

December 8, 2016

The Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment

Via email: ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Via email: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Inappropriate advertisements in the 2016 BC 2016-2018 Hunting and Trapping Regulations and lack of control of off-road vehicles

BC Nature (the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists) represents more than 50 naturalists' clubs and over 6000 members across the province. Several of our members have expressed concern over inappropriate advertisements for off-road vehicles (ORVs) in the most recent Hunting and Trapping Regulations published by the BC Government.

Specifically:

- None of the off-road vehicles in the advertisements is shown to be displaying a numbered plate or decal, which is in contravention of the regulations your government introduced in 2015.
- Some of the vehicles in the advertisements are clearly causing damage to natural areas and wildlife habitat by creating tracks in sensitive areas.
- Several of the ads are suggestive of riding ORVs or trucks in sensitive habitats.

BC Nature has repeatedly called for greater control of off-road vehicles in ecologically sensitive areas across the province. Our members continue to be greatly alarmed by the lack of prosecution or enforcement of the regulations which are meant to protect rangeland and other sensitive habitats. Putting up signs with no enforcement has no effect and we see continued damage to vegetation and soil by ORVs (including dirt bikes) throughout the province. Our members are also very concerned over the indirect and sensory disturbance caused by the presence, noise, and trails that ORVs can create, which can also lead to displacement and even mortality in some species (e.g., caribou).

We applaud the 2015 regulations requiring licensing of ORVs and look forward to seeing strong enforcement of these regulations in the near future.

By including these inappropriate advertisements in the Hunting and Trapping Regulations, the BC Government is undermining its own ORV policies and sending a message that it is acceptable to operate ORVs in sensitive habitat and without a visible numbered plate or decal.

We note on page 12 under "Site and Access Restrictions" that the mandatory registration of ORVs and the need to display a visible numbered plate or decal is highlighted in green and we appreciate that this is helpful to draw attention.

We suggest that in future publications the explanation #2 (p. 12) be either highlighted in red, or better yet, moved to the front of the regulations where it will be more prominent -- this is the explanation that it is illegal under the Forest and Range Practices Act for off-road vehicles to cause environmental damage and describes what the fines are for damaging sensitive habitats. Furthermore, we strongly recommend that the Hunting and Trapping Regulations include the following in a clear and applicable location: *"Anyone who witnesses a contravention of the Off-Road Vehicle Act is encouraged to call the Natural Resource Violations hotline at 1 844 NRO-TIPS (1 844 676-8477)"*.

Please advise us on

a) what steps you are going to take to change ORV advertisements in future publications and,
b) more importantly, what meaningful steps your government is going to take to stop the ongoing disturbance of wildlife and damage of habitat caused by uncontrolled use of ORVs on our public lands.

Yours truly,



Alan E. Burger, PhD
President: BC Nature
(Federation of BC Naturalists)