

Thank you for your email of January 12, 2016, addressed to the Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment, regarding access to Cypress Provincial Park. Minister Polak has asked that I respond on her behalf.

Since 1984, Cypress Mountain Resorts has been authorized under a Park Use Permit by BC Parks to occupy a portion of Cypress Provincial Park for the purpose of operating a downhill ski area. As a condition of the current permit, Cypress Mountain Resorts maintains the responsibility to control, regulate and direct the movement of the public throughout the downhill ski area to ensure safe and orderly use of the area. This includes providing safe access through the base area to the backcountry areas of the park for park visitors who are not clients of the ski hill.

In order to ensure safe public access through the base area, Cypress Mountain Resorts has an access policy which limits all visitors from accessing the base area from 22:00 to 09:00. This restriction has been in place for many years as part of an operational policy to ensure public safety while they prepare the base area for the operating hours. Maintenance vehicles, groomers, and snowmaking equipment are all active through the night and early morning until the opening of the ski hill at 09:00. This equipment, in particular snow grooming equipment, can pose a significant safety hazard to the public. The Hollyburn Hikers Access Trail, which does not require transiting the base area, is open at 07:00, and offers an excellent option for early morning skiing or snowshoeing.

In recent years we have seen a dramatic increase in winter usage of the backcountry areas of Cypress Park, and an increase in the number of park visitors transiting through the base area. Given the exceptionally busy year so far, BC Parks and Cypress Mountain Resorts have been working together to manage the significant increase in park visitation. One of the measures taken was to post the existing access policy on signs in the park and on the BC Parks webpage for Cypress Park to raise awareness and reduce potential conflicts in the interests of public safety.

BC Parks supports limiting the access to the base area from 22:00 to 09:00 to ensure public safety during the winter months when the ski hill is in operation. BC Parks is working with Cypress Mountain Resorts to continue to ensure that all park users have safe and reasonable access to the park.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

Jim Standen

Assistant Deputy Minister

BC Parks and Conservation Officer Service Division