

# Steeves: 2011 didn't favour the natural environment

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Crown land above and adjacent to Rose Valley Reservoir was proposed in 2011 to be given to the Westbank First Nation, despite policy to the contrary.

*Judie Steeves/Capital News*

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**Looking back, 2011 was not a stellar year for the natural environment.**

**We had two elections in the last year and it rated hardly a mention in either one. Yet, at the federal level, the government you re-elected has been making it a mission to eradicate our native salmon by ignoring all the knowledge about the impact salmon farming in open net pens has on wild salmon passing by those incubators of killer parasites and viruses.**

**It also ignores the importance of protecting and preserving wild stocks of halibut so that all can share in the resource.**

**But, the topics seldom came up during the federal election. Yes, I know they also promised to get rid of the long gun registry, but just remember what they are taking**

**away from us with the other hand.**

**And, in the municipal elections, I heard almost nothing about environmental issues, despite the fact that surveys indicate it is a concern that's high on the priority list of the majority of residents.**

**But, I think one of the most disappointing highlights of the last year was the news that the provincial government proposed to give away a big portion of Rose Valley Regional park. I guess I'm naive, but to me, parks are sacrosanct. You simply don't mess with them.**

**And, I don't care if it was Crown land that was only leased to the regional district as parkland, it was still no secret it was part of a regional park.**

**There must be lots of other pieces of Crown land which would have suited just as well to trade with the Westbank First Nation for a piece of their land for a highway intersection.**

**I simply don't get it. I mean, whose idea was it to select a regional park and the waterfront around a domestic reservoir as the pieces of Crown land for the trade? Ironically, this is within months of the province's declaration that it would no longer dispose of Crown-owned land around reservoirs! Hello?**

**All those years of confrontation between local government in the Okanagan and the provincial government over whether reservoir frontage was suitable for selling for development (when in other jurisdictions such land is being re-purchased by utilities to protect their watersheds...) and as soon as the decision is made, the province makes a mockery of their own new policy. Unbelievable!**

**And, on the topic of the provincial government's uneven policies (or is it simply that one ministry has no idea what's going on in other ministries?), another gravel pit was approved and the owner began ripping out the forest and uncovering the soil, immediately above a domestic water intake.**

**Ironically, it was in an area where a local dirt bike club has worked long and hard to de-commission unplanned trails and has been constructing more-sustainable trails that are less likely to cause erosion into the nearest waterway and put drinking water quality at risk.**

**Even more ironically, this same provincial government has spent thousands of dollars to help that club in construction of new trails and restoration of old, de-commissioned ones, when right in the middle of it all, a gravel company creates a huge new scar on the landscape with all sorts of potential for erosion.**

**On the other side of the ledger, B.C. Parks celebrated its 100th anniversary this year, but if we continue to reduce the staff responsible for maintaining this world class system of showstopping natural areas and those who help educate and interpret what we have, then the whole system could fall down around our ears.**

**On the international front, there were very serious discussions about inclusion of flows in renewed operating orders for control of the level of Osoyoos Lake south of the international border. It's something that could impact every one of us in the Okanagan basin, yet most people are unable to grasp the significance of it.**

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