

Subject: [Fwd: Letter to the Editor]

Date: Mon, 02 May 2005 14:25:15 -0700

From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

Subject: Letter to the Editor

Date: Mon, 02 May 2005 14:14:22 -0700

From: M E Craver <mecraver@shaw.ca>

To: editor@nsnews.com

CC: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Editor: I have noticed many letters printed recently, both pro and con, about the Black Bear issues on the North Shore. Black Bears are an intelligent species and will adapt to survive. It is too bad we find them adapting to our fruit trees, garbage cans, and even our Safeway stores, etc. Yes, the problem is development inside the black bears' forest habitat. Development does not always mean "building roads and houses". It can mean recreational development..

It can mean development caused by numerous people pursuing the sport of mountain biking in our natural forest lands. This development has come in the form of building of many trails, structures and riding on them far inside our forests, over time. There have even been known bear and mountain bike trailbuilder, "with chainsaw", encounters. Lucky no one was injured. Dogs running loose and along side of these many riders (sometimes three to four dogs with a large group of mountain bikers) are also a problem. The numbers of these recreationists in our forest land is growing, and becoming unsustainable.

Mountain biking belongs in contained, controlled and enforced areas like the Cypress Recreation Bike Park proposed this summer. Mountain bikers need amenities like skiing and snowboarding does. This also insures revenue coming in from the sport, using these areas. It seems people forget that many non-mountain biking folk also eat at restaurants, stay at hotels, shop, etc. bringing in millions of dollars to the North Shore annually. Tourists come in many shapes and forms. Residents and businesses on the North Shore contribute financially, also. Mountain biking contributes a very small segment of these dollar figures since the damage they are doing to our natural forest lands, etc. cost far more than the money they bring in. Much of this damage is irreversible. We can only prevent more from happening.

Less disturbance of the Black Bears in their natural habitat, over time, will hopefully solve the problems. If bears continue to be disturbed in our forests, then they will continue to "disturb" us. It will not be an overnight thing to solve, but the many encounters between cyclists and dogs who come closer than the 10 metres from the grazing bears will continue to cause the bear to lose its fear of humans and dogs. We can reverse this trend if we curtail invasive off-road recreational vehicles in our forests. In this age of growing population on the North Shore, this kind of activity should not be allowed except in contained areas already developed for such recreation, like the private run Whistler, Grouse Mtn. and Cypress Bowl recreational resorts. We should be instead be concentrating on how to manage to keep "small footprint" activity within our public forest. Yes our natural alpine forests and parks are for everyone to enjoy, but not every activity one wishes to pursue should be allowed..

It is not just the black bears, but many other wildlife species and plants mountain biking has disturbed and displaced in our mostly natural and undeveloped alpine forest "green belt" along the North Shore. This includes invasive plant species transplanting itself deeper in the forests, carried on the muddy tires of bikes. The problem with the Grouse Bear Refuge area, and money proposed (courtesy of our Provincial government) is that the wrong species is being contained.

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