Boundary Bay Boundary:
The Trappings of the IBC, The Hunting of the Snark, and the Pining of the Parrot
Dr. Brian Ballantyne
Steve Rogers

1869 Agreement

The Boundary Bay boundary is neither the 49th parallel of latitude, nor, indeed, is it a parallel of latitude. Owing to an 1869 Agreement between the two countries, the boundary is a geodesic line between two shore monuments some 20 km apart.

Range Marks

1933 - There was a considerable fishing industry in Boundary Bay. "I would let in the interiors of both countries if the boundary line were referring complex", said one of the bay fishers.
2 - Offshore mark, 1,095.13 m west of monument 4 "on the straight line between monument 4 and 5."
3 - The United States side of the IBC built two range marks on Point Roberts.
4 - Monument 3, 1.5 m west of monument 9. "On the prolongation of the left to the right boundary markers 4 and 5."
5 - Monument 4, 1.095.13 m east of monument 5 "on the exact course of the boundary between monuments 4 and 5."
6 - The Canadian side of the IBC built two range marks at Blaine.
7 - Monument 1, 1.5 m east of monument 4. "On the exact course of the boundary between monuments 4 and 5."
8 - Monument 2, 1.095.13 m east of the shore mark. "10 feet south of the boundary line to allow for the convergence of the parallel."

Role of the IBC

Demarcating and maintaining the boundary has been the exclusive purview of the International Boundary Commission (IBC) since June 4, 1908, when ratifications were exchanged between the United States and the United Kingdom by which each agreed to appoint an expert geographer or surveyor to serve as Commissioner.

In 1925, a second treaty was ratified in Washington, DC between the United States and Canada that empowered the two Commissioners to maintain an effective boundary line and to determine the location of any point of the boundary line as required. These two fundamental tasks are facilitated by the Commissioners being directed to: inspect the border, to repair and re-build boundary monuments, to keep the boundary vistas open, to place new monuments, and to report annually to their respective Governments. The 1908 and 1925 Treaties continue to guide the two Commissioners.

Implications of the Range Marks

1 - To guide fishers (and others)
2 - Serving as a base for monitoring devices, such as tide gauges
3 - Environmental Impact Assessment

Dr. Brian Ballantyne is a lawyer who serves as the Advisor to the Surveyor General and International Boundary Commissioner within CCCM. He has degrees in law, geography, environmental ethics and law; has published, lectured and consulted widely; and has expertise in boundaries.

Steve Rogers has been employed as a Surveyor with CCCM since 2001. He was commissioned as a Canada Lands Surveyor in 2005, and is currently working towards a Masters degree in Geographic Information Science at the University of London (Birkbeck).

Between 1846 and 2008, the demarcation of the boundary has been a function of technology, expertise, fiscal restraint and users' needs.