



**Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC**  
Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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March 14, 2011

By E-mail: Chris.Platz@gov.bc.ca

Chris Platz, Area Supervisor  
BC Parks  
P.O. Box 220  
Brackendale, B.C.  
V0N 1H0

Dear Mr. Platz:

Re: Renewal of Whistler Heli-ski Ltd. Park Use Permit in Garibaldi Provincial Park

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The Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia (FMCBC) is an umbrella organization of approximately 20 outdoor recreation clubs, with about 3500 individual members in total, dispersed throughout the province. For almost four decades, the FMCBC has represented the interests of self-propelled/non-motorized backcountry recreationists by maintaining and improving backcountry and wilderness experiences for our members and the public.

We understand the Whistler Heli-ski Ltd. (WHSL) park use permit in Garibaldi Provincial Park is up for renewal in 2011. The Spearhead Range has become a very popular recreation area for backcountry skiers. The growth in numbers of backcountry skiers, combined with better gear and fitness, which allow backcountry skiers to go further into the Spearhead Range on day trips, has increased the competition for skiable terrain within Garibaldi Provincial Park. This has led to greater conflicts with heli-skiers.

Furthermore, as a result of the government's inability and unwillingness to enforce designated non-motorized recreation areas within the Sea-to-Sky corridor, snowmobilers are eroding the few safe areas available for backcountry skiing and snowshoeing outside parks, and even sometimes in Garibaldi Park (Brohm Ridge – Mt. Garibaldi area). Garibaldi Provincial Park has therefore become a vitally important wilderness recreation area, guaranteed to be non-motorized.

We are therefore opposed to renewal of the park use permit for Whistler Heli-ski Ltd.

If the park use permit is renewed, we request the following:

1. The areas most heavily used for backcountry skiing should be removed. This would include Phalanx, Spearhead Glacier, Decker, Vista Bowl, Flying Saucer and Trorey Glacier.
2. An avoidance protocol should be implemented and followed rigorously and fairly, including a web and phone-based system for members and the public to notify WHSL of planned trips

and report infractions. This avoidance protocol should be easily available to the public through a website.

3. The duration of the park use permit should be limited to a maximum of 5 years to allow for further review in a relatively short period of time.

As an example of why careful consideration must be given to the renewal application of the park use permit, we wish to report a recent example of WHSL's implementation of its avoidance protocol, which is unacceptable to our members. At 8:00 am one of our members phoned WHSL to inform them of a trip to Metal Dome that day. By 11:00 am ten backcountry skiers were approaching treeline. Helicopters were flying overhead. When the group left the trees at about noon, helicopters were doing a pick up approximately a hundred meters from the group. The heli-skiers had done four runs and had skied most of the primary slopes off the north side of Metal Dome that morning, leaving less desirable areas of untracked snow for the backcountry ski group. While technically WHSL had avoided the backcountry skiers when on the slopes, the results were far from satisfactory for the backcountry skiers. This is NOT how we had envisioned fair application of the avoidance protocol. Not only is it unfair but it is counter to the spirit of the protocol and unacceptable.

Non-renewal of the park use permit or reduction in terms of duration and area should not be tied to Whistler-Blackcomb being allowed any further development within Garibaldi Park. Both Whistler (Musical Bumps and Peak) and Blackcomb (Blackcomb Glacier) have been allowed to expand into the park over the past 45 years to the detriment of the park. We oppose any further encroachments into Garibaldi Provincial Park for the benefit of Whistler-Blackcomb, whether as a trade-off for non-renewal of the park use permit or otherwise.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Yours truly,

Brian Wood,  
President, FMCBC