



Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Ottawa, ON. K2P 0P4

30 January, 2017

By email: Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca

Re. Public Input in Planning for Canadian National Parks

Dear Minister McKenna,

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you our comments on this important subject, and please accept our apologies for this late submission.

Our organization, the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMCBC), is a province-wide umbrella organization of 41 outdoor recreation clubs with over 5000 individual members. For over four decades, we have represented the interests of non-motorized or self-propelled backcountry recreationists in British Columbia by maintaining or improving non-motorized backcountry experiences, including access, for our members and the general public. We have always strongly supported maintaining the ecological integrity of our National and Provincial Parks, including wilderness, wildlife habitats, and other ecological values which are commonly compromised by motorized activities and commercialization.

For decades, many of our members have had summer and winter backcountry trips into our National Parks and have noted, similarly to our Provincial Park system, increasing neglect of facilities such as trails, and an increase in commercialization. Our organization wrote a letter to your department expressing our concern over the proposed development in the Maligne Lake area of Jasper National Park. We are also very concerned that funding for parks has been reduced considerably over the last decade or so, while the visitations to the parks have increased dramatically. The reduced funding has resulted in the loss of many services previously associated with our parks, such as the presence of informative rangers and adequate maintenance of backcountry facilities such as trails and campsites.

Some of our members attended the recent meetings with Parks Canada representatives and expressed appreciation of the opportunity to talk about future park plans, especially the opportunity to give public input on these plans. Some of our members are also members of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and have read some of CPAWS' publications. We are in agreement with CPAWS' July 2016 Report in which their views of the state of our National Parks are aligned with the views of our organization. In particular, the FMCBC wishes to stress the following main concerns, which are covered in detail in the CPAWS Report, and relate to the very essence of the reasons behind the creation of our National Parks.

These concerns include:

- 1) Maintaining and improving ecological integrity in order to improve habitat for wildlife and the natural experiences of non-motorized backcountry travelers for present and future generations
- 2) Stopping the increase in commercialization of our parks, and reintroducing the requirement for environmental assessments of any proposed developments
- 3) Ensuring regular transparent and meaningful public consultation on all park issues
- 4) Improving funding to ensure the park's needs are met adequately, and ensuring that all revenue generated by park activities is returned to the park's budget
- 5) Completing the formal protection of park reserves, and establishing new parks, not only in terrestrial areas, but also in marine areas to improve our understanding of the science of our oceans and other water bodies

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

David Wharton,
President
Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia