

Wilderness Tourism Association



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Wilderness Tourism Association urges Government not to change VQOs

(April 4, 2012; Cumberland, BC) The Wilderness Tourism Association of BC is urging the provincial government not to consider any proposals to change or remove valuable Visual Quality Objectives in the in the Burns Lake area and along the Hwy 16 corridor.

“We are certainly sympathetic to the losses that have occurred in Burns Lake and the need to develop employment for that community”, said Evan Loveless, Executive Director of the Wilderness Tourism Association of BC (WTA). “But changing Visual Quality Objective (VQOs) and other land use objectives to accommodate a bit more logging is myopic and extremely shortsighted.”

“As an industry sector that relies on visual quality (and other land use objectives) for the experiences that we sell to the world, these land use objectives are critical for our success and must be protected throughout the province”, said Loveless. “There is no doubt in the tourism industry that changing or eliminating existing visual quality objectives (VQOs) will have a major impact on our ability to attract tourists to these regions.” The accelerated rate of forest development (road development and tree harvesting) is already placing increasing pressure on the tourism industries’ ability to deliver quality tourism experiences. The changing or eliminating of existing VQOs will further impact the tourism industry. Few VQO were ever established in the Lakes TSA and along the Hwy 16 corridor so the few that exist need to be maintained.

“The amount of increased timber available if VQOs are removed will be minimal at best”, said Loveless. “What will change is that the forest companies will be able to access a very short-term supply of more profitable timber in the VQO areas (i.e. bigger and better quality pine trees, and spruce trees, which are closer to mills and therefor cheaper to access). Often VQOs are in the same areas as dedicated Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs). Sacrificing the long-term viability of tourism for short-term forestry gains is neither reasonable nor desirable for the long-term benefits to our economy. Bottom line is that changing or removing VQOs just doesn’t make economic sense.”

“The forest industry is facing difficult times and we all acknowledge that”, said Loveless. “This situation is expected to only get worse. With these dire predictions, what we really need to be doing for our communities is not removing VQOs, but rather strengthening all our land use objectives including VQOs that support tourism and local diversified economies”

The WTA sent a letter to the provincial government today urging them not to consider any proposals to change or remove valuable Visual Quality Objectives in the in the Burns Lake area and along the Hwy 16 corridor.

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For more information on this issue and the WTA please contact Evan Loveless, WTA Executive Director at 250-336-2862 or evan@wilderness-tourism.bc.ca

“Ensuring a sustainable future for BC’s wilderness tourism industry through leadership, advocacy, and stewardship.”