

# Twentyone Mile Creek User Survey

## Summary of Results

March 11, 2012

Scott Nelson

Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

### Introduction

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC started a web based survey of the users of Twentyone Mile Creek to assess snowmobile compliance with the non motorized zoning. Posters were put up at the Whistler Olympic Park and Rainbow-Madeley trailheads directing users to the website <http://www.mountainclubs.org/21mile>. The actual web survey is hosted by [surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). See Appendix A for the survey questions.

Three signs were posted along the snowmobile access route in December 2010, clearly identifying the non-motorized area (see Appendix B)."

### Results

The survey is ongoing. The following results are current as of March 11, 2012.

61% of survey responses reported observing snowmobiles inside the Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized zone.

67% of survey responses reported observing snowmobile tracks inside the Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized zone

## 2. How many people were in your group?

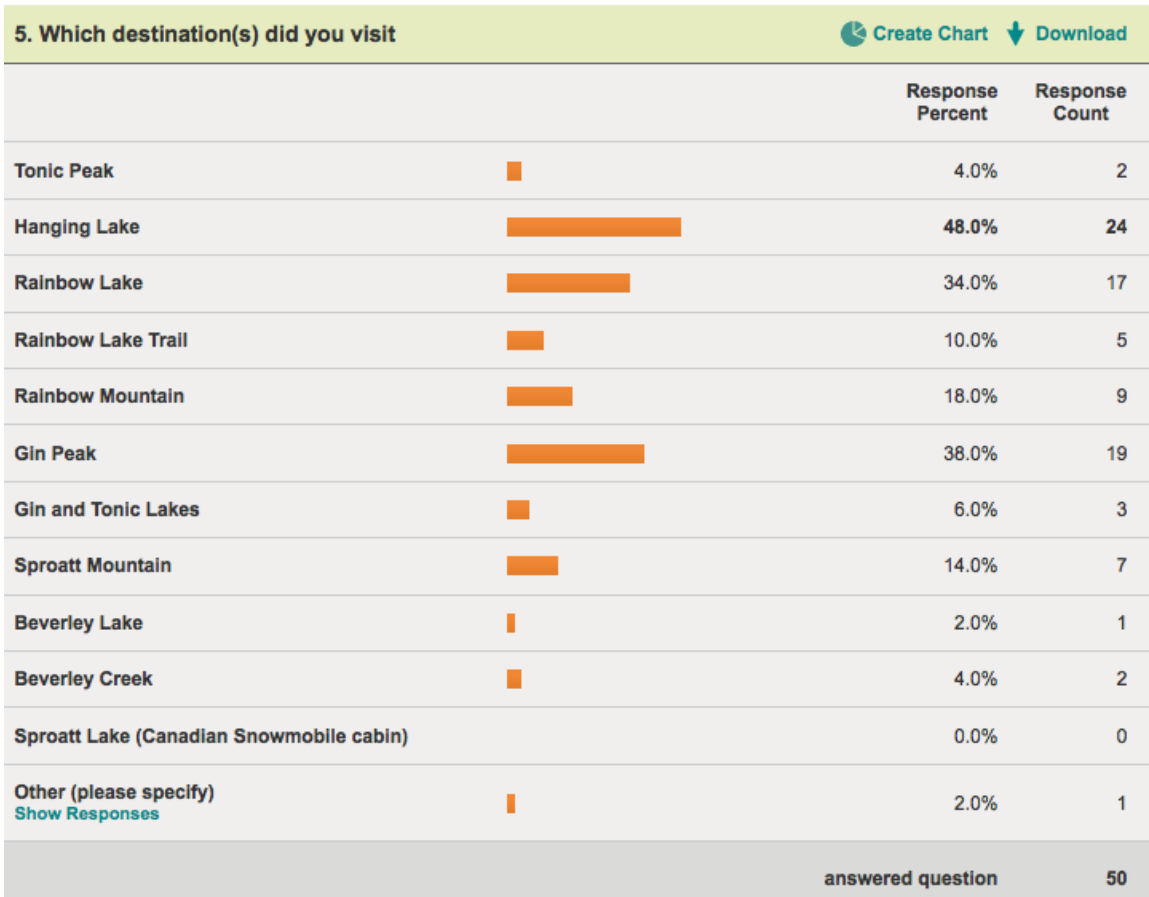
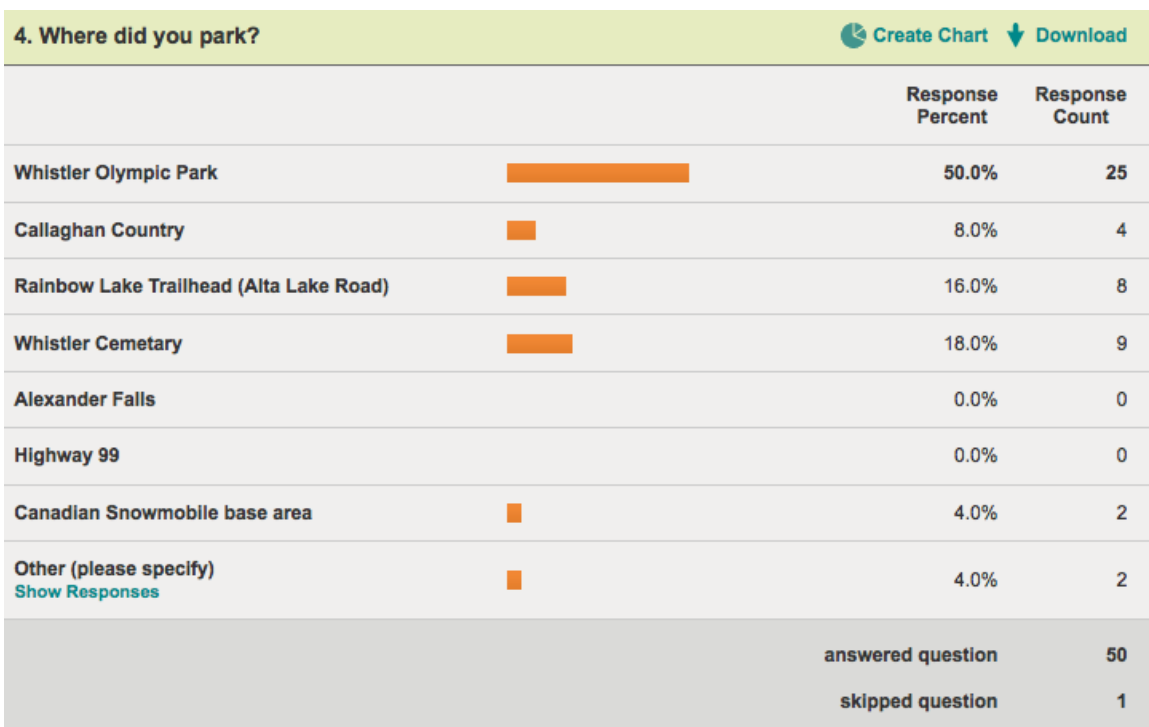
[Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
<b>skiers</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	3.82	168	44
<b>snowboarders</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	0.65	11	17
<b>snowshoers</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	0.94	16	17
<b>snowmobilers</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	0.31	4	13
<b>snowmobile assisted skiers / snowboarders</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	0.15	2	13
<b>other</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	0.00	0	11
	<b>answered question</b>		<b>50</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>		<b>1</b>

