
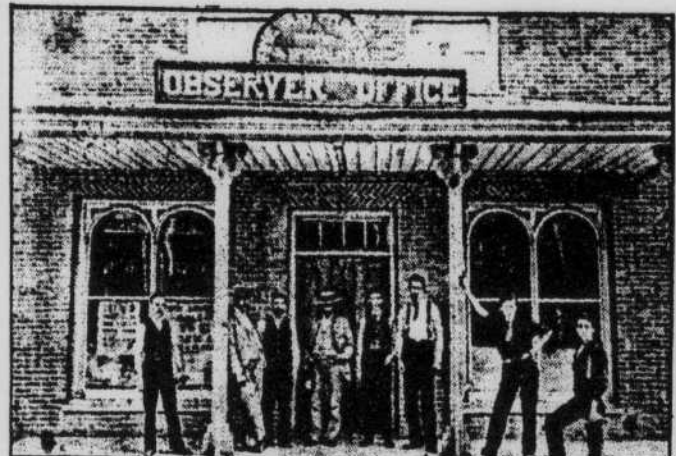


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Split: Release of Hopps report made MCI executive hopping mad

By Scott Verity Stevenson
SWIMMING WITH MEMPHRE
 — Last year Stewart Hopps got more public attention than his renowned environmental research, as one of his studies was the cause for a split in the environmental group Memphremagog Conservation Incorporated (MCI).

Internal criticism at MCI, and failure to publicize Hopps' 1989 report on "The Physical State of Lake Memphremagog" eventually caused Hopps to resign from MCI and form his own Memphremagog Environmental Research Group (MERG) last summer.

At a press conference, Hopps said the MCI executive went from supporting the release of the report to calling it unfinished.

"On April 29, 1990 a press conference was held, when it was announced that the report would be made public 'when it was completed'. No such publication occurred, until unbeknownst to me, Mr. Jacques Boisvert took the matter into his own hands and gave a copy to the press on June 17, 1990," Hopps said.

HIT THE FAN
 That's when the stir began. "I'm an optimist," former MCI member Boisvert said last summer in the height of the controversy. "I never wanted to make trouble."

"The problem is there; we know it," he said. But, "the president said we're going to keep it low-profile."

MCI president Jean-Paul Clermont responded that Boisvert was to blame.

"The whole flare up is most probably due to Boisvert," Clermont said.

Clermont said MCI reports have to pass through the press committee before they are made public.

"We don't want every member of the council to give out any information," he said. "It must be approved by the governors."

"There must be some order and consensus of opinion," Clermont continued. "Individuals must work with the governors."

Clermont also suggested that Raoul Pettclerc, head of the MCI press committee, may have overreacted.

PETTCLERC GOT MAD
 "Pettclerc got mad," he said. "It's human nature."

But Boisvert said the problem goes deeper than simply releasing a report.

"We (MCI) deal with all the problems, except the real problem," he said.

"We're a pressure group, but we're not pressing," he said. "We always wait until something happens, then say, 'Oh well, next time.' But then it's too late."

Boisvert scuba-dives everyday in Lake Memphremagog and says there are some areas where pollution is rampant.

Until the press conference announcing the creation of MERG, Hopps had remained quiet regar-

ding the apparent controversy at MCI. But he let go at the gathering of his supporters.

"For some time now MCI has been going adrift," Hopps read from his press release. "Little or nothing has been accomplished, beyond talk."

TENSIONS BREWING
 "There has been sharp disagreement within the MCI organization during the last few years. In a nutshell, the struggle can be boiled down to one of attitude," Hopps continued.

"Gradually, the control of MCI has passed into the hands of individuals who, however well-intentioned they may have been, have not understood either the objectives or the methods of the past."

Hopps formed MERG with the help of volunteers Gisèle Benoit, Jacques Boisvert, Tony Straessle and Donald Sutherland.

