



January 11, 2018

Honourable George Heyman  
BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Via email: [ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Honourable Doug Donaldson  
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development  
Via email: [doug.donaldson.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:doug.donaldson.mla@leg.bc.ca); [FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Honourable Lana Popham  
BC Minister of Agriculture  
Via Email: [lane.popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:lane.popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca)

Honourable Dominic LeBlanc  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Via email: [dominic.leblanc@parl.gc.ca](mailto:dominic.leblanc@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Ministers,

**Re: Herrling, Carey, and Strawberry Islands land use changes**

BC Nature just recently became aware of the removal of riparian and wetland vegetation and application to construct bridges to Herrling and Carey Islands in the Fraser River, near Chilliwack.

Similar land clearing has now occurred, as well, on Strawberry Island at Mission, and immediately adjacent to the Bert Brink Wildlife Management Area.

The clearcutting of all the trees, removal of shrubs and groundcover and plowing of the soils, likely to be followed by industrial-agriculture practises, presents a huge loss when compared to the ecosystem services provided by the previous land use which was sustainable harvesting of cottonwood for pulpwood. Note that a portion of Strawberry Island was included in the Bert Brink Wildlife Management Area in 2009. This protected area was named to honour Dr. VC (Bert) Brink, who was BC Nature's long standing elder for the past half century. It is indeed sad to learn that extensive and devastating clearing has now occurred adjacent to the Bert Brink Wildlife Management Area, without even public notice or the opportunity for input.

We write in support of the several organizations and individuals who have already expressed concerns to government regarding the loss of these valuable riparian and lowland/wetland habitats. The application for bridge construction to these islands must be deferred to allow a thorough assessment, including public input. Our understanding is that these lands were recently in Tree Farm License 43, and that the public should have had the opportunity to

comment extensively on their exclusion from the TFL and its conversion to Agricultural Land Reserve.

As the non-profit federation representing 54 local natural history clubs throughout BC, with more than 6,100 members, BC Nature participated in the Protected Area Strategy (PAS) in the late 1990s where we voiced strong support for protection of an additional 1,000 hectares in the Fraser Lowlands area. This was, and continues to be, in recognition of the high ecological values that these low-elevation Fraser River lands contribute to fish, birds, and wildlife in general. These floodplains are key to ecological services such as flood mitigation, by allowing rising freshet waters to flood these undyked islands and subsequently spread nutrients throughout the back channels of the Fraser River. At that time, in the 1990's, government staff from your ministries recommended protection of particular sites in an interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder PAS review. Unfortunately, only a few of the recommended areas in the Mission-to-Hope Fraser River reach have been protected as Wildlife Management Areas.

Subsequently proponents of the initiative known as the Heart of the Fraser have voiced continued public support for improved management and protection of Fraser River lowlands sites. The clearing and conversion of these three keystone islands for industrial scale agriculture represents a massive setback for the protection of something that was already recognized over a quarter-of-a-century ago.

In summary, BC Nature strongly voices our opposition to this massive land clearing, to the construction of bridges to these islands and to a likely-future proposal to dyke and drain the islands, and urge that full public discussion must take place.

Please advise us as to what stage this change in land use is at, and what opportunity there is for BC Nature to be involved in the discussion.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Visser" with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cornelis Visser, Ph.D., Acting President  
For A. Burger, Ph.D., President  
BC Nature (Federation of British Columbia Naturalists)

cc

Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change  
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Mr. Terry Beech, MP, Parliamentary Sect to Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and Canadian Coast Guard [Terry.Beech@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Terry.Beech@parl.gc.ca)

Mr. Fin Donnelly, MP Port Moody-Coquitlam [fin.donnelly@parl.gc.ca](mailto:fin.donnelly@parl.gc.ca)

Mr. Rick Glumac, MLA for Port Moody [rick.glumac.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:rick.glumac.MLA@leg.bc.ca)

Messrs. Angelo, Rosenau, Riddell, Heart of the Fraser

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