

Letters to the Editor Re Powder Renegade Lodge & Catski Operation

Letters  to the editor

'The proposal will serve the very wealthy'

Editor, The Gazette:

Our public land in the Boundary is in danger of being given away.

Almost 9,000 hectares of land are requested for a proposed cat ski operation up the Grano Creek Forest Service Road and directly adjacent to Granby Provincial Park's lower western boundary. A lodge and various buildings are to be built at a high elevation. The lodge site is in a harvested area that is fully reforested.

This request occupies a site much bigger than the current 607 hectares of ski terrain at Big White, though it would much less dense.

Ecosystems surrounding our Kettle River watershed are already under huge stress from logging and other activities which lead to flooding and erosion in the spring and drought during the late summer.

The cat ski operation proposed by the hopeful developers would add further stress by building nearly 11 kilometres of roads at high elevations, many with steep grades and on extremely steep slopes. Trees need to be

cut for the road building, for the building of 95 kilometres of snow cat trails, for 100's of kilometers of ski runs which also go through cutblocks with replanted forests of various ages. Trees will be cut at the site of the lodge area and along its water line.

The upper elevations in the northern portion of this area are currently in a "Motor Vehicle Closed Area."

The proposal will serve the very wealthy who can afford to spend roughly between \$1,000 and \$1,500 for a ski holiday. The Boundary communities will see no net benefit but rather more stress on the land.



It is not good to alienate by "disposition" such a huge tract of our public land for a select few. Response to the proposal should reference the files which constitute the application.

The Crown Land files are: 4406147, 4406148, 4406149 and should be directed to land officer sharon.dailey@gov.bc.ca.

**Jane Marshall,
Midway**

December 23, 2020

GRAND FORKS GAZETTE

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'Please let the government know what you think'

Editor, The Gazette:

On page A18 of The Gazette's Dec. 2 and Dec. 9 editions, there were innocuous ads with the title "Notice of Application for a Disposition of Crown Land." You may have missed it.

If you care about protecting the few scraps of wilderness remaining in the Boundary, if you care about Granby Provincial Park, about the threatened Kettle-Granby grizzly, who depend on the habitat surrounding the Park for their survival, about wolverines who den in the area, or more broadly, if you care about the natural world and the need for ecological restoration, here's what you must know.

This is an application from a company in Kelowna to build a 3,200 square foot wilderness lodge and develop a cat ski operation on 8,847 hectares of land bordering Granby Park. That's 88 square kilometres of grizzly habitat in an area already badly fragmented from excessive logging and forestry roads.

The fuzzy 2.5 x 3 inch map included in the ad is impossible to read and it bothers me that this innocent-looking ad, placed a few weeks before Christmas, is the only requirement to notify the public about an

invasive commercial operation proposed on public land. This is all the government requires — two ads placed a couple weeks before Christmas when most of us are likely to miss it, or not have time to think about it or follow up.

A map showing the full impact of this operation using existing forestry roads, plus 10 kilometres of new roads and nearly 100 kilometres of snow-cat roads can be seen by looking at the map provided to the Gazette. I hope the Gazette will publish this map and fully investigate the proposal so all of us can be informed about the impact of this development. In the meantime, please go to the website listed in the ad (<https://comment.nrs.gov.bc.ca/>), look up the Tenure Management Plan for Crown Land Applications, file numbers 4406147, 4406148 and 4406149 and please let the government know what you think.

**Margaret Steele,
Grand Forks**

Editor's note: A full-sized map of the proposed development is available for download on the Crown's website at <https://comment.nrs.gov.bc.ca/api/public/document/5faac802bcc1d3001a50a1ea/download>

December 23, 2020

‘Where are the voices of the experts?’

Editor, The Gazette:

I wish to briefly express my response to the adventure tourism tenure management plan by Kelowna developers. The Plan is more than 70 pages in length. It seems to be a careful attempt to address the myriad considerations that, we are encouraged to think, will maintain the viability of our natural landscapes as home for the intricate networks of flora and fauna that have occupied them for time out of mind.

So many regulations to assure that grizzly and wolverines will be afforded 500-meter buffers from their dens, that white bark pine and glacial lilies are being watched over, that the flow and timing of runoff are being scientifically overseen!

And so many serious minded descriptions of how the proponent will comply! If this plan were an academic exercise, there are many good reasons to give it an A+.

But where are the voices of the experts who know and understand grizzly needs and what would they say about the efficacy of the current regulations? How are the bears and wolverines actually doing in the Granby/Kettle watersheds with the disruptions they have already had to accommodate? And now another level of disruption to contend with?

