



Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

PO Box 19673 Vancouver, BC V5T 4E7

fmcbbc@mountainclubs.org

www.mountainclubs.org

Tel: 604.873.6096

By E-mail: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honorable Mary Polak,
Minister of Environment,
ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

25 November 2013

Re: Garibaldi Park Management Plan

Dear Minister Polak,

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia (FMCBC) is an umbrella organization of about 30 outdoor recreation clubs having a total membership of about 4500 individual members dispersed throughout the province. For over four decades we have represented the interests of self-propelled/non-motorized backcountry recreationists by maintaining and/or improving backcountry and wilderness experiences both in provincial parks and on other Crown land for our members and the public. Some of our older clubs such as the British Columbia Mountaineering Club and the Alpine Club of Canada were on the forefront of establishing Garibaldi Provincial Park, which is therefore of special interest to these clubs.

In summary, the FMCBC is very concerned about the recent decision to permit continuation of heli-skiing in Garibaldi Park, and the incremental removal of park area to increase the skiable area of the Whistler Blackcomb Ski Resort. The FMCBC is also very concerned about the lack of progress in improving public access into Garibaldi Park via the neglected traditional Singing Pass Trail.

The FMCBC has opposed for many years any extension of the Heli-ski Park Use Permit which is nevertheless going ahead. There are at least the four reasons against this extension as detailed below:-

- a) Over the last decade there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of backcountry skiers in the park and the number of conflicts with heli-skiers is increasing, and this will be exacerbated if/when the Spearhead Huts are built. A fit and well equipped back

country skier using the ski lifts for access can cover much or all of the Spearhead Traverse in a day and this results in competition with the heli-skiers for much of the same skiable terrain. The FMCBC has tried to instigate a User Conflict Avoidance Policy with the heli-skiers but it is not successful in spite of some backcountry skiers notifying the heli-skiers beforehand of their plans. Thus, the back country skiers often find their planned ski run skied out by the heli-skiers before they get there, or worse still the heli-skiers are still skiing in the same area as the backcountry skiers, thus creating an unsafe situation. In addition, the noise and downwash of the helicopters spoil the peace of the backcountry.

b) The heli-skiers have a huge tenure and the Spearhead portion is less than four per cent of their total tenure, but of course the Spearhead is conveniently very close to the helicopter base and this closeness reduces heli-skier travel time. Backcountry ski tourers travel much slower, have limited access points and thus should be allowed to access skiable areas closer to access points.

c) In addition, over many years the original two ski areas have incrementally shifted the boundaries of the park to increase their respective controlled recreation areas. This has resulted in an incremental reduction of skiable terrain for backcountry skiers to use. A bad example is the most recent boundary shift which occurred on Flute and this has increased considerably the number of skiers that can very easily access the park boundary. Thus the Spearhead traverse has become even more important as the other ski touring areas within the park have been compromised by the boundary shift. Future proposed boundary shifts will further impact back country skiing in the park and should not be permitted.

d) Garibaldi Park is more important now than it ever was because of the increasing numbers of snowmobilers and the non-enforcement of the non-motorized zones in the Sea-to-Sky LRMP. Thus there is a decrease in number of backcountry areas where backcountry skiers can be free of snowmobilies and this makes the park much more important to backcountry skiers.

On a related matter, the traditional access to the Singing Pass trailhead has been badly neglected for decades and needs to be re-established to improve access into this popular backcountry area which has one of the few public huts in the Park. Whistler Blackcomb is in a position to facilitate this process but there is negligible progress in this regard, in spite of the benefits the tks ski resort gets from continued expansion into the Park. Pressure should be applied to the ski resort to permit work on this matter

so that the public can once again enjoy reasonably easy access to this area of the park which is the traditional end of the Spearhead Traverse.

Thank you for allowing us to provide input on this important matter.and we look forward to your reply

Sincerely,

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

Cc.
Premier Christy Clark
Jordan Sturdy MLA
Jennie Aikman
Regional Director, South Coast Region
Ministry of Environment - BC Parks