



**BOWEN ISLAND HORSE OWNERS AND RIDERS ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 282, Bowen Island, B.C. V0N 1G0**

Bowen Island Official Community Plan (OCP) Update IDEAS Forum submission

October 2, 2009

To: Casey Grundy, cgrundy@bimbc.ca
Re: Priorities & interests about Bowen's future as they pertain to our organization

Background

Formed in 1983, BIHORA has grown from a small group of horse enthusiasts to an organization that has remained dedicated to its goals—enhancing knowledge and abilities and promoting general enjoyment and opportunities to all ages for participation with horses and riders.

Our presence in the community is highly visible; riding our horses on local trails, serving on the trails committees and hosting horse shows and events at the Crippen Park Equestrian Ring. Our fund-raising events pay for the up-keep of the Equestrian Ring (The Meadows) in Crippen Park, which has historically been used for horses and trail rides dating back to the days of the Union Steamship Hotel.

Current Concerns

Within one generation, our members have seen Bowen Island change from a horseback riders' paradise with virtually unobstructed riding opportunities to a fragmented set of isolated barns and trails that require motorized transport between them.

- Increased traffic and the rise of drivers who are unaware of safety risks regarding driving near equestrians have made riding on/along Bowen's roads dangerous and unenjoyable.
- Subdivisions and new developments have severed access between riding trails and facilities.
- Some public trail enhancements have not adequately considered equestrian use, putting in place bridges or other equestrian un-friendly features, thereby excluding equestrian use from areas previously used by equestrians.
- Severed trail access has increased the need to trailer horses between locations. Bowen's narrow, winding and degrading roads require trailer drivers to drive extremely slowly to avoid possible injury to their horses, and require ample planning to ensure the destination offers a safe place to park, unload and turn their trailer around.

Present Activities

Our current efforts are focused on ensuring our members have plenty of safe riding opportunities. To this end, our activities include:

- participation on the Greenways Committee and Trails Committee, to ensure new shared-use trails do not exclude equestrians; returning non-shared-use trails back to including equestrian use; and identifying opportunities for creating new trails that connect with existing trails
- educating the public on how to behave when encountering a horse/rider on a trail or by the roadside
- educating our members on appropriate trail-riding etiquette, including practicing a 'leave no trace' approach to trail usage
- collaborating with off-island horse organizations to share knowledge and provide riding opportunities on Bowen for their membership and off-island for our membership
- organizing member events at The Meadows and organizing shared-use trail events for members and non-members alike

Priorities & Interests for the Future

In regards to the OCP, there are several provisions we'd like to see embedded that would preserve and enhance equestrian experiences on Bowen. These include:

- Acknowledging that the equestrian community is one of Bowen's many community groups which contribute to Bowen's unique character and lifestyle, and therefore efforts should be made to accommodate equestrians wherever appropriate/possible.
- Noting the fact that there is no centralized hub of equestrian activity and therefore equestrian considerations need to apply island-wide, not just in isolated locations.
- Wherever possible, ensuring new bylaws and zoning are equestrian-friendly and preserve the rights of horse owners to maintain horses on their property if appropriate.

More specifically, BIHORA would like to see improved equestrian access to all Bowen's trails, and improved connectivity between trails so that riders have the opportunity to travel island-wide on horseback in safety. Specific provisions that would further these goals include:

- Ensuring new trails and upgrades to old trails adequately consider equestrian use and prevent implementing features that would preclude equestrian use (e.g. short steps, unsound/slippery bridges, inappropriate footing, low clearance). BIHORA is happy to work with developers to come up with mutually beneficial solutions that are both safe and cost-effective. We also have documentation in our library to assist with such planning.
- Increasing roadside trail safety by placing barriers between roads and roadside trails thereby separating vehicle traffic from trail traffic and eliminating parked cars from trails.

- Proactively securing island-wide trail corridors that would provide a rich network of riding opportunities through a variety of terrain over long distances.
- Improving trail connections to The Meadows, reducing the need to trailer horses there.

Conclusion

BIHORA's concerns are centered on preserving a healthy equestrian lifestyle for our members that involves having easy, safe and plentiful access to riding opportunities throughout the island. We feel that our organization's goals are not at odds with the general population's vision for Bowen and in fact, through partnerships with other community groups, can provide amenities that benefit all islanders and attract other like-minded individuals to our community.