July 4, 2019

Honourable George Heyman  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Doug Donaldson  
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Ministers Heyman and Donaldson:

I write to you on behalf of BC Nature (the Federation of BC Naturalists) representing more than 50 naturalists’ clubs and 6000 members province-wide. Our membership consists of dedicated naturalists and scientists who are connected to, have expertise in, and concern for the preservation of British Columbia’s landscapes and the diversity of organisms that inhabit them.

BC Nature supports the letter sent to government by one of our members, Helen Davis. We join her and others in requesting legislative protection of winter den sites of American black bears on Vancouver Island and across coastal B.C.

Black bears require den sites that keep them secure and dry during the winter denning period. Given the size of the bears, they need the kind of forest architecture that includes standing and downed large-diameter trees that occur primarily in old growth forests. It has been brought to our attention that government research previously established the need for this critical habitat, but regulations to protect it from standard forest operations have not been followed in all jurisdictions, including Vancouver Island and coastal areas. Lack of appropriate regulation could adversely affect the future of black bear populations, as viable den sites support the birth and early life of cubs.

Suitable den sites have declined in number along with the loss of old-growth forests. Current harvesting practices neither require site assessment for bear dens nor allow trees to grow large enough to provide optimal denning habitat. With less habitat available, mother bears may be forced into dens too close for comfort to other bears.

A representative of BC Nature would be pleased to attend a meeting with you and the invested parties, to help bring about regulatory protection for existing dens and ensuring adequate habitat into the future.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

Cornelis (Kees) Visser, Ph.D., P. Geol.