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BY EMAIL JBOBTAIL@SHAW.CA

Jeff Mohr
President
Quad Riders ATV Association of BC
PO Box 24108 Stn Northhills Ctr
Kamloops, BC V2B 8R3

Dear Jeff Mohr:

As a stakeholder in the management and development of BC's rail trails, I am writing to inform you of a revised strategic approach to rail trail management by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

As you know, BC began acquiring abandoned rail corridors in the early to mid 1990s for development as recreation trails. In 2007, Recreation Sites and Trails BC assumed responsibility for the management of approximately 550 km of former rail corridors. These trails include the Crown-owned portions of the Kettle Valley Rail Trail outside of provincial parks (from Brookmere to Midway), the Columbia and Western Rail Trail (from Midway to Castlegar), and the Slocan Valley Rail Trail.

Despite significant capital investment from the Province, federal government, Trans Canada Trail and dedicated stewardship groups, it has been very difficult to achieve the vision for a world-class network of primarily non-motorized rail trails. Limited operational resources combined with the length and remoteness of the trails, extensive infrastructure maintenance, ongoing use conflicts, and varying community support have presented many complex challenges.

The ministry sees the need to adopt a more realistic approach to rail trails management, one that represents the geographic and demographic variability across the landscape and supports the multiple interests of the communities that the trails pass through. Available funding needs to be prioritized to specific trail segments using a risk management strategy based on community support, use levels, type of use, and tourism potential.

In many communities along the trails, non-motorized use provides residents and visitors with exceptional, high quality recreational opportunities. Centered around developed areas where use is highest, non-motorized designations protect public safety, ensure an enjoyable recreation experience, and minimize conflicts. Non-motorized trails also offer a great opportunity for the development of destination tourism.

In the more rural and wilderness portions of the trails, non-motorized designations are impractical to implement and not always supported by local residents. Due to higher ORV use in these areas, trail surface conditions tend to deteriorate and cycling use is lower. Managing these types of areas for non-motorized use does not justify the exceptional costs required to maintain high quality tread surfaces.

The ministry's revised strategic management approach will implement an effective governance model that will vary along the length of the rail trails. Such an approach will acknowledge summer motorized use that currently exists along many portions of the trails. In these cases, we will support local efforts to manage existing uses to maximize user safety and enjoyment. It is our intention that these sections of the Trans Canada Trail will continue to serve as important components that link TCT Greenway segments across the province.

Available funding will be allocated to ensure that minimum maintenance standards are applied along the length of the trails to protect public safety and minimize environmental impacts and liabilities. Additional provincial investments will be prioritized to focus on collaborating with interested local governments and community groups to develop and manage sections of the trails where the potential for tourism development is high.

This strategic allocation of resources will provide opportunities to demonstrate the exceptional potential of BC's rail trails and hopefully foster increased community engagement along the trail network. In this manner, we can continue to work toward our vision of developing a world-class rail trail system in BC over time. We trust that you will continue to support us in achieving this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Townsend". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the top.

Gary Townsend
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc. Terry Wardrop, Land & Environment Coordinator, Quad Riders ATV Association of BC
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