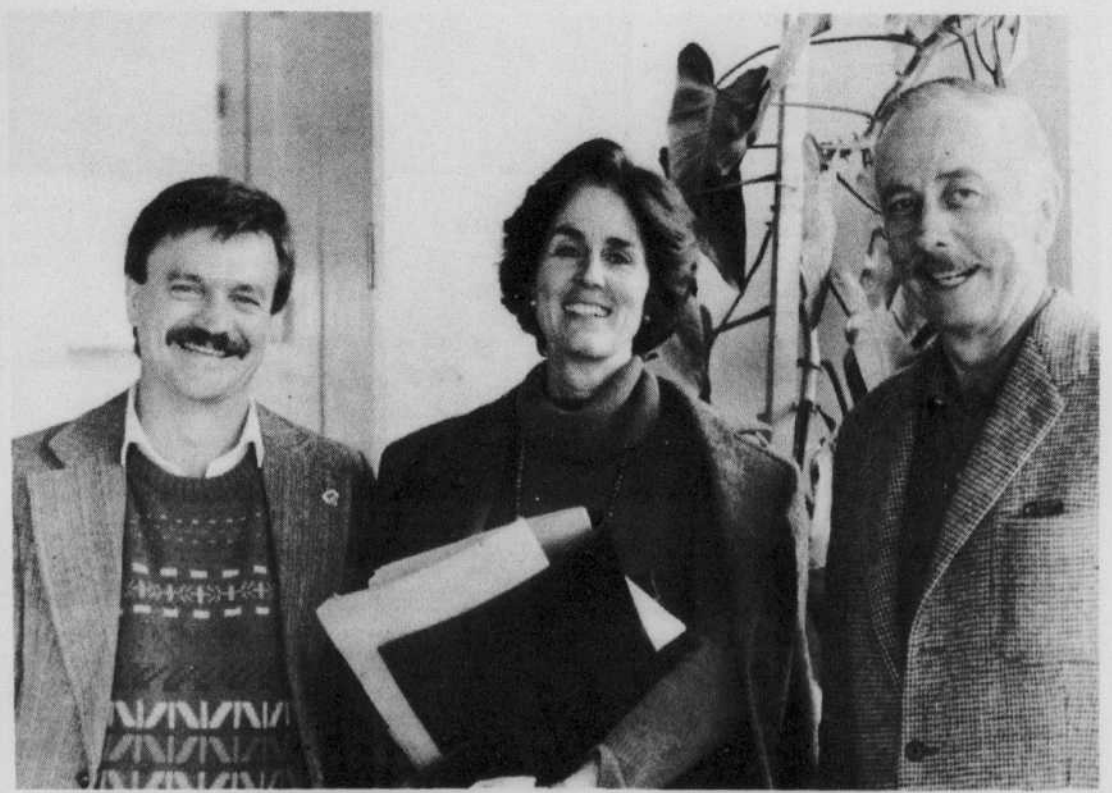
Sutherland had nothing but praise for Hopps. If Hopps was a doctor, "I would rather have you at my bedside than some of those who call themselves doctors," he said at Hopps' press conference.

Sutherland said Lake Memphremagog needs particular attention.

"The problem has to do with profit and money," he said. "There are people who spend money on their boat but not on their refuse."

TEMPERATURE RISING
 Hopps' 1989 study found that wa-

See next page



MCI executive members Raoul Pettclerc, Penny Baudinet and Jean Paul Clermont tried to put a muzzle on Hopp's report.

year in review...year in review... year in review

MERG: Dissidents form new group to speak out on environmental issues



Stewart Hopps kept silent about divisions at MCI until his supporters began to gather.

Continued from last page

ter temperatures have been increasing over the last 20 years and dissolved oxygen levels have been decreasing.

"These facts should bring seriously to our attention overuse of the lake, the future of its aquatic life and the aging of the lake," the report said.

Hopps blamed human sewage, coming from boaters and washed into the lake from streams and runoff.

He recommended a moratorium on the construction of new marinas until regulations and proper pumping facilities are installed to empty boats of their sewage.

He also recommended a survey of all leaching fields in the lake's watershed to ensure that human sewage is not finding its way to the lake.

At his summer press conference, Hopps also said the lack of trees along the shoreline contributes to higher water temperatures.

One of his objectives for MERG is to plant trees.

MERG's 1990 program also included continuing studies on the state of Lake Memphremagog, continuing weekly water reports, expanding environmental programs in primary schools and hiring a marine biology student to help with studies.

So far, MERG has kept relatively quiet in the public eye.



