

**FRASER HEADWATERS ALLIANCE
NEWS RELEASE**

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HIKERS RECREATE HISTORY

Last Friday a group of nine hikers from northern B.C. completed an eight day/ 120 km hike between Crescent Spur and Barkerville. The hike was done to draw awareness to the recently cleared, historic Goat River Trail, which dates to at least 1886. A mining survey team, working for John Bowron, Gold Commissioner of the Cariboo, first cleared the trail. "It probably hasn't been hiked all the way to Barkerville since the teens", said Roy Howard, trip organizer and Coordinator for the Fraser Headwaters Alliance.

The hike began at a ceremony dedicating the Goat River section of the National Trail – a hiking trail across Canada. Marathon swimmer Fin Donnelly led the ceremony, one of many community events timed to coincide with Fraser2000, his second historic swim of the length of the Fraser River. Although the hike ended at Barkerville, the hikers then traveled the relatively short distance to Quesnel by car to greet Fin and crew, as he and Mayor Steve Wallace swam to that community's celebration.

It rained for much of the hike; with only one day of the eight having significant sunny periods. "The hike was a pretty soggy affair," said Wells Councilor, Judy Campbell. "But I guess that's what you have to expect in the rainforest!"

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C. has recognized the Goat River Trail as a major link in the B.C. portion of the National Trail. Other sections include the well-known Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail west of Quesnel, and the equally well-known Bruce Trail on the Niagara Escarpment in Ontario. However, the B.C. government has not yet sanctioned the B.C. route. "This is of major concern because clear-cut logging is planned over the trail, and includes road development, which will obliterate much of it", said Howard.

The upper Goat River is one of the only unprotected intact wilderness watersheds of any size remaining in the headwaters of the Fraser River. "In addition to the trail, the Goat River provides a critical wildlife corridor across the Cariboo Mountains, connecting Bowron Lakes Provincial Park with the Rocky Mountain Trench," says Howard. "Logging the Goat would be like clear-cutting our heritage."

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BACKGROUNDER

- Fin started his epic swim at Mt. Robson, August 27th and will finish at Vancouver's False Creek, September 24th. More details are available on the swim website: www.fraser2000.com.
- In addition to Fin Donnelly, the trailhead ceremony also included speeches by Ron Seymour – Lheidli T'enneh Band Councilor, Keith Cole and Rene Morton – adult children of Cliff and Ruth Kopas – honeymooners on horseback who rode through the Goat in 1933, Pat Harrison – Executive Director of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C., and Dave Hendrixson – Mayor of Wells.
- In 1933, Cliff and Ruth Kopas became the first ecotourists to travel the trail. On a honeymoon horseback trip from Edmonton to Bella Coola, the couple found the overgrown trail to be one of the more challenging adventures on their journey. More than forty years later, Cliff wrote a book about their trip, titled *Packhorses to the Pacific*, which remains a classic. A campsite along the trail has been named in their honour: Kopas Camp.
- The current group of hikers consisted of six men and three women, ranging in age from 21 to 60. Four are from Dunster, two from Prince George, two from Wells, and one from Quesnel. Three of the hikers walked the full 120 km, and all nine walked the 50 km through the upper Goat River wilderness, and Wolverine and Littlefield valleys.
- The full hike consisted of multiple river and creek crossings, including one on an exciting hand-powered cable car. Several fords were required; at least one of which can only be done after peak flows have subsided.
- About 42 km of the 120 km hike was on active roads. However, there are plans to eventually route the trail around most of these. Other sections of the B.C. portion of the National Trail, as determined by the Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C., are: the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage/ First Nations Grease Trail (Bella Coola to the mouth of the Blackwater River), the Collins-Yukon Telegraph Trail (Quesnel to the Blackwater River), and the 1861 Goldrush Pack Trail (Barkerville to Keithly Creek). Additional trails connecting these sections are still in the planning and exploration stage.
- The forest in the lower reaches of the Goat contains large, ancient western redcedar, western hemlock and an occasional giant Douglas-fir, veteran of past fires. The upper Goat is old growth Englemann spruce and subalpine fir forest. Resident wildlife species are numerous, including moose, mountain caribou, grizzly and black bears and harlequin ducks. The Goat is the only undeveloped watershed of any size in the Robson Valley Forest District that supports Chinook salmon spawning.
- The Goat River, received considerable recognition this spring when it was given prominence in the B.C. Outdoor Recreation Council's (ORC) annual list of imperiled rivers, *BC's Most Endangered Rivers of 2000*. According to the ORC, ". . . concerns about extensive logging in the headwaters of Robson Valley, notably the Goat River, bring the Fraser up to number four on the Endangered Rivers list of 2000." The entire press release and backgrounder from the ORC can be viewed at their website: www.orcbc.bc.ca.