

Public Response Summary and Themes

This document summarizes the comments received on the Intentions Paper which was posted from May 15th to June 29th, 2014. There were 85 comments received during the review and comment period. Most comments were submitted through the online form, although 6 were received through other means (email, letter). A large proportion of public comments were from users of the Nordic facilities at Hollyburn, part of Cypress Mountain Resort. Forty two of the 85 comments, nearly half, explicitly discussed Hollyburn and the facilities there.

Comments from organizations:

Comments were received in the form of letters from Friends of Cypress Provincial Park Society, Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, BC Nature, and the Squamish Nation. All three organizations and the First Nation requested meetings to further discuss proposed policy with BC Parks.

Main points from each letter:

- The FMCBC supports the development of a policy and the objectives for the policy, but is not supportive of a 60 year term length. Their main concern is year-round access to the backcountry. They strongly support aligning Park Management Plan processes with resort planning processes.
- BC Nature feels that the language should be more explicit to include mention of wildlife and ecological values as opposed to the more generic 'environmental' values, and that consideration of new activities should be based on potential impacts to these values. They do not want to see a straight adoption of the All Season Resort Policy, and do not support a 60 year term length. They feel that policy on public access should emphasize that access will be safe and at no charge.
- FCPP want to see the policy make a clear distinction between operations on regular Crown land and operations in the parks. They feel that there is too much focus on economic viability and not enough on protection and public use. They do not support a 60 year term length, and would like more clarification on how the resorts relate to the rest of the parks and how the resort planning process relates to the Park Management Plans. They support joint plan development. The FCPP would like to see fee renegotiations focus on public access.
- The Squamish Nation stated that they had concerns but did not provide additional detail in their response letter.

Other groups submitted comments through the online form. The Cypress Ski Club and Nordic Racers were not included on the list of stakeholder groups that were sent letters of notification, but they are stakeholder groups for Cypress Park as they use the facilities at Hollyburn. The comments received from these groups were on the whole more supportive of increased business certainty for the resorts. Requests for additional meetings were not made.

Cypress Ski Club

- Cypress Ski Club endorses the underlying principle that BC Parks be consistent with policy for Crown land resorts where it makes sense (not create disadvantages for operators in parks).
- They would like to recognize the difference between resorts in parks vs crown land in terms of the different obligations that the resorts in parks must meet- maintaining facilities for non-resort visitors.
- Also want to recognize that the resorts in parks are more limited in terms of revenue sources (no real estate development being a major difference). They do not believe that resorts should be required to pay for search and rescue costs for non-customers who get lost outside of bounds, and should be reimbursed for any costs. They support a flexible policy so that business can change over time, and support terms long enough to allow for investment and renewal/transfer provisions. Support the ability of the resorts to expand activities and/or CRA.
- “In summary, Cypress Ski club supports the development of a BC Parks Ski Resort Policy based on the commercial realization that all ski resorts are managed consistently, whether they are located in Provincial Parks or on other Crown land. As paying resort users we encourage BC Parks to recognize that the three ski resorts within Provincial Parks do incur additional costs for such things as providing parking and access through their Controlled Access Areas to accommodate park users who are not customers of the resort.”

Nordic Racers

- The comment from the Nordic Racers was very much in line with many of the comments received from Hollyburn users. They are concerned that there is little incentive for the resort to invest in the Nordic area as it is the only facility in the city, and that facilities have been allowed to decline.
- Parking was raised as an issue, with mention of non-paying users creating extra congestion in the parking lots.
- Although they support a longer term permit they would like:
 - conditions placed on the lease setting obligations for delivery of improvements,
 - a 5 year workplan developed with consultation from parks, user groups and the general public,
 - and adequate funding for public consultation.

General Public Comments

General Policy Suggestions

Building timelines or deadlines for facility investments and other works to be completed into the permits was a general request. Having clearer language to distinguish between resort users and park visitors who aren't using the resort was also requested, as 'public use' is a term that captures both of these groups.

One commenter noted that that Objective 1.2.1 in the Intentions Paper only considered ‘continued public use’ but that wording should be changed to focus on meeting demands for resort and non-resort uses (recognize that public use may, and maybe should, increase). It was also requested that this objective not refer to permit rights, as they are separate from the policy, which can only serve as a basis for negotiating future permit rights. Suggest ‘meet the needs of resort operators’.

One commenter made note of the responsibilities of the resort operators in managing damage done by their guests, including cleaning the runs after snow melt to dispose of litter left behind (beer cans left just outside of ski run boundaries).

Scope

There were a few comments received on the scope of the policy. One commenter felt that the policy should address all ski areas, including those that are community run and/or Nordic-only, that occur within parks and those resorts that operate adjacent to parks, such as Silver Star, Mt. Washington and Whistler. One commenter felt that the scope should be reduced and that Manning Park should have its own policy.

