



Bowen Island Conservancy

5 June 2020

Mr. Tom Blackbird
District Recreation Officer
Recreation Sites and Trails BC - Chilliwack District
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Dear Mr. Blackbird:

Re: Request to prohibit motorized use on Mount Gardner Crown Land block, Bowen Island, BC

The Bowen Island Conservancy

The Bowen Island Conservancy is a well-established organization dedicated to the conservation of Bowen Island's natural environment. A BC Society and registered charity, it has 122 paid up members and enjoys broad support in the Bowen Island community. Our activities include advocacy for nature, public education, and making natural areas available to the public.

Mount Gardner Crown Lands

Mount Gardner contains diverse forests, ranging from open Douglas fir on the south and west, to dense Hemlock on the north. Varied landscape features include rocky outcrops, steep cliffs, shaded valleys, wetlands, and numerous streams. [Studies have established](#) that the Mount Gardner Crown Lands contain substantial areas of sensitive and rare ecosystems.

The Crown Lands on Mount Gardner are extremely valuable to the Bowen Island Conservancy in pursuing our mandate, both for the mountain's flora and fauna, and its accessibility to Bowen residents and visitors. We are opposed to motorized activity as it is destructive to the natural systems and diminishes the enjoyment of hikers and walkers.

Accessibility

Mount Gardner is easily accessible to Bowen residents and visitors. A well-used trail network, established 40 years ago with provincial government assistance, enables hikers to experience the varied nature of the mountain from several points around the island. With the exception of the communications towers on the north peak, the lands have been undisturbed since logging ceased approximately 60 years ago and afford the opportunity to enjoy the unspoiled natural environment and the peace and quiet of the forests (see photographs 1 and 2 in the Appendix to this letter).

Impact

Motorized activity is fundamentally inconsistent with the quiet enjoyment of nature. ATVs and motorcycles are noisy, and that noise carries widely in an otherwise tranquil area. Motorized activity is also destructive to the natural environment, particularly since it leads to erosion (for an example see photograph 3, taken June 3, 2020 at an opening adjacent to one of the Mount Gardner trails, and photograph 4 taken on a newly constructed trail used by motorized vehicles). Elsewhere on Bowen Island, motorized use of Crown Land has made the activities which the Conservancy seeks to promote untenable (see photograph 5, showing a map of motorized trails on the Crown Land block at the south of Bowen).

On the other hand, hiking has relatively little impact on the natural environment, and does not negatively affect the enjoyment of the area by others.

Proportionality

There are hundreds of Bowen residents who frequent Mount Gardner for hiking and the enjoyment of nature. There are hundreds more who come annually from the mainland for the same purpose. On the other hand, there are only a handful of islanders who have dirt bikes and ATVs.

In assessing the public benefit, we ask that you consider the large number of hikers—who make little impact on the land and have little impact on other users—compared with the small number of motorized users—and their significant impact on the land and others' enjoyment.

Conclusion

Permitting continued motorized access will degrade the natural environment and negatively impact the enjoyment of the large number of people who now hike on the mountain, to accommodate a very few dirt bikers. This is contrary to the Conservancy objectives, which are widely accepted on Bowen Island and by visitors.

We urge you to designate the Mount Gardner Crown Lands for non-motorized use only.

Yours sincerely

Bowen Island Conservancy
Owen Plowman, President

CC:

- Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
- Mr. Tennessee Trent, Trails Manager, Recreation Sites and Trails BC
- Mr. Robert van der Zalm, Regional Director (Coast), Recreation Sites and Trails BC
- Bowen Island Mayor and Council

Appendix



1. A Forest hiking trail on Mount Gardner



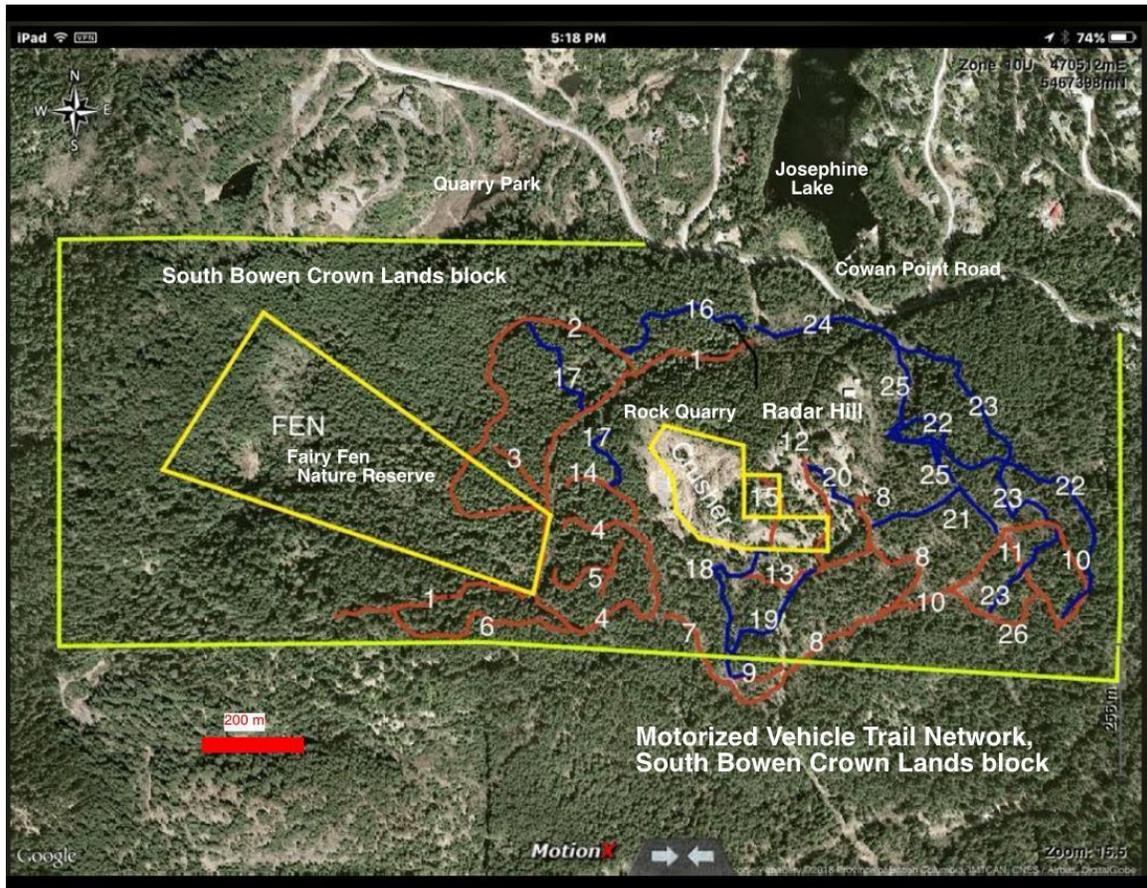
2. A Forest hiking trail on Mount Gardner



3. An opening adjacent to one of the Mount Gardner trails



4. Erosion on recently constructed motorbike trail on Mount Gardner



5. Map of trail network on south Bowen Island Crown Land block. Source: Bowen Island Trail Riders Association's Facebook page (posted April 2018). Annotation of scale and geographic references added.