

## **Wells Gray Park residents worried about development**

Proposal calls for lodge and up to 193 log cabins in the woods near the park

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Wells Gray Park area residents will voice concerns today about the environmental impact of a proposed 44-hectare development near the park that will contain a lodge, interpretive centre and up to 193 cabins.

Trasa Lodges & Inns, headed by German-Canadian businessman Wolf Worster, wants to develop the property 23 km north of Clearwater and about 10 minutes by car from the park entrance.

The \$10-million first phase of the project -- featuring a lodge and about 20 cabins -- could be completed by spring 2009 if approvals are granted and construction begins this summer.

Thompson-Nicola Regional District scheduled a public hearing on the proposal today in Kamloops.

Area resident Linda Fielding, who lives on a two-hectare site near the Trasa Lodges project, said Clearwater businesses support the development because it will generate revenue.

But she questioned the impact the project could have on the local environment, including wildlife and water resources.

"We have some beautiful creeks around here, and this is a big moose habitat," Fielding said. "Will this development hurt those in any way?"

The regional district supports the project, and issued a staff report last month that said Trasa Lodges plans to build a "low-impact, environmentally-friendly destination resort that meets environmental protection requirements."

Trasa Lodges representative Rick Sim said the Wells Gray concept started as an eight-hectare proposal, but grew into a potential 44-hectare "cabin-in-the-woods" development as more land became available.

He said the cabins will be sold as strata-title units to investors who will rent them to visitors, and he expects European buyers will be very interested in the cabins.

This will be Trasa Lodges' first project and Sim said the company wants to develop others in B.C., although no specific new properties have been acquired for that purpose.

"We feel this will fill a void because there hasn't been a wilderness lodge chain that provides a consistent product and level of service," he said. "There are great independent lodges, but no chains with a consistent brand, and we plan to be that chain."

Sim said his company will use a "refined-rustic" approach to building the cabins -- with a log-cabin look on the outside and higher-end amenities inside.

He said Wells Gray Park attracts about 250,000 visitors a year, but feels there are not enough middle-to-higher-end lodging facilities in the park's vicinity.

"That's why we're doing this -- to meet that need," Sim said.

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