Support for Winter Recreation

Some comments expressed the opinion that recreation was something aligned with BC Parks’ purpose and that if the policy would balance those opportunities with the environmental protection of parks, that this would be a good thing for the parks and for the local economy. A few commenters were specific that alpine skiing and snowboarding, and Nordic skiing, should be the focus of the resort operations, despite the growing popularity of other activities like snowshoeing.

Feedback on the Engagement Process

Only two commenters indicated that they did not feel that the engagement process was adequate. Both comments were short, consisting of a few sentences complaining of the process (not enough time, not enough information).

Another commenter, although not expressly displeased with the engagement process, suggested that the three Nordic clubs in Vancouver be consulted directly, as they would represent a large portion of the users at Hollyburn.

Recognition of Park Values

A number of commenters were concerned that the values of the parks where the resorts were located, and the public nature of the park land, would not be reflected in the policy. Suggestions to communicate the status of the parks included better signage indicating the resorts were located within parks, and requiring print materials produced by the operators to indicate that the resort is located within a park. It was also suggested that there should be built-in limits as to the types of activities that resort operators are allowed to conduct, for example that all activities must relate to recreation. This includes advertising, which one commenter felt should only be for products that were related to recreation in the park (e.g. no beer or car promos).

The role of the operators in communicating park rules was also mentioned, such as indicating on maps areas where dogs were not allowed.

Planning

There was support from comments for the development of plans for the resorts, and for the plans to address issues in operations. A recommendation was made that 5 year work plans be developed through consultation with BC Parks and the public, and another commenter suggested that there be performance objectives set for each 5 year interval.

A few comments were made on the necessity of having adequate resourcing for public consultation processes to support planning. This concept was noted by multiple commenters as being applicable both to the resort planning process, but also to the park management planning processes. One commenter stated that permits should only be in place where a park management plan is up to date. Coordinating the process for park management planning with resort planning was also noted as being a way to 'double up' on resources, but also as a more effective means of planning (ensuring coordination between the two plans).

It was mentioned by a few commenters that the intensive recreation zones in the park management plans should be used to set out areas for alpine use. One commenter noted that some types of Nordic trails could fall within other zones set out in the park management plan, such as the Nature Recreation zone.

In addition to comments on public input for planning purposes, there were a few commenters who felt that public comment should be part of the process for amending or granting a permit, or for approval of any new activities that were requested.

Fees

One comment was received regarding fees, and it was specific to how fees are used. The commenter suggested that fees from the resorts should be kept and invested back into the parks system rather than going to general revenue.

Term and renewal

About 10% of comments received mentioned the proposed length of term for the permits. Out of the comments received on this topic there were differences of opinion. Many commenters that supported the longer term length did so because they recognized the need for business certainty for the resorts, but they also indicated that requirements for investments throughout the term should be built in. A number of these comments used the Nordic facilities at Hollyburn as an example where 'deadlines' built into a permit for facility investment would benefit park users.

Other commenters expressed concern with the length of term, stating that 60 years was too long, although not all comments to this effect provided an accompanying rationale. The concept that loss of

tenure would mean loss of investment dollars was questioned by one commenter based on the rationale that sale of the resort would recoup any recent investment costs should the tenure not be renewed.

Some comments were not supportive of an 'early renewal', although some were. One commenter suggested that the permits be re-tendered upon expiry, rather than renewed.

One comment recognized the balance that must be achieved when setting conditions for term length and renewals:

"No sensible operator is going to commit to a capital expansion program without security of tenure. By the same token, the provincial government does not want to impose lease extension conditions which will lead to ticket prices becoming unaffordable."

All Season Use

Several of the comments (less than 10%) discussed the concept of all season use that was mentioned in the intentions paper. Most of the comments on all season use were specific to mountain biking, expressing support for the activity to be offered at the resorts. The comments listed a variety of reasons, such as economic and tourism benefits for the local area, preventing people from having to travel to Squamish/Whistler for accessible mountain biking. Other advocates of the sport looked at it as an opportunity to 'legitimize' the sport, and to prevent rampant construction of illegal trails in the hills below the resorts, thereby limiting environmental impacts in the surrounding areas.

One commenter felt that any use outside the ski season should only focus on traditional activities such as hiking.

Concerns with Hollyburn facilities

Nearly half (48%) of all comments received were from commenters who identified themselves as users of the Hollyburn ski area in Cypress Park. The main concerns expressed had to do with the facilities, including parking facilities, being inadequate to fulfill the needs of the users, and of the untapped potential for the Nordic area. Many commenters expressed concern that as the only Nordic facility close to Vancouver, Cypress has a monopoly and little incentive to improve the 'only game in town'.

Suggestions were to include as part of the planning process for resort development timelines that must be met as part of a permit condition. The fact that there has been talk of updated facilities for many years with none being realized was used to support requirements for facility investment being built in to permits.

One commenter suggested that although the facilities were abysmal, access (parking) should be addressed as a first priority.

