



Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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Capital Regional District Parks,
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By Fax: (250) 360-3130
and email: gyoung@victoria.ca.

Attention: Mr Geoffrey Young, Board Chairman, and all CRD Board Members.

Re: Off-Road vehicles in CRD Regional Parks

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMC) is a province-wide “umbrella “organization of about 20 outdoor clubs whose members include hikers, mountaineers, backcountry skiers and snowboarders. For nearly 30 years we have been representing our member clubs in negotiations with government agencies, resource companies and other recreational groups in land use planning in attempts to settle disputes between competing interests for the land base.

The Times Colonist recently reported that the CRD is talking about allowing off-road vehicles (ORV's) into CRD Parks. Our organization cannot understand why the CRD would ever consider allowing motorized vehicles of any type into any area that is already a park, or is being considered as a park or protected area. ORV's can include normal or heavily modified 4X4 trucks, ATV's or quads, dirt bikes and possibly snowmobiles, and every one of these vehicles should NOT be used in an area that has been put aside for non-motorized or self-propelled park users. In addition, all CRD lands purchased in partnership with The Land Conservancy are protected by a covenant which prohibits, with certain exceptions, motorized vehicles on these lands.

What is the purpose of a park if it is not to legally protect the natural environment for ordinary, non-destructive human activities so that present and future generations can experience the natural environment? There is ample evidence to show that motorized activities, especially off-road vehicle activities, severely detract from the peaceful park experience expected by traditional park visitors, and these activities commonly displace non-motorized visitors. Also, it is well known that ORV's are devastating to hiking trails and to the park's natural environment by destroying fragile ground cover, disturbing wildlife and polluting air, soil and water bodies. Environmental awareness is increasing and the impact that humans cause on the natural areas should be minimized. Motorized activities that rely on burning fossil fuels and cause environmental damage should not be encouraged even if future technologies decrease the damage that is presently commonly caused by these activities.

The population of BC is forever increasing and, in the last few decades many of us have seen

wilderness areas disappear due to urban expansion and/or industrial development. Our protected areas or parks have not grown appreciably in proportion to the increase in population. Even if some of these areas have been used by ORV's in the past, this is no argument for maintaining that usage as there is an ever-increasing demand by urban dwellers to escape the noise and smell of engines. Compared with many parts of BC where most undeveloped land is Crown Land, most of the undeveloped land on the eastern portion of Vancouver Island is privately owned due to the railway Land Grant. This means that expanding existing parks or establishing new parks by acquiring private land will be very costly and thus it is very important to defend existing or proposed parks from these types of activities.

In addition, permitting increased motorized recreation will only exacerbate the recently identified "childhood obesity epidemic". Perhaps parents should find ways to discourage children from adopting unhealthy and environmentally destructive motorized sports, so that all people, but particularly children, will recreate using their own physical energy.

We look forward to receiving your comments, and those of the Board.

Yours Sincerely,

Brian Wood,
President,
Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC.

cc. Mayor Janet Evans, Sooke, BC.
By Fax: (250) 642-0541 and email : jevans@sooke.ca.

cc. Bill Bennett, Minister of Community and Rural Development,
By Fax: 250-387-4312 and email : cd.minister@gov.bc.ca