



February 14, 2013

Jennie Aikman, Regional Planner
Ministry of Environment - BC Parks
PO Box 3010
Cultus Lake, BC V2R 5H6
jennie.aikman@gov.bc.ca

Re: Golden Ears Provincial Park Management Plan

Dear Ms. Aikman,

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia (FMCBC) is an umbrella organization of 27 outdoor recreation clubs, with about 3500 individual members in total, dispersed throughout the province. For over 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.

The FMCBC is pleased to comment on the draft management plan for Golden Ears Provincial Park and is generally supportive of the plan as a whole. Management plans are extremely important for proper management of our parks. Please find our comments on specific management issues below. This document has been structured to match section 3.2 of the draft plan as much as possible.

Issue: Ecosystem values are being impacted by recreational use.

Objective: Develop appropriate facilities and infrastructure to mitigate impacts from backcountry use.

FMCBC comments: We support the installation of appropriate food caches, toilets, and other minimal infrastructure at backcountry campgrounds. Generally we discourage fires in the backcountry, especially in alpine/subalpine areas. Relocating the Alder Flats campground out of the riparian area makes sense, but this campsite is important and should be kept in the same general area. We are strongly supportive of monitoring the condition of backcountry trails and maintaining them as necessary, with proactive maintenance being the best course of action. Working with volunteer groups, including the FMCBC and our member clubs, is likely to be critical to the success of a trail monitoring and maintenance program.

Objective: Ensure aircraft access in the park is not impacting wildlife, ecosystem, and recreational values.

FMCBC comments: We support the proposed requirement for prior authorization for air access to the northern part of the Wilderness Recreation Zone of the park. In addition to impacts on wildlife, air traffic can negatively impact the wilderness experience for visitors to the area. While



in many areas air traffic is minimal, in some locations in the province the disturbance has become substantial, with sightseeing tour flight paths being used multiple times per day, and certain lakes becoming popular for landings. Continued monitoring and impact assessment should be conducted.

Issue: Recreational facilities are no longer meeting demand.

Objective: Trail networks area expanded to include loop trails and viewpoints.

FMCBC comments: We support the linking of the Golden Ears Trail with the East Canyon Trail via a footbridge over Gold Creek, as we have received numerous inquiries about a replacement for the former “Burma Bridge” at this location. However, an inventory of current trails in the park, including their condition, should exist and be consulted prior to expansion of the trail network. Current trail maintenance needs should be met before adding to the burden through additional construction. As mentioned above, partnerships with volunteer groups such as ours can help to achieve these objectives. Cutting of trees to create or restore viewpoints should only be performed after very careful examination of the area with an aim to minimize disturbance. In many circumstances the negative impact will outweigh the potential benefit of an improved view.

Objective: Park visitors have access to year-round recreational activities and amenities in the park.

FMCBC comments: We are strongly supportive of improved year-round access to the park. The current situation, with frequent road closures, can be very frustrating, especially since it often seems to be the case that properly equipped vehicles could navigate the road without much difficulty. Gate closure times should take into account the schedules of backcountry users, who often start early in the day and return after nightfall.

Regarding construction of roofed accommodation, please find attached the FMCBC policy on Huts, Cabins and Lodges in BC Provincial Parks. In this case, since the proposed buildings are in a frontcountry area with very high traffic, many of the additional impacts would be small. Nevertheless, we oppose any new commercial roofed accommodation in BC Parks, so any yurts or cabins should be operated by BC Parks (possibly through a Park Facility Operator), and should not be owned by an external entity. We would expect that the number of beds associated with this initiative would be low, and are not sure of the justification for such construction. An alternative may be to establish additional warming or cooking shelters for winter campers to use while tenting in the usual campsites.

Issue: Adjacent land use may be affecting park values.

Objective: Management of adjacent lands complements park objectives.

FMCBC comments: We strongly support the continued complete ban on off-road motorized vehicles in the park. Continued monitoring and enforcement is important to ensure compliance.



Opportunities: To protect and promote the health and safety of park visitors.

Objective: Measures are taken to protect public safety.

FMCBC comments: We support maintaining the existing shelters for emergency use. The Panorama Ridge shelter has been subject to vandalism and garbage dumping in the past. Maintaining it in good, clean condition may help to reduce the temptation for some users to add to the problem. Additional ranger presence in the area would help to educate users and encourage compliance with rules.

Issue: To ensure that any commercial activities within the park occur in a manner than maintains park values.

Objective: To provide appropriate opportunities for commercial activities within the park.

FMCBC comments: We do not support the promotion and marketing of Golden Ears Provincial Park as a destination for filming. While some filming may be acceptable, promotion and marketing for commercial activities does not seem to be in accordance with BC Parks mission and mandate. We feel that crown land outside of BC Parks is more appropriate for the film industry.

As a final comment, we note that the draft plan mentions interpretive programs being offered by the park facility operator. We strongly support interpretive programs, ideally conducted by BC Parks staff. With its proximity to the lower mainland, large campgrounds, and high visitor traffic, Golden Ears Provincial Park provides an excellent opportunity for public education through interpretive programming.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this management plan. Feel free to contact us for clarification on any of our comments or to further discuss this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Webster', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Webster,
President