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March 27, 2007

Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Stewardship Division
Ministry of Environment
PO Box 9047
Station Provincial Government
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Ms. Wilkin:

Re: Removal of Nancy Greene Lake Provincial Park from list for potential fixed-roof accommodation; facilitation of community-based planning process for recreational use in the Rossland Range

Thank you for your letter of December 29 in response to our letter requesting that your Ministry remove Nancy Greene Lake Provincial Park from the list of parks available for proposals for fixed-roof accommodation, and further requesting that your Ministry reinstate and expedite the planning process for recreational use in the Rossland Range.

The Board of Directors of the Friends of the Rossland Range has asked me to further communicate with you and your Minister about these issues.

1. Removal of Nancy Greene Lake Provincial Park from the list of parks available for fixed-roof accommodation proposals.

Simply pointing out that no proposals were received at this time does not meet the community's needs around this issue. Studies by the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC, among others, have shown that a major part of the satisfaction people feel from their parks is the knowledge that what they value is protected, and is not at risk of being snatched away. This is like the satisfaction a homeowner feels knowing he has secure title to his home, or, conversely, the debilitating anxiety experienced by a homeowner

who lives from day to day not knowing if his home is going to be expropriated at any moment.

The future “comprehensive impact assessment” to which you allude does not in any way address the need for security around the safety of Nancy Greene Lake Provincial Park. It merely leaves a potential nerve-wracking fight hanging over the heads of our citizens.

For the reasons outlined in our previous letter, we are convinced that Nancy Greene Lake Provincial Park is grossly inappropriate for development of private fixed-roof accommodation. We are aware that this opinion is shared by a major portion of the citizens in the communities sharing Nancy Greene Lake Provincial Park. (We understand, for instance, that a petition of some 500 names was submitted in opposition to fixed-roof development in the Park.)

If the provincial government is serious about preserving the values that make parks worthwhile, the Ministry must immediately exclude Nancy Greene Lake Park from the fixed-roof development process. Failure to do so will promote continued anxiety, ensure future strife, impair the value of Nancy Greene Lake to its communities and tourist businesses, and cause further public distrust of the Ministry’s ability to defend our heritage.

2. Facilitation of a community-based planning process for recreational use in the Rossland Range.

For the last 5 years, the Friends of the Rossland Range have promoted the need for a community-based, multi-stakeholder planning process to define areas for recreational use in the Rossland Range, in order to preserve the environmental, natural, and experiential values that make the Rossland Range a valuable asset for its communities (including its tourism businesses).

In the Rossland Range, the potential exists for a “win-win” plan agreed to by all users. The relationship between its forest tenure holder and the other users is positive (and the forest is being well managed). The relationship between recreational user groups, including the current commercial tenure holder, is amicable. Wilderness ecosystems and wildlife are not presently experiencing undue stress. The local Grizzly population, for instance, is increasing.

A plan that simply respects current and historical uses, and preserves the values on which they rely, would add considerable worth to the Rossland Range as a community, forest, and tourism resource.

However, the Rossland Range is now experiencing considerably increased recreational use. While current user levels still allow a practical amount of flexibility and adjustment in land use planning, failure to plan as soon as possible could result in an over-committed, inflexible landscape, with matching attitudes among users – exactly the

situation that is proving almost fatal to backcountry recreation planning in the East Kootenays.

The Friends of the Rossland Range have discussed a planning process with government planning staff at the regional and district levels, and have had very positive responses regarding both the importance of planning in the Rossland Range, and the nature and scope of the process. Unfortunately, every time we and our government counterparts were at a point where we were ready to take more hands-on action, the relevant government offices were restructured, staff roles were redefined, and the direction and initiative were lost.

Nonetheless, we continue to work for a positive, planned approach to recreational use in the Rossland Range.

We are currently implementing a strategy to engage citizens, user groups, businesses, and local governments in agreement about the need for a community-based plan. We expect our efforts to result in considerable community consensus and support.

As well, we are aware that many of the relevant government staff members are still in positions where they could manage a planning process, and are still inspired to do so if they were given the appropriate direction from their Ministries.

We note that many citizens in the communities surrounding the Rossland Range remain very bitter about the loss of Nancy Greene Recreational Area (in the “heart” of the Rossland Range) during the regional land use planning (“CORE”) process. A community-based planning process leading to some degree of assurance that the natural and public recreation values in the heart of the Rossland Range will be protected would go a long way towards building confidence in government’s ability to be responsive to the needs of its citizens.

We therefore ask, as in our earlier letter, that your Minister direct the appropriate staff to take up once again the project of a community-based, multi-stakeholder plan for recreation in the Rossland Range.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to your considered response.

Yours truly,

Les Carter
Director, Friends of the Rossland Range