



## Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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January 15, 2012

Mayor and Council  
Resort Municipality of Whistler  
4325 Blackcomb Way  
Whistler, B.C.  
V0N 1B4

Re: Winter and Summer Recreation in the RMOW

Dear Mayor and Council,

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMCBC) is a 40 year old umbrella organization of 24 outdoor recreation clubs having approximately 3,500 individual members in British Columbia, most of them being in the Lower Mainland region. The FMCBC represents the interests of its members and its mission is to foster and promote the hiking, mountaineering, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing activities of the membership and the general public through leadership, advocacy, and education. In this capacity the FMCBC has been an active participant in several multi-year land use planning processes, and some of its members have decades of experience in dealing with many issues relating to backcountry use.

### **Winter Recreation**

The FMCBC identified the continued use of the Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized area by snowmobilers as the most urgent winter recreation issue in the Sea to Sky corridor. Under the Sea to Sky Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) this area has been designated as non-motorized since March 12, 2009. There were many factors considered when this designation was approved, including the area's long history of heavy use for backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, protection of the RMOW watershed, and providing undisturbed habitat for the resident goat populations. It is important to understand that self-propelled backcountry skiing and snowmobiling are incompatible activities. Please see the enclosed summary.

In the fall of 2010 signs were erected by the provincial government, in partnership with the FMCBC and the RMOW, at the 3 main road access points to Twentyone Mile Creek. (See the attached photo.) Despite these signs, snowmobilers continued to blatantly disregard the non-motorized boundary. One snowmobile can track out the area in a matter of minutes. On December 31, 2011 there were over 70 snowmobile trucks parked on the Callaghan FSR which leads to the Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized area. This demonstrates that the snowmobilers are clearly not complying with the non-motorized zoning and that the problem is not limited to just a few snowmobilers.

As a result of this continued violation of the non-motorized area by snowmobilers it is increasingly unsafe for backcountry skiers and snowshoers to enjoy the area. Having snowmobiles in a non-motorized area compromises the safety of self-propelled users, puts one of the main RMOW drinking water sources at risk, and compromises the goat populations. The Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized area is vital to self-propelled backcountry users as it is one of the very few day use areas in the Sea to Sky corridor where self-propelled users could be safe from snowmobilers. Unfortunately this is not currently possible with the high level of noncompliance by the snowmobilers.

Self-propelled backcountry skiers are an important visitor group for Whistler as they contribute substantially to local businesses including retail stores and local ACMG guiding services. Facilitating backcountry skiing and snowshoeing will help Whistler attain its Whistler 2020 goals as these activities have zero carbon footprint.

The present domination of the Twentyone mile creek non-motorized zone by snowmobiles is completely unacceptable. The importance of non-motorized areas for backcountry skiers cannot be over emphasized. We look forward to your assistance in resolving this issue expediently so that all user groups can enjoy the winter season.

## **Summer Recreation**

The FMCBC has identified re-establishing the Singing Pass trail access as the most urgent summer access issue in the Sea to Sky corridor. We would like to see the Singing Pass trail re-established to provide functional access in summer and winter to Singing Pass, the Musical Bumps, and the Spearhead Range. As the traditional access route to the Singing Pass trailhead has been severely limited by "the slump" the only viable access to the trailhead is now via the IPP access road on the Blackcomb side of Fitzsimmons Creek. From the IPP intake site a footbridge crossing would facilitate an easy connection to the existing trail near the old parking lot on the south side of Fitzsimmons Creek.

There are several benefits of re-establishing access to the Singing Pass trail.

- It would provide a safe easy connection to the Singing Pass trail and the Musical Bumps trail from Whistler Mountain in summer.
- It would offer an alternate route to the alpine areas on the Musical Bumps and Whistler Mountain for people looking for a more physical challenge.
- It would provide a connection to proposed new trails such as the Singing Creek trail from Cheakamus Lake.
- It would complement the proposed Spearhead Hut system by giving hikers the option of doing a summer Spearhead hiking traverse from Blackcomb clockwise around the headwaters of Fitzsimmons Creek (on the non-glaciated inside of the horseshoe).
- It would significantly reduce the potential for conflict or collision for hikers on the existing access road where it passes through the Whistler Mountain bike park.
- It would facilitate more non-motorized healthy activities that are part of the Whistler cachet and Whistler 2020.

Hiking is the number one summer activity in Whistler. Re-establishing the Singing Pass trail will expand Whistler's hiking options providing guests with a reason to extend their stay or to return for another visit.

There is strong support for re-establishing the Singing Pass trail. The RMOW Forest & Wildland Advisory Committee's Hiking Trails Task Force lists re-establishing the Singing Pass trail as one of the top priorities to improve hiking in Whistler. The Alpine Club of Canada- Whistler Section strongly supports re-establishing the Singing Pass trail. WORCA supports re-establishing the Singing Pass trail. Discussions regarding this issue with Whistler Sport Legacies, Whistler Blackcomb, and B.C. Parks have all been favorable.

