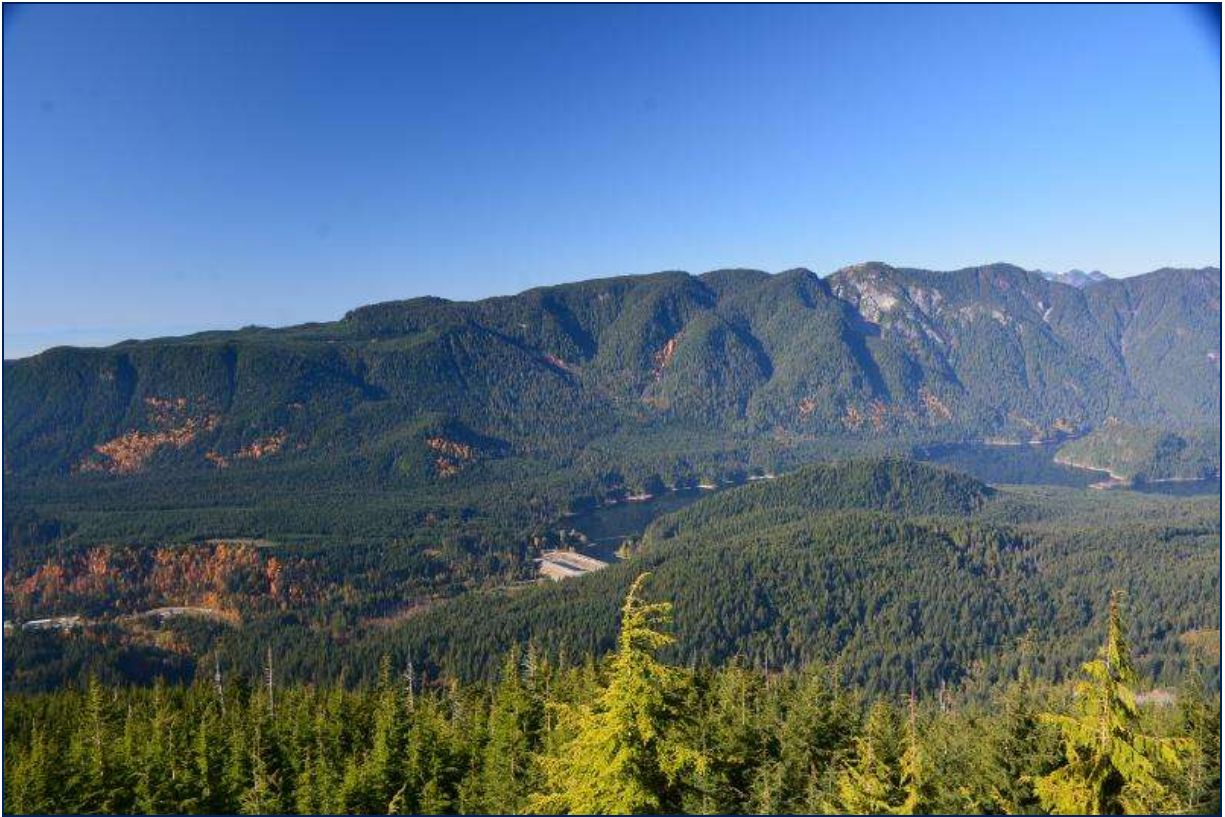


## **BMN HIKE REPORT**

### **Coquitlam Lake Viewpoints (October 28, 2017)**

by Mark Johnston



From the “new” viewpoint, looking across Coquitlam Lake toward Eagle Ridge. Coquitlam Dam is visible in the centre middle ground. *Terry Puls photo.*

Last year we scheduled a trip to the Coquitlam Lake Viewpoints, but when the day of the hike turned out to be cloudy and rainy, decided to go to Saw Blade Falls instead. Two weeks later we put together another hike to the viewpoints, but discouraged again by clouds and rain, only went as far as Dry Crossing Falls. Not giving up, our third attempt—albeit a year later—proved to be the charm. We had a beautiful fall day—clear and warm—the kind of day on which one is happy to take sufficient time to savour the sights, sounds, and smells.

Eight of us met on Harper Road near the entrance to the Port Coquitlam & District Hunting & Fishing Club. Three of us were veterans of many a club hike, one had attended just one of our hikes previously, and the other four were participating in their very first club hike.

Often, when we meet at this location, we plan on an earlier start, usually 8:00 am. At that time of the morning, there is still plenty of parking along Harper Road, and another benefit is that the shooting at the Hunting & Fishing Club hasn't begun. But this morning, with a later, 9:00 am start, some of us had to park farther down the road, and, more disconcertingly, the shooting had begun in earnest. But peculiarly, as we hiked up Lower Elevator, past its signs warning of the proximity of a live firing range, the guns fell silent for a spell. Perhaps the shooters were taking a midmorning coffee break?

