

"Protesters says they would rather go to jail than give up their fight to prevent Langford from putting a locked gate at the entrance of Langford Lake Cave."

By Rudy Haugeneder
News staff

Jun 08 2007

Cave protesters defiant

Protesters says they would rather go to jail than give up their fight to prevent Langford from putting a locked gate at the entrance of Langford Lake Cave.

And their wish is likely to be granted.

The next time a city hired work-crew goes to the site, it will be accompanied by the RCMP who will arrest and haul way protesters who try to stop the work, said Mayor Stewart Young.

The protesters will be charged with trespass, he said, promising it is apt to happen soon.

A work crew and backhoe trying to install a gate at the cave entrance last week were turned back by protesters who lay in front of a trail to the cave at the end of Leigh Road.

"I don't mind if I get arrested," said Sonny LaPointe, 28, a former Montreal resident who said protecting the environment is his mission in life. He sleeps in a nearby tree and earns a small income by writing environment stories.

"If that happens, it happens," he said in a telephone interview.

The protesters are members of the Coalition to Protect Goldstream Watershed.

The group is trying to prevent construction of the planned Spencer Road Interchange connector that would link a road being built from the Bear Mountain subdivision to the Trans- Canada Highway.

LaPointe reported that three municipal officials approached protesters at the cave entrance Tuesday and asked if they would cease and desist if the gate allows the free



Photo contributed

Larry Wartels from the Coalition to Protect Goldstream Watershed at the entrance to the cave with the recently installed gate.

flow of water and small animals to enter and leave the geologically sensitive limestone cave.

Lapointe said the protesters said "no" because the coalition wants the entire area, including the interchange site, left in its natural state.

No one at Langford City hall would confirm whether such a meeting had taken place.

Young said the cave entrance must be blocked for injury liability reasons and to protect the geologically sensitive limestone cave he admits to having explored it as a teenager.

Larry Wartels, the coalition media spokesperson, called the Langford offer "an absolute ploy" and an attempt to divert attention from the interchange protest and efforts to keep the cave entrance open.

"They are looking for a violent confrontation," he said of the mayor's threat to arrest protesters.

If the protesters are arrested, hauled away and a cave entrance gate is installed, he promised the coalition would not return to tear it away.

"We don't engage in property damage whatsoever," he said.

However, he didn't rule out that non-coalition environmentalists would remove the gate.

"We can't be responsible for other people," he said, adding "nobody with the coalition will do anything like that."