Has the strength of regulations governing decades of timber management protected us against unmanageable flows of water? And now expanded access and more in-

trusion into our reservoirs? Where is the science that says this is possible?

Look at the aerial images of the mountainside landscapes where the developers wish to introduce more intrusion. All those logged patches represent huge withdrawals of our natural capital. Ask yourself when we are going to quit pretending that we can squeeze one more treasure from our landscape without precipitating collapse. How will the natural world be a better place, and more likely to sustain a human population, with 8,847 more hectares of land devoted to wealthy people being able to slide on snow. Are Big White, Baldy, and Silver Star not enough?

**Ron Liddle,
Grand Forks**

December 30, 2020

‘I think the proposal is a disaster’

Editor, The Gazette:

This is a response to the proposal by a Kelowna adventure tourism company's Tenure Management Plan currently before the Crown. Tracking # 100325390.

I think the proposal is a disaster for the West Boundary's fragile ecosystem. The roughly 9,000 hectares that would go towards the proposed cat ski hill are in the Midway Range of the Monashee Mountains, next to the south western border of Granby Provincial Park between the Kettle and Granby rivers.

The company's plan mentions that area streams have no fish in them, but I have seen fish in them with my own eyes.

If we are stewards of the land, we should be aware of the state of the land around us. The ecosystem has already been severely degraded due to massive clear-cut logging for the last 35 – 40 years. I have logged in this area over this time period so I am aware of the severity.

There is also impact to regional seedlings that we have spent our tax dollars replanting due to the large machinery driving over, clearing and making ski runs. I think the impact of snow cats driving up and down the proposed ski hill could disrupt the birthing process of area mammals.

This topic is a part of and as sensitive as the whole ecosystem.

I say there is not much mention in this proposal about wildlife. I also think that many of the hibernating mammals will be severely impacted as they all make their dens and bear their young through the winter months.

I doubt if much of this wildlife are going to survive the severe impact of the large snow cats, even over one season, let alone over the proposed 30-year tenure. I also worry that some of the mammals may move to another area but that could over-populate other areas creating habitat and food supply problems and even susceptibility to disease.

**Stan Swinarchuk,
Grand Forks**

December 30, 2020

'We request, therefore, that all be denied'

Editor, The Gazette:

There are three adventure tourism developments proposed for the Boundary area as per the following:

Big White plans to more than double their ski lifts from 15 to 37; expand their tenure area from 3,140 ha to 6,900 ha; expand ski terrain from 607 ha to 1,628 ha. In addition they plan to build two golf courses and develop a "backcountry" residential and recreational area catering to motorized activities (e.g. ATV, motocross, snowmobile).

Outback Snowmobile Tours Inc. is applying for a Crown Land Tenure to utilize existing snowmobile trails for guided snowmobile tours. As such, they are anticipating a tenure of approximately five to 10 years to start. The area proposed for this operation extends over 16,000 ha which overlaps part of Big White's existing operating area.

Powder Renegade Lodge has submitted a tenure management plan that includes a Lease for an Intensive Use Site, License of Occupation for an Extensive Use Area, and a License of Occupation for Roadway, all for 30 year terms. Their proposed area covers around 9,000 ha. Their lodge and staff houses extend over 15 ha. They plan to build 10.7 km of new roads much of which will be on excessively steep slopes and 95 km of snow roads. All roads will be: "... for the sole purpose of the cat skiing operation and have been proposed only where necessary throughout the tenure."

All of the above operations will extend over areas that, according to the PRL's plan, have "been extensively logged and includes multiple cut blocks and expansive road networks that will greatly assist the start-up and development of a cat skiing operation." However, they will have several negative aspects. They will:

- Create ever more openings across the landscape which will adversely affect the hydrological regime resulting in more downstream flooding in the spring and increased droughts in the fall
- Develop more roads which will add to the permanent openings on the landscape, increase the risks of erosion and slope failures and incur very high maintenance costs
- Reduce the timber harvesting landbase, significantly reducing the amount of timber available to the local sawmill
- Negatively impact all species of wildlife in the area • Significantly decrease ecosystem biodiversity and the overall health of the forests

All of these proposals will cause unprecedented and very intrusive cumulative impacts on the entire Boundary area. They will also change the very nature of the Boundary area; this is unacceptable.

We request, therefore, that all be denied.