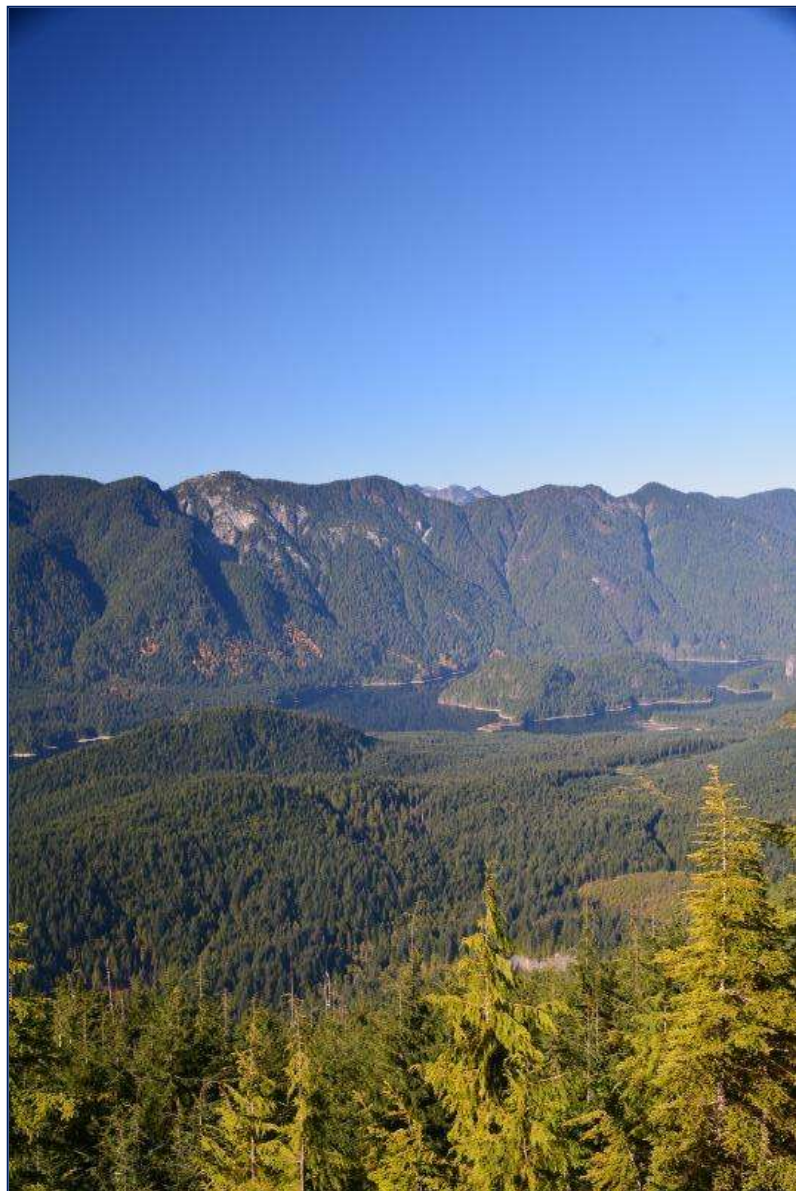
At the top of Lower Elevator, we came to the four-way intersection with the Woodland Walk trail and continued more or less straight ahead on Coquitlam Lake View Trail (CLVT). With the twinning of the power line a few years ago, this part of CLVT is no longer the "country lane" it used to be and has become an industrial grade road. If there is any upside, it's that it's now possible for hikers to walk abreast, which, in turn, makes it easier to converse. But after crossing the power lines, our route was the same as it's been for many years, an old logging road, now quite eroded. When it rains, the old road can be a veritable stream, but today it was dry as a bone. Similarly, after prolonged rain, the fords of Pritchett Creek—its tributary and the main stem—can be very challenging. A week ago, after several days of heavy rain, they would have been impassable. But now, with the recent dry spell, they were quite manageable.

Just past Dry Crossing Falls, we reached the realigned upper CLVT. Turning onto it, we soon recrossed the old trail, which gave us the opportunity to compare the two routes. The old route is very steep and eroded down to bedrock; when it's wet, it's very treacherous. The new trail, built by BMN volunteers through the trees that border the old route, is equally steep but has the advantage of having a good footbed.



**Looking across the Coquitlam River valley toward the southern end of Eagle Ridge. The gravel pits along the river are prominent in the left middle ground. *Terry Puls photo.***

Near the top of the realigned trail, we stopped for a rest, drink, and snack. Then we walked out onto the old trail/road and continued toward the viewpoints. Up until this point we had been walking in shade, but now we were beginning to get some direct sun. When we had walked another 500 m or so, we came to a handmade sign directing hikers toward a side trail to Coquitlam Lake Viewpoint. This is the “new” and superior viewpoint. But to get to it, we had to negotiate the steepest bit of trail yet, and found ourselves often resorting to the use of hands and arms to pull ourselves up.



**Another view of Coquitlam Lake and Eagle Ridge.**

*Terry Puls photo.*

Given that we had been in the forest all day and sometimes on steep slopes, some of our party might have wondered whether the payoff would be worth it. Coming out onto the rock bluff, however, and seeing the panoramic view, our group’s doubts about worthiness melted away. We looked down on much of Coquitlam Lake, across to Eagle Ridge, and out toward a swath of Lower Mainland urbanization. We noted splashes of fall colour here and there, and remarked on the brightness of the colours this year. Someone said that it wasn’t just our imagination. There is something about this year’s weather pattern that has resulted in leaves having a greater intensity of colour than is typical.

Before heading back, we followed the CLVT to its end at the original viewpoint. At one time there was a very good view from here, but over the years tree growth has all but eliminated the former vistas.

We varied our return by taking Saw Blade Trail down to the falls, and then heading back on CLVT Lower West Fork. The latter trail is quite nice, generally level and with the “country” feel that the CLVT south of the power lines now lacks. When we reached the power lines, we sat down on the right-of-way for a while. It was nice to be in the sun and we were in no hurry to leave. Many people think that hiking in fall is best, and on a day like today, they certainly wouldn’t have gotten any argument from us!