## 3. How many people did you observe using the 21 mile creek area on this day, including your group?

[Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
<b>skiers</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	6.38	300	47
<b>snowboarders</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	1.37	26	19
<b>snowshoers</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	2.05	45	22
<b>snowmobilers</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	7.59	258	34
<b>snowmobile assisted skiers / snowboarders</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	1.50	27	18
<b>other</b> <a href="#">Show Responses</a>	0.18	2	11
	<b>answered question</b>		<b>50</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>		<b>1</b>



## Chronology

Most data in this section comes from the user survey, but some additional data points have been added based on reports in the bivouac.com snowmobile infraction database.

### 2008-2009 Season

#### **March 22, 2009**

Reports: 2  
Snowmobiles: yes (2)  
Snowmobile Tracks: yes (2)

Many noisy snowmobiles highpointing on the west side of rainbow.

#### **March 29, 2009**

Snowmobiles: yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: yes

#### **April 4, 2009**

Snowmobiles: yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: yes

We observed one snowmobile assisted snowboarder reach the top of a ridge, let the snowmobile run down riderless, and board down the slope. Another snowmobiler came within feet of us, turning away from us at the last minute. This snowmobiler came back later and apologized. He said he didn't see us until the last minute. He was visiting from the US and unaware this was a non-motorized area. He was told about the Rainbow Lake area by local snowmobilers.



Photo: Carol MacMillan

**April 5, 2009**

Not a survey response – from <http://bivouac.com/SAbxPg.asp?SAbxId=7>

From the time that we came over Rainbow peak, we could hear snowmobiles on Rainbow lake and ripping up the opposing peaks. The entire valley was tracked out. At least some of the machines had no mufflers. By the time we descended, there were only about 5 machines left, which continued till 6:00 PM. Although the valley was completely devastated, it may only take a dozen machines to do this, over a period of hours.

There were some tracks on the north side of Rainbow mountain as well, but no machines on Sunday.

**April 6, 2009**

Not a survey response – from <http://bivouac.com/SAbxPg.asp?SAbxId=19>

Snowmobile tracks up Rainbow Mountain from Rainbow Lake, seen from Puma Peak.

**April 18, 2009**

Not a survey response - from <http://bivouac.com/SAbxPg.asp?SAbxId=20> and <http://bivouac.com/SAbxPg.asp?SAbxId=21>

Snowmobile tracks up Rainbow Peak from Rainbow Lake. Seen from Puma Peak.

We successfully summited Rainbow from Hanging Lake. Thanks for all the flags. The only downside was the ridiculous number of sleds all over hanging lake, rainbow lake and the mountain.

## 2009-2010 Season

### December 19, 2009

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

saw tracks around Gin and Tonic Lake from Sproatt Summit.



Photo: Scott Nelson

### January 9, 2010

Snowmobiles: yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: yes

A pack of snowmobiles came roaring down the slope we were skinning up, which was quite alarming. We stopped one of them to ask whether this was a non-

motorized area (we weren't sure). Sled "I don't care". PLB: "Well you should" Sled: "Why?" PLB: "Because you could run us over" Sled: "Then don't come where there are snowmobilers" PLB: "That's why I'm asking you if this is a motorized-access area" Sled: "Wroom"

### **February 5, 2010**

Snowmobiles: Yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

Our party of 3 skiers went up to Hanging Lake and beyond from the nordic ski centre in Callaghan Valley. We noticed snowmobile tracks across and around Hanging Lake, and we could also see and hear snowmobiles on and around Rainbow Lake.

### **February 12, 2010**

Snowmobiles: Yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

### **April 4, 2010**

Not a survey response – from <http://bivouac.com/SAbxPg.asp?SAbxId=36>

Even though we were two valleys and about 5km away, we could hear snowmobiles tearing up and down rainbow mountain from Telemagique Ridge. They were too far away to actually see. Impact: Machine noise in an otherwise pristine wilderness environment in Callaghan Lake provincial park.

### **April 10, 2010**

Snowmobiles: Maybe  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

I assume "observe" includes hearing and not just seeing? Should the cemetery be one of the parking lot options? Didn't know how to estimate number of users. We were only on the trail, but even if you went to Rainbow Lk, you probably wouldn't know how many people were on Sproatt etc.

### **May 9, 2010**

Not a survey response – from <http://bivouac.com/SAbxPg.asp?SAbxId=41>

I saw snowmobile tracks up Rainbow Mountain from the direction of their play area around Sproat. I'm not sure if the mountain itself is out of bounds for them, as a sign board at the Callaghan Country parking lot indicated the area they are barred from does not include Rainbow's summit.

I know Robin reported in his Puma S1 outing he didn't see evidence of them, but I had some time to take a closer look.

## 2010-2011 Season

### **December 23, 2010**

Snowmobiles: No

Snowmobile Tracks: No

-1C and puking snow all day. I think we were the only ones up for the punishment.

### **January 1, 2011**

Snowmobiles: yes

Snowmobile Tracks: yes

### **January 9, 2011**

Snowmobiles: yes

Snowmobile Tracks: yes

### **January 12, 2011**

Snowmobiles: Yes

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

### **January 15, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No

Snowmobile Tracks: No

(Beverley Creek)

### **January 28, 2011**

Snowmobiles: Yes

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

The snowmobiles ON the lake, I.e. IN the watershed was very concerning. Dogs aren't allowed in there so what makes these snow mobiles any less of a threat? I don't recall seeing any signs at the Rainbow Lake trailhead prohibiting snow mobiles though there may have been some. In any event, all the Snow mobile tracks (and snow mobiles!) I observed were coming from the far end of the lake, all the way to the near end where the Rainbow Lake trail comes out.

