

16 January 2023

Mayor and Council  
Bowen Island Municipality  
981 Artisan Lane  
Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G2

Dear Mayor and Council:

### **The urgent need to halt Mount Gardner trail use by offroad vehicles**

On November 14, 2022, Bryan Mitchell, Land and Resource Specialist, Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, notified the Bowen Island Municipality and the Bowen Island Conservancy that the Visitor Use Management Framework (VUMF) for Mount Gardner has been placed “on hold”. The reason given by Mr. Mitchell states that there are insufficient resources available to conduct an Archeology Overview Assessment and Preliminary Field Reconnaissance of the area. No date was given by Mr. Mitchell for a restart of the VUMF process.

Mr. Mitchell notes that the *“archeological work is necessary to gain information on the impacts of current recreation use (motorized and non-motorized) on these important cultural values.”* Mr. Mitchell has failed to note the inherent contradiction in the current situation though: while the VUMF consultation process is on hold, and there is no archeological investigation being carried out, the Mount Gardner area remains open to use by dirt bike and ATV users, which have a far greater impact on the natural environment than non-motorized activities, and which are potentially degrading what archeological values exist on the mountain.

We are respectfully asking you to send another letter to the Regional Manager of Recreational Sites and Trails, and to copy the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, together with Minister George Heyman. In addition to reiterating the previous Council’s position on prohibition of motorized use on Mount Gardner, we urge you to make the following points:

1. Although the consultation process is on hold for the Visitor Use Management Framework, the Mount Gardner area remains open to dirt bike and ATV users. While the process is on hold, any further recreational motorized use on Mount Gardner should be halted, and signs should be put in place prohibiting dirt bikes and ATVs from using the Mount Gardner trails, together with monitoring to ensure there is no further destruction from these offroad vehicle users.
2. Since the VUMF process is on hold, pending the necessary archeological assessment of First Nation sites, it is unconscionable of the Province to continue to permit motorized use that will potentially destroy any such sites.

The Ministry’s website, in its introduction, states:

*The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy is responsible **for the effective protection, management and conservation of BC’s water, land, air and living resources.*** [bold type added]

We submit that, if this is the Ministry's mandate, doing nothing while waiting for resources to be available to complete the Visitor Use Management Framework is not an option.

The Bowen Island Conservancy participated in the workshops held by Bryan Mitchell and his staff on Bowen Island, in June of 2022. The Conservancy has been consistent in its message to the Province: **no recreational motorized activity should be allowed on Mount Gardner.**

As you are no doubt aware, the previous Council unanimously directed staff to prepare a submission to Tom Blackbird, Regional Manager (Coast) for Recreational Sites and Trails BC, requesting a prohibition of motorized use on Mount Gardner (Council meeting of April 27, 2020):

*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.*  
*CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (res 20-232)*

At the Council meeting of June 8, 2020, the previous Council approved the draft letter to Tom Blackbird, dated May 20, 2020, that outlined the rationale for prohibiting recreational motorized use on the Mount Gardner Crown Land. We assume the draft letter was sent soon after the meeting.

During Mr. Blackbird's presentation to Council on April 27, 2020, he acknowledged that a restriction on trail use in Crown Land has been put in place in other communities due to concerns about "noise, pollution, general disturbance and a bit of being overly rowdy" ( 44 minutes in the Council meeting recording).

We are enclosing our letter to the previous Council, dated February 28, 2020, with the memorandum which provides some basic points to support an argument for Bowen Island Municipality's jurisdiction over the Crown Lands within its municipal boundaries.

We urge Council to be proactive in posting its own signs at the entrance to Mount Gardner trails to halt any recreational motorized vehicle use of Mount Gardner.

Yours truly,



Bowen Island Conservancy  
Owen Plowman, President, for the Board

Ellen Coburn, Allie Drake, Joyce Ganong, Jennifer Hall, Paula Hay,  
Louise Loik, Nerys Poole, John Rich, Bob Turner, Peter Williamson

Encl:

- Letter to Mayor and Council concerning Jurisdiction of Municipality to regulate Trail Activity on Crown Lands within Municipal Boundaries (28-Feb-2020)
- Memo concerning Municipal Jurisdiction over Crown Lands on Bowen Island (07-Feb-2020)
- Appendix to Memo concerning Municipal Jurisdiction over Crown Lands on Bowen Island (07-Feb-2020)