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Promoting nature awareness in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and beyond

March 27, 2014

Lexa Hobenshield,
External Relations Manager, KMC
Trans Mountain Expansion Project
Kinder Morgan Canada
8531 Commerce Court
Burnaby, BC, V5A 4N4
Transmitted by email: lexa_hobenshield@kindermorgan.com

Dear Ms. Hobenshield (Lexa):

The Burke Mountain Naturalists (BMN) are a group of approximately 250 members who take a keen interest in understanding and protecting nature. When our club formed in 1989, our first two initiatives were to protect lands on Burke Mountain and at Colony Farm. We were thrilled when our efforts led to the announcement of the establishment of Pinecone Burke Provincial Park and the protection of Colony Farm as a new Regional Park in June, 1995. Since that time, we have maintained a keen interest in Colony Farm Regional Park. A number of BMN members continue to volunteer at Colony Farm Regional Park; some also serve as Board members for the Colony Farm Park Association (CFPA). I am presently the Chair of CFPA.

It is difficult to overstate the shock I felt when I learned at your workshop on March 26 that you were proposing to use several fields at Colony Farm Regional Park as a place to lay down and assemble the portion of your pipeline that will go under the Fraser River. It was especially difficult to not receive a full explanation of why the location of the pipeline crossing had changed and what circumstances made your corporation feel use of the Park was the preferred option. As I recall, the only explanation we received, which was delivered with a casual shrug of the shoulders, was that "the other site was becoming problematical".

To our minds, parks are simply not suitable sites for industrial construction activities. Parks are created as green space for public enjoyment and to protect wildlife habitat. Colony Farm was specifically protected to keep the lands in public ownership, to keep the lands open and accessible to the public, to preserve the agricultural capability of the land, to provide opportunities for public recreation and to protect wildlife habitat and enhance its biodiversity. Another goal was to ensure compatible land uses. We do not see construction of a pipeline to be a compatible land use at Colony Farm Regional Park. We are opposed to this proposed use of a protected Park as a construction site.

We request a detailed written justification as to what site(s) you were previously considering for pipeline assembly and why these options are no longer apparently favoured. This explanation should include the cost savings you anticipate if you were able to use CFP.

We fear it is all too easy for your staff to see parks as “empty spaces” available for your convenience and construction activities.

Our understanding is that you propose the pipeline will go underground in the field which belongs to the Forensic Psychiatric Institute (FPI). Please describe how much of this field could be required both as a temporary worksite and for permanent infrastructure and access. Also, please describe how you propose to access this field for ongoing maintenance activities.

Our understanding is that you propose to construct an assembly pad and access road through at least 5 fields on the Home Farm side of the Park and could cross Colony Farm Road as well as intrude into the hedgerow near Mundy Slough. This hedgerow was planted, in part, as habitat compensation for loss of the 3rd runway at the Vancouver airport. Please describe how you would prepare the site for such work and explain how much of each field would be required. We understand your construction work within Park boundaries will not be permanent so please describe how you propose to restore the land to its original state. Also please describe the length of time you would anticipate to be working in the Park and your proposed season(s) of use.

Colony Farm Park is visited by thousands of people every year. Traffic along Colony Farm Road increases significantly during the active growing season for the Community Gardens. It is our understanding you propose to use Colony Farm Road as your main access for construction activities. As the vast majority of the parking for park visitors at Colony Farm Park is accessed off Colony Farm Road, please explain how you would avoid having an impact on park users.

At the meeting on March 26, you failed to clarify if Metro Vancouver (Colony Farm Park) and the provincial government (FPI site) have given permission for you to use their lands. In our view, it is inappropriate that you are proposing to permanently impact land which lies within the Agricultural Land Reserve on the FPI lands. Will your proposed work require permission from the ALC to proceed? Will the City of Coquitlam also be required to approve this proposed work? Have you consulted with Kwikwetlem First Nations?

The fields that you propose to use at Colony Farm Park have been designated for agricultural use under Colony Farm’s Land Use Plan. The field adjacent to the FPI was, in fact, used for such purposes a few years ago. However, agricultural fields have also significant wildlife value. In particular, these fields, because they have not been used for agricultural activities for several years, have mostly converted into “old field habitat” which is an extremely valuable type of habitat for many species. In particular, several species-at-risk rely on the old field habitat at Colony Farm Park. These include great blue herons, barn owls, short-eared owls and barn swallows. While the nesting season for migratory birds is an especially critical time of the year, the fields are used by wildlife throughout the entire year especially by raptors which forage over the fields for voles and other small mammals. Great blue herons forage in these fields as well as the drainage channels throughout the winter months. In addition, studies by the Vancouver Avian Research Center which conducts banding studies on the Port Coquitlam side of Colony Farm Park have shown the Park is an important area for birds, especially juveniles, to gather in the post-breeding period. These

birds can spend several weeks at Colony Farm Park in the post breeding season, gaining muscular strength and the skills they will need for successful migrations south.

Colony Farm Park is also well known as a regional “hot spot” for the colourful Lazuli Buntings, a bird more commonly found in the interior of BC. Every spring, volunteers from BMN and CFPA conduct public nature walks at the Park in the field adjacent to the FPI because this area is one of the more favoured sites for Lazuli Buntings to nest. The male birds use the tall trees as roost sites to call and attract females. Nests are typically built in shrubs only a few feet off the ground. These nature walks are an extremely popular event at Colony Farm Park. We do not want to see bunting habitat disturbed nor our ability to offer these walks impaired.

In addition to our request for a written justification, we also request an opportunity meet with you to discuss relevant issues should permission be obtained from the various authorities to proceed. In fact, we would recommend a special public meeting be hosted to present information and receive public input from all those who care about Colony Farm Regional Park. If such a public meeting is held, we recommend it include a formal presentation rather than simply being an Open House. Our experience with Open Houses is that they often fail to properly convey critical information and members of the public who attend often come away with confused and incorrect information.

I appreciate your offer of a map of the area which will show your proposed zones for construction activities. I will arrange to pick this up sometime next week so that I can share it with BMN members and the CFPA Board. It is deplorable that your proposal has only been brought to the attention of the public after the deadline has passed for applications to the National Energy Board to participate in the Hearing even though, as you explained, there may be additional opportunities to request the National Energy Board hold additional hearings with regard to route specifics.

Sincerely,

Elaine Golds, Ph.D.
Conservation-Education Chair

cc:

City of Coquitlam

Metro Vancouver Parks

Metro Vancouver Board

Kwikwetlem First Nations

CFPA Board,

Ginny Wilson, President, Colony Farm Community Gardens Society

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