[http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=38350](http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=38350)





Photo: clubtread

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjSwWRdef2Q>

### **February 4, 2011**

Snowmobiles: Yes

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

Went up 21 mile creek and down to WOP from Hanging Lake. Many snowmobiles on rainbow lake. When questioned, they claimed ignorance and said something regarding the lack of signage.

### **February 19, 2011**

Reports: 2

Snowmobiles: Yes(1)

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes(1)

Metre+ new snow, didnt make it to hanging lake due to parking fiasco. The lack of overnight parking ruined our trip. I've heard that's been remedied this year, thanks!

Snowmobilers are a significant distraction and detriment to the weekend. Not to mention the EXTREME safety concerns that exist in avalanche terrain when snowmobilers are added to the mix.

Also see Youtube Video of snowmobilers on Rainbow Lake:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TU0v34\\_sJuw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TU0v34_sJuw)

**February 21, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

**February 22, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

**February 23, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

It was sure disappointing to see snowmobile tracks all over Hanging Lake. Fortunately we did not see or hear them. I wish the lake was part of the non-motorized zone.

**February 26, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

Our club trip was an overnight snow shelter clinic and so we did not cover much ground as we needed time to build an igloo etc. Also, there was lots of fresh snow so any snowmobile tracks were likely covered.

**March 5, 2011**

Snowmobiles: Yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

Note: this survey record completed by a snowmobile group.

**April 5, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

**April 23, 2011**

Not a survey response – from  
[http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=39069](http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=39069)

lots of snowmobile tracks. right up to the bottom of the summit. only saw a couple machines running around though. seeing where some of their tracks are going makes me now understand why so many die...



Photo: Scott Mac  
2011-2012 Season

**November 30, 2011**

Snowmobiles: yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: yes

**December 21, 2011**

Snowmobiles: yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: yes

Snowmobile tracks were everywhere: all over Hanging Lake, Rainbow Lake, up almost to Rainbow Mtn, out towards Beverly Lake, and all over the slopes to the S of Rainbow and Hanging Lakes. From a self-propelled backcountry access perspective this has the following negative impacts: -noise of snowmobiles almost constant throughout day -visual impact of tracks -skiing impact of tracks (many slopes for skiing already tracked out) -smell/pollution: even an hour after the snowmobiles had left Rainbow Lake, the stench that hung over the lake was disgusting. I have not

experienced this before. It literally smelled like a chainsaw was running next to me. I suspect air quality was similar to sitting in the middle of a traffic jam.

**December 29, 2011**

Snowmobiles: No

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes, but not sure if they were in the non-motorized zone

**December 31, 2011**

Reports: 2

Snowmobiles: Yes(1)

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes(2)

thx for your efforts to raise the profile of people breaking the rules in this watershed.

**January 2, 2012**

Snowmobiles: Yes

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

Thanks for putting together the survey. We would love to get the area back to traditional human-powered usage as it is so easily accessible.

[http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=42238](http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=42238)



Photo: Paul Kubik

### **January 14, 2012**

Snowmobiles: Yes

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

We'd really like better enforcement of the non-motorized zone. The noise and smells of snowmobiles really detract from the experience and make it a far less desirable area to recreate in as backcountry skiers and snowboarders. There is also a safety concern of snowmobilers high marking above us and there have even been some close calls with snowmobilers flying around blind corners and straight through our group.

