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Ski resort proposed near Chilliwack 'an environmental snow job,' says Wilderness Committee - The Chilliwack Progress

THE CHILLIWACK PROGRESS

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[Jennifer Feinberg](#)

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1 / 2 View looking south from Mt. Archibald, taking in the proposed ski terrain of Bridal Veil Mountain Resort, with Mt. Mercer (centre left) and Mt. Thurston (centre right, shrouded in cloud).

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The Wilderness Committee is calling on the provincial government to scrap the Bridal Veil Mountain Resort proposal since the development threatens the most endangered bird species in Canada: the spotted owl.

"It's a massive snow job to make the public think everything is okay – but it's not OK to mess with endangered species habitat," said Joe Foy, Wilderness Committee's protected areas campaigner in a Feb. 11

release.

The ski resort idea from Bridal Veil Mountain Resort (BVMR) reps has proposed gondola routes "that cut right through" Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) 2-501 at Elk Creek, which was among the more than 2,500 hectares designated by the province in March 2011 as protected long-term owl habitat areas.

Foy is furious over the omission of this info given that the public is being asked to comment.

"The province sends you to their Mountain Resorts Branch website for more information, but it doesn't tell you about the threats to the Elk Creek spotted owl WHA which is a critical future refuge for captive-raised owls," Foy said.

The spotted owl is the most endangered bird species in Canada, Foy underlined, with only one wild-born and several owls born in captivity in the wild.

The Wilderness Committee is calling on the provincial government to reject the Bridal Veil proposal, and demand that the Mountain Resorts Branch provide the public with more accurate maps and information that clearly show the impacts on spotted owl habitat.

"The owl's numbers have been driven towards extinction — from an estimated 500 breeding pairs to zero pairs in the wild — because their forest habitat has been gutted by decades of industrial logging."

The B.C. government runs a captive-breeding facility that houses more than 30 captive-raised spotted owls and has designated a WHA like 2-501 at Elk Creek, and these areas are crucial "for the release of captive-bred spotted owls to restore the population to healthy numbers once again."

The government of Canada is about to publish its finalized 'Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy' that includes critical habitat maps and relies on the captive-release program.

"The feds are decades behind in releasing this strategy, and when they finally get it done, the province works in the opposite direction destroying the habitat faster than they can protect it," said Foy. "How can you fund a

captive-breeding program, and declare it a solution to recover this species, but at the same time hide the fact you are destroying its habitat?"

The all-season ski resort proposed by Bridal Veil Mountain Resort Ltd., is a collaboration between Robert Wilson, Jeff Wilson, and Mike Lalonde. If approved, it would be east of the City of Chilliwack, in Area D and E of the Fraser Valley Regional District, the document shows.

Proponents say they aim to make it: "Canada's first destination all-season mountain resort to be jointly planned, designed, constructed, managed with, and be majority owned by First Nations – the Stó:lō peoples."

Public engagement is open until Feb. 28, 2025.

Bridal Veil is at the EOI stage:

"At this Expression of Interest (EOI) Stage, we are seeking public input to better understanding the following:

- Use and interests in the proposed area
- Public interests related to the proposal itself
- Aspects to consider in the major project review process."

The engagement and project page, with a link to an online survey is live at engage.gov.bc.ca.

Wilderness officials say there is a map of the project provided but it doesn't make it clear the impact on the WHA or spotted owl.

"This project can't go ahead at the expense of spotted owl habitat, full stop," said Foy. "People need to be given a fair chance to have their opinion heard and that means being informed about spotted owl restoration efforts and the risk this plan poses.

"Once informed, I believe most people will say no to this unacceptable project," said Foy.

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I have been a Chilliwack Progress reporter for 20+ years, covering city hall, Indigenous, business, and climate change stories.

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