Fred and Jane Marshall,
Midway

January 6, 2021



Powder Renegade Lodge proposal should be rejected

Editor, The Gazette:

On behalf of the Boundary Environment Alliance, we ask that the province reject or delay the Powder Renegade's cat-ski and Lodge proposal for a year.

Our website at boundaryalliance.org outlines numerous detailed concerns with the proposal and its location, up against Granby Park.

Our concerns begin with the completely inadequate public noti-

fication and required response time over the holiday season, and at a time of year when it is not possible to do the kind of "on the ground" assessments, crucial for a project of this size.

Concerns include the project's planned incursions into the Motor Vehicle Closed Areas and areas under intended habitat and wildlife protection by Government Regulation Act and how the project would

trash the intent of these intended protections. Mapping on our site shows the extent of these areas.

This is a plan that has exaggerated economic benefits with no costing of environmental consequences.

We urge readers to check out our full concerns and tell Government before Jan. 14 to delay or cancel this project.

Al Grant,
Rock Creek

January 13, 2021

Leave some wilderness wild

Editor, The Gazette:

Thank you, Fred and Jane Marshall for your recent informative and eye-opening letter that highlights the need to stop the proposed adventure tourism developments in the Boundary area.

Big White wants to increase their ski area to 6,900 hectares, add 2 golf courses, and create a small city that would cater to motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles, ATV's, and motocross.

Outback Snowmobile Tours, Inc wants to offer guided snowmobile tours which would extend over 16,000 hectares.

Powder Renegade Lodge wants a 30-year lease for a proposed area that would cover 9,000 h. and over 10 km. of new roads, much on steep slopes, plus 95 km. of snow roads. All for a cat skiing operation.

My vote is also: NO, NO and NO.

I find it shocking that at this point in humanity's history, where we are in the middle of a climate crisis, and where the environment is already falling off the cliff, that anyone would even consider desecrating any remaining wilderness for the sake of motorized, polluting, and noisy joy rides. Are there not enough ski hills, back country trails, ATV trails, logging roads in what is remaining of our dwindling piece of paradise in this Boundary Country?

Flooding and drought are also serious issues in this area, which more roads into the backcountry can exacerbate. Think long term. What about the traffic on Highway 3, which already gets backed up in the summer? Picture the hoards of tourists flocking to such destinations, idling at the traffic lights downtown on a hot August day.

And lastly, what about the rights

of those citizens who do not have a voice? The wild animals, birds and creatures who have lived in these lands for thousands of years, at the very least. This is their home. Who votes for them? For their right to a peaceful life in their slice of wilderness? I for one will vote for them. I hope you will too.

Please make your voices heard. We must save some untouched wilderness for wildlife, for the present and future health of our planet, for the beauty we take for granted today, and for the future generations to come.

**S.G. Shore,
Grand Forks**

***Editor's note: PRL's tenure management plan proposes around 11 km of dirt roads across 12 separate stretches of terrain. These would not be paved, nor would they connect to existing forest service roads.*

January 13, 2021

'Let us leave good things be while we can'

Editor, The Gazette:

Powder Renegade Lodge was not the only proponent entering an application for a disposition for Crown Land over Christmas, during the pandemic. Terus Construction, Ltd. also did, and this leads me to believe that there is an actual modus operandi in industry. It is inappropriate to slip ads in during the holidays, especially during a pandemic, when people cannot meet with other people to prepare their opposition, and also when government officials are hard to reach, on vacations as well, and the whole government phone system is being overhauled to digital phone calls. Spending hours on the phone trying to reach someone in some ministry is not unusual, and very often it is only an answering machine that you get.

As per PRL, what has not been mentioned is that a previous such proposal in Meadow Creek was rejected because it was found to be in caribou habitat. Hopefully their biologist did more detailed ground-

work regarding grizzlies and wolverines in the proposed tenure right up against Granby Park, a Class-A provincial park. A Kootenay biologist has done long and cold ski tours to learn more about wolverines. They are very secretive creatures and would simply disappear from the proposed area. And we know how meetings with grizzly bears go — more often to the detriment of the bear. Let us leave good things be while we can. Mitigating just does not work that well.

**Angelica Herlihy,
Grand Forks**

****EDITOR'S NOTE:** PRL and Terus Construction filed advertisements with The Gazette and the Boundary Creek Times as per forest ministry guidelines. PRL's tenure management plan explains that the company withdrew from its proposed Meadow Creek operation after learning the operation would conflict with migrating Caribou herds.

January 20, 2021