



Jesse Zeman, Executive Director
B.C. Wildlife Federation
101-9706 188th Street
Surrey, B.C., V4M 3N2
Jesse.zeman@bcwf.bc.ca

Minister Bruce Ralston
Minister of Forests
Room 138 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

June 12th, 2023

Minister Ralston,

After the wildfires of 2021, the B.C. Wildlife Federation engaged the Ministry of Forests (MoF) to propose interim solutions to address ecological impacts due to wildfires in the Interior. A number of these areas have road densities which are 3-5 times greater than the commonly accepted scientific threshold for negative impacts on habitat and wildlife. The BCWF proposed closing roads to motor vehicles to give the Ministry time to work collaboratively with First Nations, stakeholders, and the public to plan and manage road densities and access equitably and sustainably. We expected a plan would be rolled out by Spring 2023.

In 2022, our membership flagged dozens of violations and inequities, including mushroom buyers who were given 'exploratory permits' in road closure areas, then photocopied them and handed them out to mushroom pickers. We also reported numerous issues with non-compliance and complaints about garbage and debris being left throughout the forest. Enforcement was non-existent and we have been told the regulation associated with the closure was written so poorly that government agents (Conservation Officer Service and Natural Resource Officers) would not enforce the regulation.

We were assured a consultative process was being developed to ensure equity in access, that some roads would be open, and that environmentally sensitive areas would be protected. Unfortunately, according to our most recent discussions with MoF, it is clear that everyone other than members of the public is allowed to access these areas. According to MoF staff, all commercial users have unfettered access and a number of permits have been issued to others to access the closure areas. There is no definition of "commercial activity" so a commercial user could include anyone with a social media account and one follower. We have been informed the only "commercial activity" excluded is hunting.

Over the past 22 months, the B.C. Wildlife Federation has worked with the Ministry of Forests in good faith to address existing and future issues related to the sustainability of habitat and wildlife in the wildfire areas. The Ministry has not been responsive to these concerns. To date, these closures have been poorly managed, implemented, and enforced. The province has failed to address ecological concerns with road densities and salvage logging, the two most significant impacts on the landscape. Worse, the province has created a two-tier system where it is only the public that is excluded from these areas. This does not work for wildlife and habitat, the BCWF, its clubs and members, or the public.



Our membership is extremely dismayed by the Province's approach, inequity of application, lack of follow-through. Our members, and law-abiding members of the public have obeyed the closures, despite the government's failure to implement, manage and enforce them equitably. The B.C. Wildlife Federation would like to see roads that are open, open to all, and those that are closed, closed to all by September 1, 2023.

In Conservation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jesse Zeman'.

Jesse Zeman
Executive Director
B.C. Wildlife Federation

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Lewis'.

David Lewis
President
B.C. Wildlife Federation

Cc Richard Manwaring, Deputy Minister