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November 9, 2009

The Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Aboriginal Relations & Reconciliation
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

and

The Honourable Barry Penner
Minister of Environment
PO Box 9047, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Abbott and Minister Penner,

Re: BCWF Concerned Regarding Hunting Regulation Proposal

We are writing on behalf of the BC Wildlife Federation membership to address concerns regarding a request for motor vehicle hunting prohibition for Management Units 7-40 and 7-41 in the Omineca Region for hunting during the period of August 15th to September 30th. BC Wildlife Federation cannot support this regulation proposal because of the dangerous precedent it would set.

The Kwadacha First Nations claim that current regulations are considered to be infringing on their ability to harvest wildlife for sustenance purposes and negatively impacting educational programs for the community's youth. This Motor Vehicle for Hunting Prohibition proposes to increase the availability of wildlife along some of the more significant transportation corridors in the Kwadacha traditional territory as well as provide that traditional campsites remain unoccupied during the community's Tsekene youth educational days in September.

First Nations have first priority to wildlife for food, social and ceremonial purposes and ample opportunity for harvest is provided. The needs of First Nations to harvest are always accommodated before the needs of resident hunters are even considered. The Provincial Wildlife Allocation Policy is only applied to the other residency groups once First Nations needs have been fully accommodated. Resident hunters are limited to specific seasons and by other restrictions on wildlife harvest. Motorized access is required by the public to achieve their allocated harvest in distant locations. Owing to the great distances covered, this regulation proposal would effectively shut down access to all species in the area. There are alternatives to this proposal that would facilitate all groups such as posting of the Kwadacha traditional camp sites for their use.



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Under constitutional provisions, First Nations needs for food is guaranteed and is currently fully met in the provisions for harvest. However, restricting access to other residency groups is not a constitutional provision. Also, there is no conservation concern so monopolized access should not be granted to the Kwadacha First Nations.

Residents rely on the ability to have motorized access to first gain access to an area and then to assist in the retrieval of their harvest; this also ensures the animal can be fully utilized. The proposal is not science based and provides only First Nations with a monopoly on motorized access.

If this regulation proposal is approved it will set a dangerous precedent for the entire province of BC for the harvesting of fish, wildlife and all other associated resource activities because motorized access for all other groups can be denied.

Due to the nature and serious impact of this potential decision, it is necessary that it be discussed at the provincial ministerial level as it has the potential for far reaching negative outcomes for BC residents.

We respectfully request a meeting, or meetings, at the earliest opportunity with the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to address the seriousness of this matter and concerns of the BC Wildlife Federation membership.

Yours in conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mel Arnold", is written over a horizontal line.

Mel Arnold, President
BC Wildlife Federation

cc: BCWF Membership