

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please find below and attached a letter regarding the River of Golden Dreams Habitat Enhancement Project.

I watched with interest the recorded presentation about the River of Golden Dreams (ROGD) habitat enhancement project scheduled for August 2024 in the section between the fish weir and 21 Mile Creek. I think it's great that this river has been identified for habitat enhancement and if the RMOW is serious in wanting Whistler to be a place where "nature is protected" I hope it will consider doing even more.

You are probably aware that the ROGD has been continually degraded ever since Europeans settled here. The section of the river planned for habitat enhancement was forcibly realigned by the construction of the railway on one side and the Valley Trail on the other. It has much less water in it now than historically after 21 Mile Creek was rerouted by humans from Alta Lake to its current location. And recently there is even less water due to climate change. On top of this, we allow people down this section (as well as other sections) where they scrape the sensitive river bottom as well as the vegetation that lines the river and is home to nesting birds, beavers, and other wildlife.

As we know, spawning fish need access to gravel to lay eggs and shade to keep streams cool, especially as temperatures increase. Just like more trees are being planted in Rainbow Park to provide shade for humans, fish also need shade if the RMOW is serious about improving fish habitat. It is my hope that there is minimal damage to streamside vegetation during this project. Is the RMOW willing to commit to this?

It sounds like right now this section of the river will close when water levels are low; I suggest we consider closing this section of the river permanently. This is a great opportunity for the RMOW and province to show residents and visitors that protecting nature is a higher priority than giving in to the demands of humans who consider it their right to recreate wherever they want without considering their responsibilities to nature. Would the RMOW be willing to work with the province on this?

Finally, it is probably time to put a plan in place for the entire river to protect it from overuse. Users of the river might not realize that cumulative effects of

river traffic result in degradation of habitat and create a housing and food crisis for species that depend on river ecosystems for survival. Would the RMOW be willing to consider some type of River Guardian program where access is regulated and/or users must be accompanied by a River Guardian?

A great reminder from David Attenborough: “I think sometimes we need to take a step back and just remember we have no greater right to be here than any other animal”.

Sincerely,

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