### **January 15, 2012**

Snowmobiles: Yes

Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

Two Snowmobilers tried to go down to the Olympic Park Area on the 14.Jan, but got stuck above a very steep section. They couldn't go up or down with the snowmobile and had to hike out to the Olympic Park. We met them on Sunday morning when they hiked up to retrieve the machines. They had ropes with them to lower the

machines down the steep section.They told us they came in over Sprout Mtn and Rainbow Lake

Here are two pics from the Rainbow area in Jan.2012. Maybe you are interested in the snowmobile tracks. The smell was terrible

Cheers

Ed



Photo: Ed Zenger



Photo: Ed Zenger

**January 27, 2012**

Snowmobiles: No  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

**January 28, 2012**

Reports: 2  
Snowmobiles: Yes(1)  
Snowmobile Tracks: No

There were several machines in the meadows above the Sproatt Lake cabin, but none of them attempted to come into the 21 Mile watershed. We observed a total of six different touring parties using the marked Hanging Lake Trail. Of note, directions from WOP staff and the fact that there are two entrances to Northern Explorer mean that many groups do not pass the registration kiosk. Hence, there will be a considerable under-reporting of backcountry touring use from that area. If the registration were just above the larger info sign, you would likely catch quite a few more parties. Three dogs in the Hanging Lake area as well, all with different parties. None of the dogs went over the watershed boundary.

The day we were up there was a white out, it is obvious that snowmobiles are entering the non-motorized zone even we conditions are much less than perfect. If

they are going to enforce the just need to go up any saturday during the winter, not wait for surveys such as this to collect another winters worth a data

**February 3, 2012**

Snowmobiles: Yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

There were snowmobile tracks on Hanging Lake and the surrounding area. The non motorized area including & surrounding Rainbow Lake had the most snowmobile tracks. The Sled tracks extended all the way north to the height of land just south of Beverly Lake. While we only saw 2 sleds during our 3 hours in the Alpine the area was completely tracked out by sleds. Some of the sled tracks were 50 to 60 CM deep. Skiing into them in heavy snow could easily break your leg. Photos being emailed to the FMC.



Photo: Bryce Leigh

**February 4, 2012**

Reports: 2  
Snowmobiles: Yes(1)  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes(1)



Flagging on lower slopes of Sproatt, branching off "4.5 km to the Lake" sign from main trail would be helpful.

I think that what is happening around Rainbow Lake is a disgrace. Finally non-motorized users won the area back, one of the only high roads we can drive in winter, and then snowmobiles are allowed to take the back door in and ravage the slopes. In order to maintain the non-motorized area, my view is that they have to be banned completely from the area and especially from parking on the road up to Callaghan. I'd venture a guess that snowmobiles (or at the very least their tracks) could be observed there almost every weekend with nice(ish) weather in the winter.

Here is a photo taken on this trip from the summit of Mt. Sproatt, looking approximately west (I think): <http://www.ubc-voc.com/gallery/d/142681-2/DSC05560.JPG>



Photo: Gili Rosenberg

### **February 5, 2012**

Reports: 3  
Snowmobiles: Yes (1)  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes (3)

On this day there was not an inch of the summit of Gin Peak that wasn't tracked by snowmobiles. We were passed by 2-3 snowmobiles who were headed from the

hanging lake side up the gulley/shallow col immediately north of the summit of Gin peak. They seemed to continue east into the next drainage. That gulley was heavily tracked by sleds making putting in a skin track difficult.

**February 11, 2012**

Snowmobiles: Yes, but not sure if they were in the non-motorized zone  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

**February 12, 2012**

Snowmobiles: Yes  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes

We saw 2 snowmobiles playing on or around Rainbow Lake. There were many tracks likely less than a week old that went quite a ways up the flank of Rainbow Mountain as well as quite far down the 21 Mile Creek basin.

**February 19, 2012**

Reports: 4  
Snowmobiles: Yes (4)  
Snowmobile Tracks: Yes (4)

A group of 4 snowmobilers rode down to the bottom of the Hanging Valley and rode all over our skin track, leaving the occasional blob of bright green liquid behind in the snow. When we ran into the I informed them that they were in the watershed / non-motorized zone and that they were supposed to stay on the other side of the ridge. They promptly left and didn't come back. This implies that either a) they wanted to obey the rules but didn't know where they were. They probably followed tracks. or b) they knew they were in the non-motorized zone, but only felt bad about it after I called them out.

Photos of snowmobile tracks and green liquid (engine coolant?) in hanging valley NW of Sproatt:  
<https://plus.google.com/photos/109726583260615024689/albums/5712053590745610833?authkey=CNeNisbb0suCvgE>



Photo: Chris Michalak

We noticed several small patches of neon green liquid on one snowmobile track, as well as a strong smell of fuel in an area where it appeared that snowmobiles may have stopped.