Donald Sutherland... People spend money on their boat but not on their refuse.



Jacques Boisvert... Scuba diver took the matter into his own hands.

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Pinnacle: Anti-development forces may have lost 7-year battle

By Sharon McCully

KNOWLTON — A Superior Court ruling expected this summer will determine the legality of a series of events which began in 1983

and eventually lead to the rezoning of Pinnacle Mountain.

A coalition of citizens opposed to the intensive development of the mountain is challenging the validity of a 1987 land use plan which recommended the removal of 2300 acres of designated farmland from the green zone to allow intensive recreational development.

The group has argued in court the decision was taken under pressure from developers and without adequate public consultation.

The recreational designation stemmed from the recommendation of a the Frelighsburg urban planning committee and adopted by council in 1987. The recommendation was later approved by the Regional Municipality (MRC).

DESOURDY PRESSURE
Opponents to intensive development on Pinnacle Mountain have maintained that the influential Desourdy Company which owned the land applied political pressure on the planning committee to have the land de-zoned.

Pierre Tellier bought the land from Desourdy once it was recommended for intensive recreational development by the MRC.

In 1988, Tellier's development company Sibeca Inc. submitted a plan to council for the construction of a ski hill, 18 hole golf course, and housing complex on and around Pinnacle Mountain. At the time, Tellier told council he expected to be able to welcome the first golfers in the summer of 1992 or possibly the fall of 1991.

He estimated the project would create 50 year-round jobs, not including work for some 200 during the construction phase. Then two

things happened. A citizen's action committee was formed to oppose the intensive development of the mountain. And the Quebec government placed a moratorium on the rezoning of agricultural lands.

When the moratorium was finally lifted, a resolution was passed by the Frelighsburg council once again asking that the agricultural zone be revised to allow recreational development.

LAND USE PLAN
The MRC accepted the recommendation and included it in its regional land use plan presented to the *Commission pour la protection du territoire agricole* (CPTAQ). Last fall, the rezoning proposal was modified and accepted by the CPTAQ following public hearings.

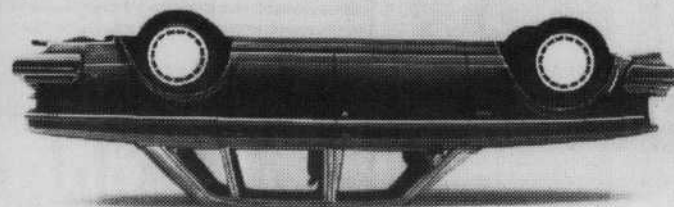
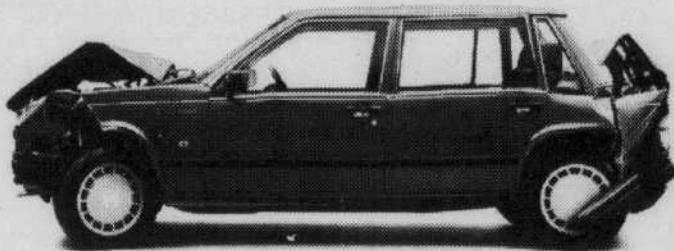
In December, the Quebec government approved the rezoning proposal.

The municipality of Frelighsburg is currently working on a municipal land use plan which is expected to include the recreation designation when it is deposited in June.

Sibeca's Pierre Tellier says he intends to proceed with the recreation project as planned.

Opponents are hoping a court ruling expected in early summer will

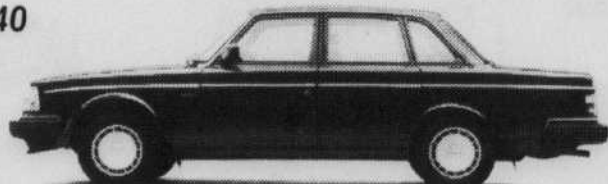
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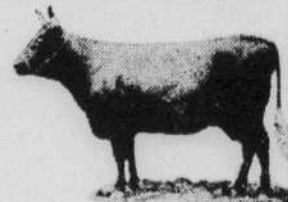
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From rails to trails? Beebe subdivision divides groups

By Scott Verity Stevenson

LENNOXVILLE TO BEEBE AND BACK — If 1990 was the year to battle over the Beebe Sub, 1991

may be the year to actually use the abandoned railway, either as private property, a recreational trail or with a steam train.