Comments specific to facility investment:

Most comments were specific on the need for the lodge to be replaced with a larger more functional facility, and many noted that there has been a long term plan to build a new lodge in a new location, which has never been acted upon. There were two commenters who supported having the historic lodge renovated in its current location, but they were in the minority of commenters.

The facilities for changing, waxing, and washrooms were all noted as being inadequate for the volume of users, as well as being cramped and unsafe.

It was noted that none of the facilities meet accessibility standards, limiting users of the site to those not requiring wheelchairs.

Some commenters indicated the need for more trails as there were concerns with congestion, and that more regular maintenance (grooming) was required, as well as more variety of trails (particularly for beginners). The lack of a timing shack for races was also felt to be something holding the area back from being part of the provincial race circuit.

Access and Capacity Issues

Issues on access and capacity for both the parks and the Ski Resorts are addressed through planning processes, and are not proposed for inclusion in the draft policy, but many of the comments received (at least 2/3rds) made mention of issues with public access to the park. There are several topics in particular that were mentioned, and listed below.

One commenter specifically asked questions on capacity limits being set for the parks. He stated that "I have witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of people accessing park facilities over the past 10 years in particular the last 7 years" ... "I am amazed at how well the current operators have been able to manage the increased number of people accessing park facilities. However, for anyone that has spent any time in the park, (especially on a sunny weekend) there is a definite need to provide safe and adequate (parking issues, trail access issues) access for visitors accessing facilities at the park.".... "I would ask that the ministry to take a step back and review the current capacity issues from the perspective of public safety and enjoyment and not solely from the perspective of increasing profitability to operators, (without adequate controls in place to ensure public safety is maintained and enforced)."

The question of capacity for the parks, particularly Cypress Park, was not expressly stated in other comments regarding access but should be considered when looking at the overall access issue.

Public Access

Access to other areas of the park outside of the resort operating area was mentioned by about 10% of commenters as an issue they would like to see addressed in the policy. That access should be easy, clearly marked and at no charge, regardless of whether a visitor was a resort customer or not, were clearly communicated. Better signage and understanding of the rules were recommended, and limits on

access control for the operators (should not have control outside of their operating areas) was also requested. One commenter disliked having to provide proof of their waiver, and questioned whether adequate warning signs would not be a more efficient way to address liability concerns.

Backcountry use

Access for backcountry use, although related to general public access, dealt with more specific concerns, and there were a few commenters (less than 10%) who specifically discussed backcountry ski access. The prohibition of backcountry users from travelling within the ski area boundaries was stated to be a safety concern, as the easiest terrain for uphill travel was claimed to be within the ski area boundaries, at least for Cypress. The downhill travel at Mt. Seymour for backcountry users goes back down the same trail being used for uphill travel, which commenters felt increased the chances of collision on the trail. Concerns were also expressed for Mt. Seymour plowing access paths from alpine runs to the backcountry uptrack, as it was claimed that this encourages downhill users from the resort to also use these tracks for downhill travel. Other comments felt that access to the backcountry should not be limited to the resort operating hours, but should be allowed at all times except when there were safety concerns relating to snow conditions.

Road Use

There were a few comments received that were specific to the park roads. Unrestricted hours to the roads was requested in recognition of all public highways not having hours of closure. Road use and access was requested by another comment to at least be allowed prior to 7am, if 24 hour access was not possible.

A few commenters made the point that cyclists are a major recreational user group of the Cypress Bowl Road, and suggested facilities to support cyclists who use the road, and that restricted road access for movie shoots was not appropriate as it interrupted this recreational use of the road.

Parking

Over half of all comments received mention parking in some way. The vast majority of commenters (85%) who discussed parking identified themselves as users of the Hollyburn ski area, and therefore the majority of comments regarding parking were specific to this area of Cypress Park.

General parking comments:

- Some commenters felt that 'non-discriminatory' parking, where non-resort customers were parking for enjoyment of the park, should not be linked with the resort operations. All users (those visiting the resorts and those accessing other areas of the park) should have the same rights to use the roads and the parking areas. Suggestions on how to achieve this varied, from suggestions that a one-size-fits-all solution should be found, to having parking restrictions only enforced on holidays and weekends, to having fees for parking (set by BC Parks) to offset the costs the operators incur to maintain parking for non-resort visitors.
- The comments varied in their response as to what they would like to see, as some disliked the idea of resort patrons being treated differently than other members of the

public, with others feeling that differential treatment was justified as some were paying to use the operator's facilities while others weren't.

- Parking on the highway was considered dangerous.
- There was one request that overnight parking be allowed.

Comments specific to Hollyburn users:

- Some commenters were specific on not feeling it fair that non-paying users such as snowshoers had the same access to the parking facilities as paying users, with the belief that season pass holders deserve priority. Suggestions were made of having separate lots, one for paying users and one for those accessing other areas, and that other activities (snowplay) be moved so that there is less demand on the Nordic lots. It was noted that a subsidized shuttle service would help alleviate parking and be environmentally friendly.