



Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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Sept. 20, 2011

Bill Marshall
Director, Recreation Sites and Trails BC
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Dear Mr. Marshall,

Twentyone Mile Creek has been a very popular backcountry skiing areas for decades. It is one of the most accessible areas for day skiing from the town of Whistler and from Whistler Olympic Park in the Callaghan Valley. Twentyone Mile Creek is also a recognized non-motorized zone in the Sea to Sky LRMP for "quiet enjoyment by the public."

Snowmobiling in this area has been an ongoing problem for years, but improved access from the Callaghan Valley has exacerbated the problem. A handful of snowmobiles can track out all the safe skiing slopes around Rainbow Lake, and the loud noise from these machines ruins the wilderness experience that backcountry skiers seek. Last season the provincial government erected signs to inform snowmobilers about the non-motorized area. The signs were entirely ignored and snowmobilers continued to ride roughshod all over the non-motorized area. Conflicts with snowmobilers are now so prevalent that they are driving backcountry skiers out of the area.

It's time that the provincial government and the RMOW address this problem. Snowmobile access to the Twentyone Mile Creek valley is only possible via one route from the south end of Callaghan FSR at highway 99. In order to protect the non-motorized recreation zone in Twentyone Mile Creek, this access route must be closed to all non-guided snowmobilers for the 2011-2012 season. Enforcement would be a simple matter of not plowing any parking, and towing vehicles from the MOT turnaround at the south end of Callaghan FSR. Parking at this turnaround is already prohibited. Canadian Snowmobile Adventures' guided tours need not be affected by the closure, as they have demonstrated respect for the non-motorized area.

As the popularity of backcountry skiing and snowmobiling grow, conflicts are increasing, especially in the congested Sea to Sky corridor. It is vital that non-motorized areas exist where backcountry skiers can go safely without the conflict of snowmobiles. Twentyone Mile Creek is an established non-motorized zone, but snowmobilers continue to disrespect the designation, negatively impacting Whistler's reputation as a safe place for backcountry ski touring. It's now time to take action to enforce the non-motorized designation for this area. Eliminating parking at the south end of Callaghan FSR and closing the route to snowmobile traffic is easy, inexpensive to implement, and an effective solution. The groundwork has been laid through the LRMP planning process, and now it's time to follow up with decisive action.

Sincerely,

Scott Webster
President
FMCBC

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