Hi there, We observed a lot of snowmobiles around Hanging Lake, Rainbow Lake and Gin peak (going up west flank, but also on north slopes). Tracks went partway

up Rainbow Mountain. There were definitely more snowmobilers than skier or snowboarders! I hope this is a bit more specific than my answers for the survey, and I am a bit unsure about the motorized/nonmotorized zone. Thanks!

The first snowmobiles we encountered on this trip were on Hanging Lake, five of them. I know this is in the "motorized" area, but they proceeded to highmark right above us (as we skied across Hanging Lake), setting off avalanches and losing their snowmobiles (rolled down the slope) several times. This was disconcerting - if the snowmobiles had rolled right to the bottom or the whole slope pulled, we could have been in danger (we moved away). Once we got onto the ridge between Hanging Lake and Rainbow Lake, we were in snowmobile country for real. There was a snowmobile highway leading up towards Gin Peak, and at least 12 of them were buzzing around the lake and up and down the flanks of Rainbow Lake. When we headed up to Gin Peak, we were passed several times by machines (at least 6 of them), and they passed within meters of us at speed. Then the visibility deteriorated, but they still kept on going at the same high speeds. We felt in danger, and chose a route between trees where we could, hoping that they wouldn't go there. They congregated on the summit of Gin Peak since they were shuttling people up and down the mountain. Our "wilderness" experience was close to ruined by the noise, the smell, the tracking out of slopes that we traveled on (both up and down), the speed with which they passed us and the nearness of the machines. It seems that this is not a rare occurrence in the area, based on what I have heard from people, my trips to the area (four so far) and the old tracks I have seen on those trips. The only way to ensure the non-motorized zone is indeed non-motorized is to ban snowmobiles from the area completely, by enforcing a ban at the parking spots that they use. Making boundaries and agreeing on them is futile in this case.

URL for the album, lots of snowmobile and track photos, most of them in the non-motorized zone: [http://www.ubc-voc.com/gallery/v/gilirosenberg/gin\\_peak\\_feb\\_2012/](http://www.ubc-voc.com/gallery/v/gilirosenberg/gin_peak_feb_2012/)



Photo: Gili Rosenberg

## Conclusion

Efforts to curtail snowmobile use of the Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized zone have been unsuccessful. Use of the area by snowmobiles continues to increase. Since the current boundary of the non-motorized zone has proven to be unenforceable, we recommend shifting the non-motorized zone west to include the west side of Mt. Sproatt and terminating public parking where the lower portion of Callaghan FSR leaves Highway 99. This will allow conservation officers to enforce the closure at the parking area as was done for the upper Callaghan Valley non-motorized zone which has been largely successful at keeping snowmobilers out for the past 4 seasons.

The boundaries of other non-motorized zones in the Sea-to-Sky corridor should be reviewed to see if they pose similar problems

## Appendix A: Survey Questions

This short survey is being conducted by the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia (FMCBC) to evaluate use of 21 Mile Creek for winter backcountry recreation. This survey has 9 questions and takes only 1 minute to complete.

Please complete this survey if you have completed a trip into the 21 Mile Creek area: Rainbow Lake, Rainbow Mountain, Sproatt Mountain, Gin Peak or Hanging Lake. If

you did an overnight trip, please complete the survey once for each day of the trip.  
Only one person in your party needs to complete the survey.

1. When did you visit the Rainbow / Sproatt area?

DD MM YYYY

2. How many people were in your group?

- Skiers
- Snowboarders
- Snowshoers
- Snowmobilers
- Snowmobile assisted skiers / snowboarders
- other

3. How many people did you observe using the 21 mile creek area on this day, including your group?

- Skiers
- Snowboarders
- Snowshoers
- Snowmobilers
- Snowmobile assisted skiers / snowboarders
- other

4. Where did you park?

- Alexander Falls
- Callaghan Country
- Canadian Snowmobile base area
- Highway 99
- Rainbow Lake Trailhead (Alta Lake Road)
- Whistler Cemetary
- Whistler Olympic Park
- Other (please specify)

5. Which destination(s) did you visit?

- Beverley Creek
- Beverley Lake
- Gin and Tonic Lakes
- Gin Peak
- Hanging Lake
- Rainbow Lake
- Rainbow Lake Trail
- Rainbow Mountain
- Sproatt Lake (Canadian Snowmobile cabin)
- Sproatt Mountain
- Tonic Peak

Motorized recreation is prohibited in the 21 Mile Creek drainage. The non-motorized zone includes Rainbow Lake, Rainbow Mountain, Gin & Tonic Lakes and the north side of Mt. Sproatt. Hanging Lake, the west side of Gin Peak, and the south side of Mt. Sproatt are outside of the non-motorized zone.

