.19 | 16 | Merriman: some lakes on logging claims are stocked by gov but gated |
| 80.2.17 | 15 | access ban sought for Hart Lake CR (water reservoir) |
| 80.4.15 | 11 | Hart lake ban denied |

1980

END

key players: 1st noted

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| Alec Merriman | 59.11.10 | outdoors editor Colonist; writes the column "Outdoors"; (see 75.3.23; search his books: Logging Road Travel VI 1973 2 vols) |
| Ted Barsby | 67.5.2 | founding president BC Wildlife Federation (nickname: Mr. Public Access); past President Nanaimo Fish & Game Club. |
| Tony Bristowe | 63.1.23 | Vic Fish & Game, access work |

key gov players:

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| Dan Campbell | 59.4.26 | MLA Comox |
| Ray Williston | 59.4.26 | forest minister |
| Earle Westwood | 60.7.22 | recreation minister |
| Phil Gaglardi | 59.11.10 | highways minister |
| Bennett | 59.11.10 | premier BC |
| A W Hobbs | 62.6.20 | special inter-departmental committee to the Public Access committee - (to draft public access act) |
| S C Speare | 63.3.7 | Access Committee chair (also SC Caribou); 62.2 -66.12 |
| Robert Bonner | 66.12.14 | Access Committee chair (also attorney general) 66.12 ~ |

acronyms:

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|------|----------|---|
| CCF | 65.11.19 | Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (political party from 1955 Social Democratic Party) |
| CFI | | Council of Forest Industries (rep forest companies) |
| ERT | | Elk River Timber (div of Scott Paper) |
| BCFS | | BC Forest Service |
| BCWF | | BC Wildlife Federation (est 1956) |
| BCFP | | BC Forest Products |
| TLA | | Truck Loggers Association |
