

April 8th, 2020

Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
President of the Executive Council
West Annex Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8X 1X4

Dear Premier Horgan,

RE: COVID-19 and Healthy Outdoor Activities

We, the undersigned, would like to draw your attention to an issue that has understandably been of less interest during these challenging days for your government. During the last two months or so, your focus has been that of stemming the devastating impact of the coronavirus, and some encouraging signs are starting to appear. We agree that this is priority one.

One of the consequences of the all-out fight to contain the virus has been the necessary cessation of social gatherings and the rule of social distancing, which fortunately most of the public has readily accepted. There are, however, activities that can be permitted to sustain the health of the public that our Health Leader Dr. Bonnie Henry has emphasized on more than one occasion. Getting outdoors while adhering to social distancing is important for the public's health and amongst the outdoor activities that can be conducted with little to no risk are hunting and fishing.

Hunting and fishing are very important in terms of food security for rural and coastal communities throughout the province. Over half a million BC residents participate annually in fishing alone. While fishing is currently permitted, your government, we believe, has unnecessarily restricted public access to most of the forest recreation sites and provincial parks. Many of these closures have also restricted access to vital boat launches and fishing access points. These measures are, in our view, counterproductive and will result in potentially unsafe crowding on fishing spots elsewhere.

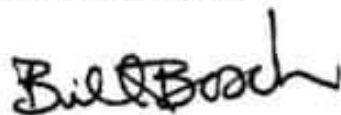
Fishing is very much an individual and or family activity that can be conducted safely with social distancing in mind. We fear that closure of boat launches and fishing access points will send a message to families and potential new anglers that fishing is an unsafe activity, when, in fact, it is quite the opposite.

We feel a proactive approach using signage and communications that at trail heads, fishing access points and recreation areas will be more than enough to encourage users to keep their appropriate social distance and mitigate the spread of the virus.

We also feel that residents with self-contained campers and trailers should be permitted to access provincial parks and recreation sites to enjoy the outdoors safely.

While it is reasonable to restrict some travel within the province, especially to rural communities, we don't feel travel to remote camping destinations should be discouraged. We fear that if designated parks and recreation sites remain closed that the public may choose to create their own campsites, which may well have negative impacts on fish and wildlife habitats.

Yours in conservation,



Bill Bosch
President
BC Wildlife Federation



Matt Jennings
Executive Director
BC Fishing Resorts & Outfitters Association



Louise Pedersen
Executive Director
Outdoor Recreation Council of BC