



October 13, 2015

Bryce Leigh
Director Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C.
& ACC Whistler rep for the FMCBC Recreation & Conservation Committee
PO Box 19673 Vancouver, BC V5T 4E7

Via Email: powderhounds@telus.net

Dear Mr. Leigh:

Re: Whistler Blackcomb Public Access to Singing Pass

Thank you for your letter dated September 10, 2015 that identifies the FMCBC's position on public access through the Whistler Blackcomb Controlled Recreation Areas (CRAs) to Garibaldi Park and Singing Pass. Your letter and position statement speak to the FMCBC's promotion of self-propelled activities and the importance of protecting and maintaining access for quality non-motorized recreation. FMCBC has explained that there is a need for better public hiking access and expressed frustration and concern for public safety over the condition of the existing Singing Pass access trail that is located on the Whistler Mountain (south) side of Fitzsimmons Creek. In addition to improving public hiking access, there is a desire by the group to reduce the hiking distance by allowing hikers to drive up from the village to a new trailhead location, thereby offering quicker access to Garibaldi Park.

As you know, improving public access through the Whistler Blackcomb CRAs has been an outstanding issue for several years. The situation is complex in that a solution requires the involvement and cooperation of the user groups (FMCBC, ACC), a number of branches of Provincial government (Mountain Resorts Branch, Recreation Sites and Trail Branch and BC Parks) as well as the existing stakeholders with overlapping land interests (Whistler Blackcomb, Whistler Sport Legacies and Innergex). In June of this year, after hearing concerns from FMCBC, the Mountain Resorts Branch brought together a working group of the Provincial agencies and the stakeholders with the intent to explore interests, concerns and options. Through this discussion and collaboration, the working group has determined that the most feasible option for improved public hiking access to Garibaldi Park at this time is to:

- Drive up from the village and park in Parking Lot 8 (on Blackcomb Mountain, adjacent to the Sliding Center – approx. 1.8km and 150 metres in elevation above Whistler Village), see attached map;
- Walk through the Sliding Center to the Innergex penstock right of way that is between the Sliding Center and Fitzsimmons Creek;

- Hike up the penstock right of way and new sections of trail to be built adjacent to the existing mountain road, to the Innergex intake on Fitzsimmons Creek (approx. 4km);
- Cross a new pedestrian bridge over Fitzsimmons Creek that will be constructed in the vicinity of the intake;
- From the bridge, hike along a new section of trail on the Whistler side of the creek to a point that intersects the existing Singing Pass Trail, if possible beyond the problematic Harmony Creek crossing (exact location to be determined);
- Hikers enter Garibaldi Park and continue on to Singing Pass.

This new trail through the CRAs will be referred to all stakeholders for comments on its establishment. The intent is to legally establish the trail under Section 56 of the Forest and Range Practices Act. The signage and maintenance of the new trail will be the responsibility of the Province in partnership with the user groups and stakeholders.

The working group believes that this solution will meet many of the objectives and address some of the concerns that FMCBC has raised. The new public hiking route will promote self-propelled, non-motorized recreation; offer improved, safe access, eliminating the areas of concern/hazard that currently exist with the Whistler route; and the public will be able to drive up to a higher elevation than the village where they can park and stage for free.

In addition to the improved pedestrian access, the following options will be explored:

- Pay-for-service shuttle to drive users along the mountain access road to the Innergex intake;
- Discounted 360 Summer Hiking Season Lift Pass for FMCBC & ACC members
- Earlier access to the lifts (currently 10am start) - Whistler Blackcomb has offered to consider earlier access

These additional opportunities will allow alternate modes of quick and efficient access into the park, and all of these considerations speak to the concerns that FMCBC has raised.

The Recreation Sites & Trails Branch is developing a detailed proposal which will be brought to the working group, showing trail alignment, distances, additional requirements and cost estimates. The working group will then identify partnership opportunities, funding requirements, cost sharing and responsibilities for implementation.

With regard to continued winter access on the Whistler Mountain side, the working group has also recognized the importance of maintaining the existing trail to some standard that allows skiers to continue exiting from the park and down the trail on the south side. I would like to encourage FMCBC to work with the Province to assist in the ongoing maintenance of this piece of the solution.

Once again I would like to thank you for your involvement in this process to date. The working group has done its very best to address the issues and concerns you have raised, while considering the existing land uses and the contractual obligations of the Province.

Sincerely,



Tori Meeks
Land Officer, Mountain Resorts Branch
Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations

Encl: Singing Pass Access Discussion Map

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