6. Did you observe any snowmobiles during your trip?

- Yes, inside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- Yes, both inside and outside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- Yes, but not sure if they were in the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- Yes, but only outside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- No

7. Did you observe any snowmobile tracks during your trip?

- Yes, inside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- Yes, both inside and outside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- Yes, but not sure if they were in the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- Yes, but only outside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone
- No

The FMCBC is trying to track compliance with the non-motorized zoning for 21 Mile Creek. If you have any photos of snowmobiles inside the 21 Mile Creek non-motorized zone, please send them to [admin.manager@mountainclubs.org](mailto:admin.manager@mountainclubs.org)

8. Do you have any photos of snowmobiles in the non-motorized area? Please send them to [admin.manager@mountainclubs.org](mailto:admin.manager@mountainclubs.org) or enter a URL link below.

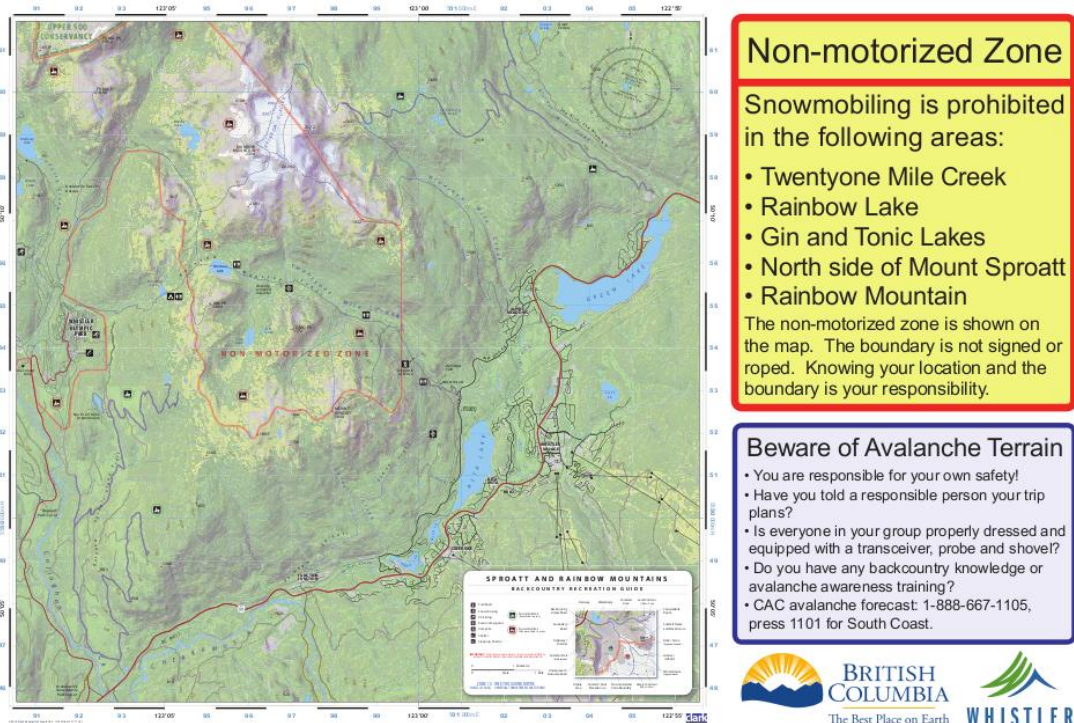
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

10. Please enter your email address if we can contact you for more information.

## **Appendix B: Signage**

Three signs showing the location of the non-motorized zone in Twentyone Mile Creek were erected along the snowmobile access routes in December 2010.

# Rainbow Mountain Wildland Area



Sign showing Twentyone Mile Creek non-motorized area



Sign at south end of Callaghan FSR @ highway 99





Sign at north end of Callaghan FSR @ Callaghan Valley Road