

Singing Pass Access Summary 1900-2017

by Paul Kubik, BCMC Director, Cabins and Trails

Singing Pass, at the head of Fitzsimmons Creek, had a history of mining and hunting prior to the establishment of Garibaldi Provincial Park in the 1920s. The original park boundary included all 33 square kilometers of the high elevation terrain that is now part of Whistler-Blackcomb Resort.

In the 1950s, logging up Fitzsimmons Creek to the park boundary opened up access to private vehicles. Roads up both north and south sides of the creek are open to the public.

In 1964, the Varsity Outdoor Club of the University of British Columbia, working with BC Parks, relocated the Singing Pass trailhead from the miner's trail in the valley bottom to the end of the logging road on the south side of Fitzsimmons Creek. A parking facility with space for about twenty vehicles and outhouse were constructed.

In 1965, downhill ski operations commenced on Whistler Mountain by Garibaldi Lifts Ltd. The B.C. Mountaineering Club wrote to the Honourable Ken Kiernan, Minister of Recreation and Conservation, "to ensure preservation of existing access routes into the park (e.g. Fitzsimmons Creek Trail) to the new shelter at Singing Pass built by the B.C.M.C." The Honourable Mr. Kiernan responded, "We can assure you that no Park Use Permit will be issued to [Garibaldi Lifts Ltd.] without due consideration being given to the effect that it will have on public access to and within Garibaldi Park."

In 1967, the B.C. Mountaineering Club built the Himmelsbach hut, a 10-person, public backcountry mountaineering hut at Russet Lake, Singing Pass.

A mine was constructed at Harmony Creek, and in 1972, the trail was relocated by BC Parks to follow the mining road.

In 1973, Order In Council no. 1293 deletes from Garibaldi Park all the high elevation terrain around Whistler Mountain summit (about 9½ km) that now comprises the upper ski development of Whistler Mountain including Whistler Peak, West Bowl, Burnt Stew basin and Peak 2 Peak gondola.

In 1978, Order In Council no. 2863 deletes about 3 km of Fitzsimmons Creek valley and about 5 km of high elevation terrain on Blackcomb Mountain from Garibaldi Park. The deleted park lands are given to Whistler Mountain and Blackcomb Mountain Resorts.

In 1982, Whistler Mountain Ski Corporation (formerly Garibaldi Lifts Ltd.) entered into its first master development agreement (MDA) with the Province. Fitzsimmons

Creek road (south side) was explicitly dedicated in Schedule A of the agreement as a "public access road 20 meters in width" and "park access right-of-way." Article 4.03 of the MDA states it is the responsibility of Whistler Mountain Ski Corporation to establish Fitzsimmons Creek road as a statutory right of way as described in Schedule A. The legal survey was never done. (Mountain Resorts Branch, which approves resort development on behalf of the province, has in its All Seasons Resorts Policy that "A statutory right of way creates an interest in the land and requires a legal survey. The statutory right of way document to be used for Recreation Improvements is the form attached as a schedule to the MDA..)

In 1985, Order In Council no. 1633 deletes about 2 km of high elevation terrain northwest of Blackcomb Peak from Garibaldi Park. The deleted lands are given to Blackcomb Mountain Resort to become part of its sprawling Seventh Heaven terrain.

In 1987, Order In Council no. 2325 deletes about a further 2 km of high elevation terrain due west of Blackcomb Mountain and roughly 4 km at Harmony Bowl from Garibaldi Park. The deleted lands are added to Seventh Heaven on Blackcomb and Harmony Bowl on Whistler.

In 1991, the Fitzsimmons Creek road (south) was damaged by a natural landslip approximately 2 ½ kilometers up the road. Private vehicles were blocked from reaching the trailhead but continued to park before the landslip. Whistler Blackcomb did not repair the road slump as required in its MDA.

Around 1995 or perhaps later, Whistler Blackcomb illegally gated the Fitzsimmons Creek road on the south side, thereby blocking private vehicles from the public access road. The public was now faced with hiking an extra 4½ kilometers of boring logging road before reaching the park boundary.

In 1996, the Whistler Mountain Bike Park opened. Today, several trails in the terrain park cross over or run along the public access road. At some point all terrain vehicle tours used the public road.

2010 Winter Olympics: The original forestry road on the north side of Fitzsimmons Creek was upgraded to service the 2010 Whistler Olympic sliding centre and the Innergex run-of-river power project. The public road is gated at the Whistler Sliding Centre. Currently, commercial vehicle operations including resort access roads, zip lines and all terrain vehicle tours are permitted on both roads whereas private vehicles are prohibited.

In 2016, approximately \$50,000 was spent by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to repair the road slump. In October, the road repair immediately washes out with rain. Whistler-Blackcomb offers "privileged access" for \$50/person or \$200 for a family of four to ride their lifts around the slump and continue to Singing Pass.

July 2017, Resort Municipality of Whistler implements pay parking in all parking lots with a 24-hour maximum stay. Park visitors staying for two or more nights can only pay for one day and hope their vehicle won't be towed if they stay longer.