Since the Beebe Subdivision of the Canadian Pacific Railway was abandoned, a variety of groups has sprung forth over the last year to propose new uses for the 46-kilometre corridor.

The land has first been offered by CP to the provincial government. If the province refuses it, CP officials say they will offer it to municipal level governments, followed by private interests.

Last year the provincial government asked CP not to dismantle the railway tracks and bridges until this spring, while it made up its mind. CP agreed not to do anything with the railway until April 1.

Euclid Harel, who is overseeing the issue for the provincial transport ministry, said last fall that the government should decide during the winter.

NO SALE BEFORE APRIL

"There will be no sale before the first of April," he said, adding that usually municipalities would buy the land.

Most vocal in pressuring the government has been the *Sentier Massawippi* group, which wants to convert the railway into a recreational trail for walking, bicycling, skiing and so on.

The group wants Quebec to study the feasibility and costs of such a trail, with a view to the gover-

nement buying the land as a linear park.

The government accepted the idea of a joint comparative study with *Sentier Massawippi* and *Nostalgie de la Vapeur*, a group that wants to run a steam train for tourists along the abandoned railway.

The Quebec planning and development office (OPDQ) offered to fund half of a \$60,000 study, if the two groups could come up with the other half.

Georges Des Lauriers of *Nostalgie* said his group has the funds, but *Sentier Massawippi* is still digging for its share of about \$18,000.

NICKELS AND DIMES

"We're raising money in nickels and dimes," said group member Keith Baxter last winter. "We've got to change our strategy."

Several municipalities along the railway have endorsed the recreational trail project, including Sherbrooke, Lennoxville and Ascot and the Sherbrooke and Coaticook regional municipalities.

Others have been harder to convince, according to *Sentier Massawippi* members.

Many property owners along Lake Massawippi want neither steam train nor trail. For many, the railway runs between their property and the lake. Others actually live on CP land, between the

railway and the lake.

Many of these property owners have been paying rent to CP for as long as they can remember; now they have a chance to own uninterrupted access to the lake, and the privacy that goes with it.

A recreational trail, and to a lesser extent a steam train, would mean the public would be constantly passing between their property and the lake, where they have docks and boathouses, if not some sort of a beach.

PRIVACY THREATENED

These property owners argue their privacy would be threatened if public access were given.

One lakeside resident, Avrum Malus, who leases land between the tracks and the lake from CP said he would normally support the idea of a linear park, but in this case he would lose too much privacy. He said his bedroom window is only several feet away from the actual railway.

Sentier Massawippi members say they only want a corridor of about 15 feet wide from the existing 30-metre wide CP right of way. Surveillance and specific resting spots are solutions they offer to maintain privacy rights of lakeside residents.

Opposition between property owners and trail advocates has

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Battle: Groups want public trails, landowners want privacy protected

been heated at times, but the two groups have also expressed a willingness to compromise. For example, a trail might be built from Lennoxville to North Hatley, and then diverted around the lake away from lakeside properties.

UMBRELLA GROUP

One of the steps lakeside residents took to deal with the issue last year was the formation of local groups of residents, who are in turn collected under one umbrella group, the Lake Massawippi East Shore Owners' and Users' Association.

The association is negotiating with CP on behalf of residents who wish to purchase a section of the railway in the case of a private sale.

Canadian Pacific officials have said that they would prefer to sell the land as a whole, or in select parts, rather than dealing with each individual lakeside resident.

Malus, who is vice-president of the Perkins Bay Homeowners' Association, described this as a failure of CP's responsibility as a landlord. Malus has been renting from CP for 17 years and said the company should be more considerate of individual residents' concerns.

But CP officials have stated that their first responsibility is to shareholders, and thus to get the best price they can.

In a private evaluation commissioned by CP, the 46-kilometre railway corridor was estimated to

be worth almost \$11 million. More specifically, the land between North Hatley and Ayer's Cliff, along the lake, was evaluated at \$10.5 million.

If interest groups are opposed on everything else, they stand hand-in-hand in opposition to that price.



1991 may be the year the abandoned railway actually gets used.



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