

28 February 2022

The Honourable Katrine Conroy  
Minister  
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Conroy:

## **Designation of Mount Gardner, Bowen Island as off limits to motorized vehicles**

We write to you again (our initial communication was by email message on 9 August 2021) to request your involvement in prohibiting motorized vehicles from Mount Gardner, on Bowen Island.

### **The Bowen Island Conservancy**

The Bowen Island Conservancy is a well-established organization, founded in 1997, dedicated to the conservation of Bowen Island's natural environment. A BC Society and registered charity, we have over 180 paid up members and enjoy broad support from 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. Numerous 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. As well, although the area in question is around 900 ha, because of its location on this relatively small (5,060 ha) island any negative impact to the lands will be disproportionately high.

### **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. 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 forest.

## **The need for and impact of motorized activity**

A small number of individuals have somehow taken on the role of primary liaison with Recreational Sites and Trails BC as “stewards” of the trails on Mount Gardner. They propose to expand the existing trail network, and perform considerable work to upgrade the trails so that they are able to ride ATVs and motorcycles on them. At the same time there is a substantial network of pre-existing trails suitable for motorized use elsewhere on Bowen Island, available to this group *and frequently used by them*. The Ministry has, therefore, aligned itself with a group of individuals who (a) do not represent the broader community’s views about Mount Gardner, and (b) are seeking to expand their trail network at the expense of the majority of the island’s residents and visitors, who look to Mount Gardner as a quiet place to hike and enjoy nature.

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. 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.

While there are hundreds of Bowen residents who frequent Mount Gardner for hiking and the enjoyment of nature—together with hundreds more who come annually from the mainland for the same purpose—there are only a handful of islanders who have dirt bikes and ATVs.

## **Our request**

We continue to support the Bowen Island Municipal Council’s Resolution #20-232 (27 April 2020), which states: *“That Council support prohibiting motorized use on Mt. Gardner; and that Council direct staff to prepare a submission to Tom Blackbird, District Recreation Officer for the Chilliwack District of Recreation Sites and Trails BC, requesting a prohibition of motorized use on Mt. Gardner”*.

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.

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

Yours sincerely,



Bowen Island Conservancy  
Owen Plowman, President, for the Board

CC:

- Bowen Island Mayor and Council
- Bowen Island Parks, Trails and Greenways Advisory Committee
- Mr. Jordan Sturdy, MLA, West Vancouver-Sea to Sky
- Mr. Robert van der Zalm, Regional Manager (Coast), RSTBC
- Mr. Tom Blackbird, District Recreation Officer, RSTBC