



Response to the City of Abbotsford's McKee Neighbourhood Plan

July 26th, 2023

The Fraser Valley Conservancy is disappointed that the Abbotsford City Council approved the McKee Neighbourhood Plan (MNP) on June 26th, 2023. This plan does not protect the needs of nature. The implementation of this plan will result in loss of critical tree canopy and wildlife habitat, contributing to the climate and biodiversity crisis. The homes built will not address the lack of affordable housing, and will increase reliance on personal transportation.

It is time for municipalities to make strong, progressive, and forward-thinking plans that balance the needs of nature to support our growing communities. It must also prioritize and value the Semá:th First Nation by engaging in respectful and honest reconciliatory action.

Two important questions remain unanswered after the approval of the MNP:

- How will terrestrial habitat outside of the riparian areas be protected, especially in the habitat hubs?
- How will the road and related infrastructure design ensure wildlife linkages will be functional and effective?

To address these concerns, the Fraser Valley Conservancy requests the following seven action items of the City of Abbotsford:

1. Complete a McKee Neighbourhood Plan gap analysis of the MNP as passed. This analysis would investigate:
 - i. Feasibility of the habitat hubs and wildlife linkages as envisioned in stage one being achievable with the approved plan's road network and developable areas.
 - ii. The impacts to First Nations' traditional land use of the area.
 - iii. The incorporation of the City's Trail-use Strategy findings.
2. Update the Tree Protection Bylaw (2010) to capture the protection of trees to the greatest extent possible and meet the goals of the City's Urban Forest Strategy. Revise the bylaw to protect trees throughout the MNP, not just in riparian areas.
3. Establish a funding mechanism for the MNP specifically to acquire key pieces of developable land to ensure the linkages and hubs can be secured.
4. Create Best Management Practices (BMPs) that function as prescriptions for all developments, regardless of land-use type. These include, but are not limited to:





- i. Road design guidelines to ensure wildlife linkages are functional for all species. Include wildlife access to crossings and maintenance of existing hydrological conditions. Designs need to meet both engineering and environmental requirements.
 - ii. Minimum size requirements for wildlife linkages and habitat hubs, including suitable buffers, to ensure important areas (including federally designated Critical Habitats) can remain functional.
 - iii. Establish setback requirements for areas where recreational uses and wildlife linkages or habitat hubs overlap.
5. Publish the GIS shapefiles associated with the approved MNP maps on the City's webmap and ensure the background research documents are available to the public.
6. Provide adequate staffing resources for timely and rigorous review of development permits and enforcement of the staff recommendations.
7. Meet the standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

The Fraser Valley Conservancy remains committed to assisting the City of Abbotsford with these action items, including providing input on Best Management Practices and development proposals.

We will continue to work with stakeholders and all four levels of government (municipal, provincial, federal, and First Nations) to search for innovative approaches to difficult environmental issues.

We will also work with the community to share the importance of the McKee Peak area, encouraging our supporters to Speak for the Peak as each new development proposal is presented.

We must work with nature to create a livable community on McKee Peak where future generations will be able to live and thrive.

Sincerely,

Joanne Neilson
Executive Director
On behalf of the Fraser Valley Board of Directors

