

Prince George Mayor and Council
1100 Patricia Blvd
Prince George, BC
V2L 3V9

August 14, 2023

Re: Caledonia Nordic Ski Club request for a Letter of Support to Expand its License of Occupation

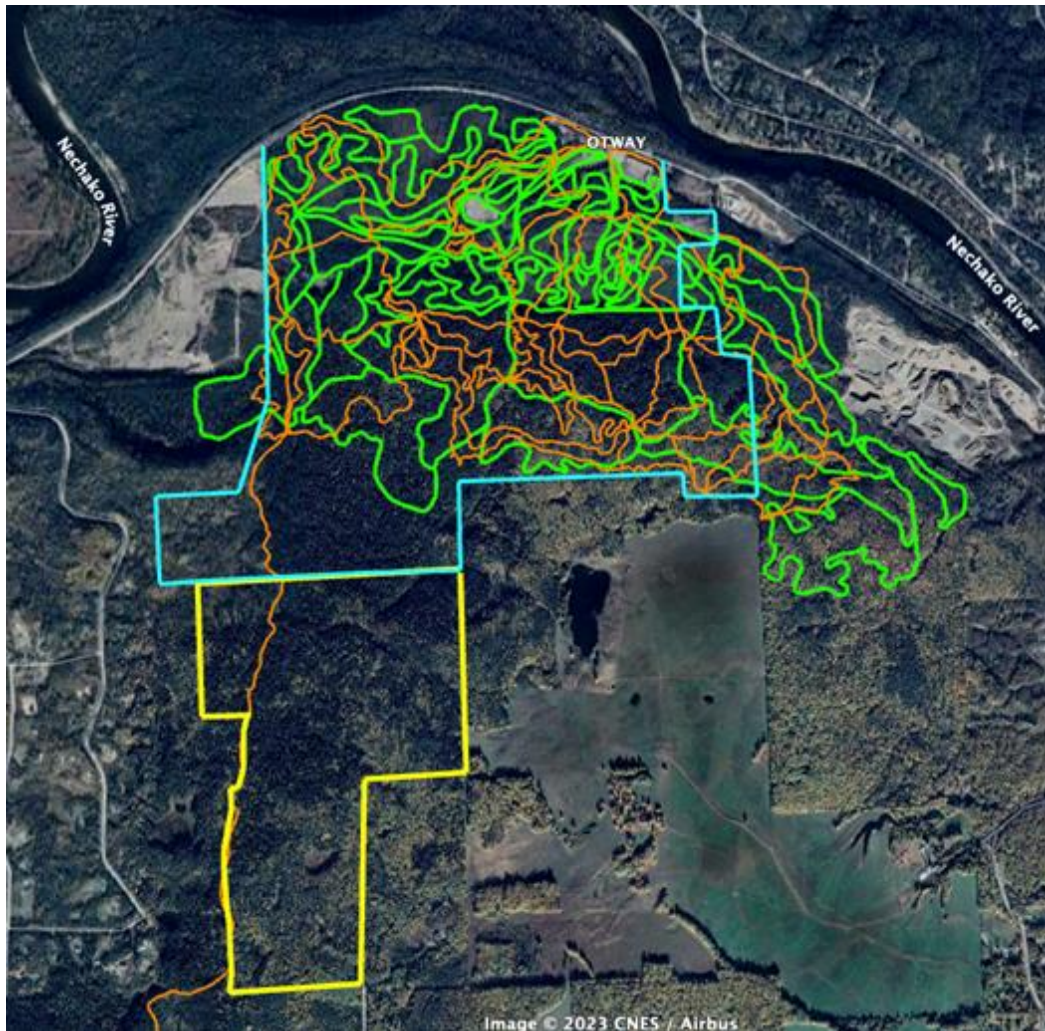
Dear Mayor and Council,

The Caledonia Nordic Ski Club (the Club) has requested a letter of support from you for an application to expand the tenured area of the Club for the purpose of ski trail development. Below are two important reasons against ski trail development in the new 120 Ha area along the Greenway trail.

Forests of high conservation value. Some of the forests in the proposed expansion area are identified in a report commissioned by the City of Prince George as including intact, sensitive old forests of high conservation value (Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping and Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory Report, 2012; see Figures 3.1 & 3.2, pp. 17 & 21 <https://www.princegeorge.ca/media/1401>). The Report recommends leaving forests of high conservation value intact. If these forests are found to be over 250 years old, the report recommends protecting the area as a park (see p. 52).

- The below map of trail development at Otway illustrates the intensity of development on the Club's existing License of Occupation (green lines are ski trails, which are usually at least 6 meters wide; orange lines are hiking trails). The yellow box at the bottom of the map is the proposed new License of Occupation, which currently contains only the Greenway Trail.
- The Club does not have any publicly recorded environmental stewardship procedures, policies, or goals. Until those are developed, it can only be assumed that trail development in the new areas will follow the practices of the past.

Map: Caledonia Nordic Trail Development. The light blue boundary includes the current License of Occupation; the yellow boundary is the proposed expansion. Green lines are ski trails and orange lines are hiking / biking trails.



Declining snowpack. Of primary concern at Otway is the declining snowpack. As a low elevation ski area, Otway is very vulnerable to climate change. The snowpack data recorded at the BC Government Prince George snow station located at the airport demonstrates that snowpack is declining.

<https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c15768bf73494f5da04b1aac6793bd2e>

- At Otway, existing ski trails in mature forests with large trees, such as the Old Sawmill Loop trail, already suffer from marginal ski conditions. For ski competitions, snowmaking is needed to ensure reliable snow conditions. Snowmaking, however, occurs in a very limited area of Otway on competition trails that are far from the proposed new trail development.

Conclusion: Given the declining snowpack, the mature forests of high conservation value, and the absence of environmental stewardship planning and policies, expansion of ski trails in this new area is not justified.

Expanding the tenure as a biodiversity offset: I would, however, be strongly in favour of the Club applying to expand its License of Occupation for the purpose of creating a no-trail protected area around the Greenway trail as a biodiversity offset for the Club's development on its existing License of Occupation. This type of action by the Club would demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental stewardship in the area. The commitment to protecting the area from any trail development, however, would have to be explicit in the Club's application.

An alternative area to secure ski trails: In the winter of 2020-2021, the Club developed a large ski trail network on the private lands owned by Terus Ltd. Assisting the ski club in securing this private property might be an alternative method of protecting recreation opportunities close to Prince George.

Sincerely,

Redacted

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