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White Gold, Whistler B.C.

The Resort Municipality of Whistler Council

04 May 2020

RE: Forest Fire Thinning

Honourable Mayor and Council,

I am writing to request a stop to Forest Fire Thinning in Lost Lake and other parks in the Whistler area, including and especially in the Callaghan valley.

Whistler's Forest is not like the dry fuel-driven forests that dominate publications and recommended fire management regimes. Rather, Whistler's forest is inherently resilient.

My request comes from 35 years' experience with Federal Government; the first decade as a terrestrial ecologist with Forestry Canada (now NRCan), and the next 25 years with Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service. While with Forestry Canada, I was responsible for research to mitigate the impact of Canadian forest management practices on non-target organisms (beneficial insects, seed-set of native plants, small mammal & bird communities) including the fragmentation of old-growth forests. With Canadian Wildlife Service, I designed monitoring and conservation programs for forest and grassland birds of BC.

I joined the Whistler Forest and Wildlands Committee (FWAC) in January 2019, hoping to advise RMOW Council on issues related to forestry, wildfire management, land use, and recreation spaces around Whistler. On 11 March 2020, I presented my concerns with the Forest Fire Thinning program to FWAC.

I was sad to read the Resort Municipality email stating the fire thinning program will continue. It seems my presentation had no effect even though financial constraints due to the Covid pandemic would suggest the cost of the fire thinning program should be deferred if not reconsidered.

One of the major predictors of forest fire is snow melt. On 30 April 2020, I conducted a 4.5 hr study of the effect of fire thinning in Lost Lake on snow melt. Admittedly it was only one year and a week later than I would have liked, but the results point to decreased snow and decreased soil moisture where fire thinning has occurred. As the literature and forest ecology experts suggest, fire thinning in our forest type will INCREASE fire risk.

I would be happy to make both the FWAC presentation and snow melt report available to council.

Will the Mayor and Council take this opportunity to lead other coastal municipalities and cease Forest Fire Thinning?

Regards,



Rhonda L. Millikin