

July 1, 2021

Central Coast Regional District
626 Cliff Street, Box 186
Bella Coola, BC V0T 1C0

Attention: Board of Directors

Re: Firvale Wilderness Camp – Our Response to Letters from Neighbours

This letter serves as a response to the letters sent by Tom & Dolores Vosburgh and Nancy Atkinson with respect to the intended use of our property located at 4330 MacKenzie Highway, Firvale, BC. We will address each issue raised in turn.

Ratcliff Creek:

Our cottage does not sit *directly* in the path of Ratcliff Creek; rather, it sits approximately 100 metres to the east. *Figure 1* below, a map provided by the Provincial Government of British Columbia, shows the location of Ratcliff Creek and the flood protection work that was performed to ensure that Ratcliff Creek does not erode or further damage our property.



Figure 1 – Provincial Government of British Columbia Map

Contrary to what both the Vosburghs and Ms. Atkinson allege, the majority of the water flowing through Ratcliff Creek flows through the east culvert (see *Figure 1* above). During extreme rain events and rapid snow melts, the water can flow through the west culvert or over the highway itself due to poor highway maintenance of culverts. Most of the time, however, and as you can see in the photographs below (both taken in June 2021 during the extreme heat wave and subsequent rapid snow melt), Ratcliff Creek flows entirely through the east culvert (see *Figure 2* below), not the west culvert (see *Figure 3* below).



Figure 2 – East Culvert (June 2021)



Figure 3 – West Culvert (June 2021)

In November 2019, we contacted Pat Gunderson, the foreman for Dawson Road Maintenance, to inform him the two culverts were blocked by debris and that excess water from Ratcliff Creek would flood the highway and overwhelm both culverts. Within a week, Mr. Gunderson toured our property and presented a plan to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, which called for the clearing of the debris blocking the culverts and the removal of fill from above the highway to prevent the culverts from becoming blocked in the future. Since their removal of debris (250 dump truck loads) there have been no issues, even in high water events (see Figures 4, 5, and 6 below).



Figure 4 – East Culvert before MOTI work



Figure 5 – MOTI work clearing East Culvert



Figure 6 – Ratcliff Creek near East Culvert (Oct 2020)

We have also been in close contact with the Ministry of Forestry, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. We welcomed Ministry representatives to our property in September 2020 to review the flood protection work we had performed on our property. We were given the proper paperwork for future work near the creek. The Ministry assured us their involvement in this issue was concluded and that they would continue to monitor Ratcliff Creek to see if any changes need to be made.

The Vosburghs are aware of all of this, having previously made complaints, yet in their letter they present this as a new issue. We respectfully question their motivations here.

Zoning:

We are currently working closely with the CCRD's planning department to either rezone or obtain a variance for our property due to the intended use of our property.

Our property is currently zoned for "campground use", which means "providing designated sites for the accommodation of the travelling public in tents, camper vehicles or travel trailers; and may include personal service facilities to accommodate the needs of the occupants." This description fits the current use of our property.

We have invested significant capital into upgrading the electrical, water and sewage systems on our property to meet all legal requirements. We have, at every available opportunity, used local businesses and workers when performing this work on our property.

We are committed to the advancement of sustainable tourism in the Bella Coola Valley. Our small "glamping" operation is safer, far less impactful, and beneficial to our community than a traditional campground or a hotel.

First Nations Consultation:

We respectfully acknowledge that our property is located on traditional Nuxalk territory. Through the short time we have lived in the Bella Coola Valley, we have built excellent relationships with the First Nations community. We are fully committed to continuing and growing these relationships and have been consulting and working with local First Nations leaders to create tourism initiatives. We would love to see stronger Nuxalk representation and revenue in the local tourism industry and believe we can help with this.

Trespassing:

We inform our guests of the areas in the Bella Coola Valley where they should not go and we will continue to do so. We are happy to provide signage, though the Vosburghs already have multiple prominent signs in the areas that border their property.

Property Taxes:

We can offer no insight with respect to the rising property tax assessment for Ms. Atkinson, though her blaming our presence in the Bella Coola Valley for rising property taxes is misplaced, at best. We wish her luck with her property tax appeal process.

Conclusion:

We have strived to create an inclusive environment where all are welcome. We have given and received so much support from this community during such a prolonged period of crisis.

We are not “an extensive commercial enterprise”, as Ms. Atkinson alleges. We are a small business focused on the promotion of sustainable, responsible tourism in the Bella Coola Valley.

We are not opposed to coming to mutually-agreeable solutions to the issues that Ms. Atkinson and the Vosburghs have put forward, but we have found it near impossible to appease the Vosburghs, who are openly hostile to us and petition to destroy what we have built.

We wish to peacefully coexist with our neighbours. Hopefully we can.

Robert & Jennifer Sherlock
Firvale Wilderness Camp