



Canyon Creek Recreation Society

Smithers BC

February 11, 2025

To: Honourable Ravi Parmar
BC Minister of Forests
Victoria BC (by email)

Protection of Volunteer-operated Recreation Sites and Trails in British Columbia

Summary

We have two requests. Locally, we ask that Section 169 of the BC Forest Act be enacted to protect our recreation site (REC 3562) from logging for a period of ten years.

On a provincial level, we ask that societies that manage recreation sites and trails operated by volunteers under the auspices of Rec Sites and Trails BC be granted the right to control access by licensees for roadbuilding and/or logging.

Background

Our society has operated the Canyon Creek Ski Area east of Smithers BC under a Partnership Agreement with Rec Sites and Trails BC since 2007. In December of 2024, our society was notified that BC Timber Sales planned to log a portion of our recreation site (REC 3562). Logging of any portion of our recreation site interferes with our ability to plan and apply for new trails within our recreation site boundary. Logging of any portion of our recreation site reduces the canopy, allowing wind and sun to negatively affect the high quality of snow we are known for. Logging would effectively reduce the size of our recreation site for decades.

Benefits

Many BC communities rely on public recreation. Many people choose to live in communities based on recreation opportunities. The sign of a stable community is often a complete set of recreation facilities such as cross-country and backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling in winter and hiking and mountain biking in summer. Most of these activities take place on Crown land and often depend on VORST administered by Rec Sites and Trails BC.

Volunteer-operated Recreation Sites and Trails (VORST) save provincial taxpayers millions of dollars each year in development and maintenance costs for recreation infrastructure and operation that otherwise would be funded by provincial taxpayers.

VORST activities generate sales for local businesses that cater to recreation. Volunteering allows retirees to give back to the community with time, funds and expertise. Volunteering allows youth and young families to take part in a community endeavour that benefits all residents and makes them feel a vital part of the community.

VORST are long-term and carry on for decades. In contrast, forestry operations provide employment and business opportunities on each hectare of Crown land once for each rotation, or about once every 80 to 100 years. VORST can easily provide more benefits for the community and for the province per hectare per year, considering taxes saved and services provided.

Conclusion

The current situation pits one government agency against another. Rec Sites and Trails BC has both the expertise to determine the need for community recreation and the management skills to grant Partnership Agreements that do not diminish the Timber Harvesting Land Base needlessly. Approval of timber harvesting by BC Forest on established VORST can directly conflict with the planning decisions made by Rec Sites and Trails BC by fundamentally changing the forest cover.

In turn, logging on VORST can diminish the available recreation for the community and reduce the planning options available to a VORST managing society.

On a local level, we ask that the Minister protect the integrity of our Canyon Creek Ski Area by specifying our recreation site (REC 3562) as a designated area under Section 169 of the BC Forest Act to prohibit roadbuilding and forest harvest for a period of 10 years.

On a provincial level, we ask that the Minister grant authority to all societies that manage Volunteer-operated Recreation Sites and Trails the right to refuse or negotiate roadbuilding and/or forest harvest by a licensee in BC.

We look forward to establishing a new higher standard with you.

Mike Wyllie, President

Stephen Lockwood, Vice President

Jim Easterday, Secretary/Treasurer

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