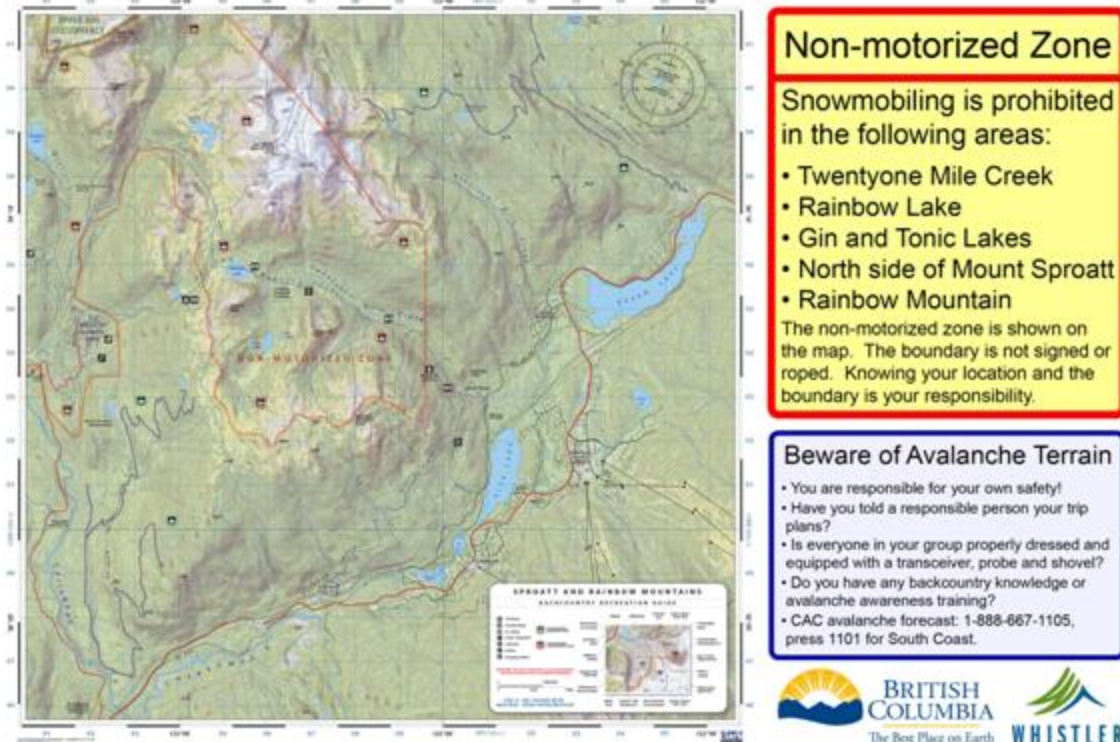
We look forward to working with you to make re-establishing the Singing Pass trail access a reality so that Whistler residents and guests can once again use this important trail to enjoy the backcountry.

I may be reached by email at [powderhounds@telus.net](mailto:powderhounds@telus.net) or by phone at 935-2551.

Sincerely,

Bryce Leigh  
Recreation and Conservation Committee  
Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

# Rainbow Mountain Wildland Area



## Summary of the issues supporting the creation of non-motorized areas

It is vitally important that backcountry skiers have safe non-motorized areas in which to enjoy skiing without the risk of interference from snowmobilers. This is supported by Gordon Erlandson in his August 25, 2008 report, "Recommendations for the Management of Winter Backcountry Recreation in the Lillooet River Drainage and the Sea-to-Sky LRMP Area." On page 11 it states, "there would have had to be substantive understanding of the following: • a recognition that motorized use can have an impact on the ability of non-motorized users to fulfill their recreational experiences in areas where both types of uses take place concurrently — and that non-motorized uses do not have the same potential impact on motorized user experiences."

Non-motorized areas are necessary for several reasons.

- When skiers and snowmobilers "share" an access route or play area, the quiet enjoyment of the skier is reduced by the noise, smell, and fumes from snowmobiles.
- As snowmobiles are bigger, heavier, and move faster than skiers, shared access routes create collision hazards.
- Snowmobiles track out fresh snow much quicker than less mobile backcountry skiers. Backcountry skiers tend to manage or conserve their use of a slope for later use. However a few deep snowmobile tracks render a slope unsuitable for skiing
- Skiers and snowmobilers use backcountry areas in incompatible ways. Skiers tend to set a single uptrack to the top of a slope. A safe uptrack avoids areas where other skiers are likely to ski down. Snowmobilers tend to ride all over slopes, creating avalanche risks for ascending skiers.
- Skiers and snowmobilers manage avalanche risks in different, incompatible ways. Skiers rely more on careful route selection to minimize hazards, while snowmobilers rely more on travelling

through and clearing hazardous areas quickly. These tactics are at odds with one another and create additional hazards for the skiers

- Snowmobilers are riding their snowmobiles to the top of slopes, getting off them and pushing them riderless downhill while they ski or snowboard down behind them. This is called ghost riding. Not only does this combine all the previously mentioned dangers snowmobilers pose to skiers, but it adds the frightening potential for skiers to encounter uncontrolled riderless snowmobiles heading downhill towards them