

Mayor Jack Crompton and RMOW Council
By email : corporate@whistler.ca

February 1, 2021

Dear Mayor Crompton and Council members

We are writing in response to the recent letter from Kevin Creery, planning analyst, seeking public input regarding an application by the RMOW for a VORR to prohibit the use of gas-powered motors on Alta Lake. From our perspective, the problems on Alta Lake go far beyond the proliferation of gas-powered watercraft.

However, if the RMOW's first move is to make an application for such a VORR, and a ban on gasoline powered motors is implemented, **we will require an exemption to this rule and would expect the Municipality to obtain the exemption on our behalf.** Without an exemption our ability to maintain and use our property will be severely hampered. As such, we ask for your written assurance that our property will be exempted from the VORR.

Our family owns 6970 Blueberry Trail on Alta Lake, a property now surrounded by Blueberry Hill Park. We have owned the property since it was first subdivided from the homestead of Grace Archibald in 1935. Access to the property is only by foot over Blueberry Trail or by water. The property has only one address but consists of two separate lots: Blocks 5 and 6, Plan VAP6495, District Lot 4751. (Don't look it up on Google maps as you will be taken to a non-existent property on Blueberry Drive.) We do not have electricity service to our property and therefore are not able to charge batteries to run an electric motor. Furthermore, the surrounding forest canopy precludes adequate use of solar power for charging such a battery. We rely on our small utilitarian boat with a 4 hp gasoline powered motor to transport heavier bulky items. Hence our need for an exemption.

We also notice that information on the website FAQs states:

If the VORR is approved, can gas motors be used for rescues? (January 14th)

Yes, the Conservation Officer Service, RCMP and Emergency Services such as Whistler Fire Rescue or Whistler Search and Rescue would be exempt from the VORR.

This shows a worrisome lack of understanding of the number of boaters needing emergency help every summer, usually when inexperienced canoeists capsize at the north end of the lake, en route to the River of Golden Dreams. We are often the ones providing the assistance, using our 4hp gas powered motor. We know that over the years we have rescued close to 10 people from certain drowning, in addition to helping countless other frightened cold and wet tourists, many of them young children, get safely to shore every summer. Eric White at Lakeside Rentals also uses his powerful gas powered boat to help boaters in distress on the lake.

Whistler Fire Rescue does not maintain a boat on Alta Lake, so is not available to carry out any needed timely water rescues. In fact, in the summer of 2020, we called 911 to ask for ambulance transport for a hypothermic concussed paddleboarder coughing up copious amounts of blood on our dock and were told paramedics would have to walk over the trail to the property and transport him back over the trail. We advised the 911 operator that it would be impossible to bring a gurney over the trail and asked specifically about the Whistler Fire boat, to be told that was not an option. (Presumably the ambulance dispatcher is a different service from the fire dispatcher, and she was clearly unwilling to go out of her way to solve the problem.) We had to put the injured man into our boat to transport him to the Alta Vista boat launch to meet the ambulance waiting to take him to the Whistler Health Centre.

Rather than focussing on one issue only (gas vs electric motors) we suggest the Municipality take the time to first create an overall plan on how best to preserve the health of the lake, while accommodating appropriate recreational use. Some examples of things beyond motor fuel which may affect the lake's health and should be reviewed include invasive species; fecal contamination by non-migratory Canada Geese; live aboard boats; natural shoreline disruption from landscaping – the list goes on.

We understand the complicated jurisdictional governance, but believe it is the responsibility of the RMOW, which actively promotes tourism to and use of Alta Lake, to take action to protect one of its most important assets. It is the municipality which should engage stakeholders to collaborate on creation of the plan, and then work with other levels of government to implement it. We would fully support the RMOW in taking such action and believe there are many others who would too.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly



on behalf of
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cc Kevin Creery
Planning Analyst

