

**(DRAFT) Voluntary Recreational Access Management Group
September 20, 2006 Meeting**

Attendance List

Name	Organization	Contact #s
George Schultze	MOE	Fax 847-7728, ph 847-7299, george.schultze@gov.bc.ca
Les Auston	Houston Snowmobile Club	845-7040, lauston@telus.net
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Mel Coulson	BV Naturalists	Ph 846-5649, melandevi@bulkley.net
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Daryl Hanson	Smithers Exploration	ph 846-9214, quickdnd@bulkley.net
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Jim Easterday	Outdoor Recreation Alliance	Ph 847-4802, fax 847-6155, jim@hiway16.com

Note: notice of meeting was sent to the email addresses on our contact list of all club reps

Purpose of the Meeting

- To review and discuss the voluntary access restrictions and the effectiveness of the VRAMC in achieving compliance.

Agenda

- 1.) Overview of Activities Since Last Meeting
- 2.) Status Report of Caribou
- 3.) Access Management and Compliance Concerns
- 4.) Recommendations and Action Items
- 5.) Next Meeting

Minutes

1. Overview of Activities Since Last Meeting
 - Minutes of the last meeting held on Feb 1, 2006 have been distributed to all of the club reps
 - Winter calf survival flight was conducted in March 2006 (results distributed)
 - Fixed wing telemetry flights were initiated and since mid July ten flights have been conducted. Results from the flights are reported to the VRAMG reps.

2. Status report of caribou

- George reported that the current status and progress of the herd is good. The reproductive rates are good and survival rates appear to be good. On the July 19, 06 fixed wing flight 114 caribou were observed (includes this years calves).
- Currently eighteen collared animals are being tracked. There were 19 but one collar appears to have failed and no longer produces a signal.

3. Access Management and Compliance Concerns

The purpose of the VRAMG was to manage recreational users in the area to voluntarily comply with the recreational access restrictions prescribed to minimize the risk to the caribou. The group would try to avoid legislated restrictions in order to provide flexibility to allow recreational opportunities where the caribou herd and it's recovery would not be jeopardized.

Concerns a) increasing use of motorized vehicles in the non-motorized area

b) Increasing number of dogs being taken into the CORE area

c) Amount of winter motorized use in the non-motorized area (including use as per agreement with clubs) may be reducing the effectiveness of the habitat so caribou do not use it

d) Non-motorized user activities may be displacing caribou

e) Increasing forest development is creating more potential access points making it logistically harder to control users.

Discussion

- Generally it has been felt that up until now people were mostly complying with the voluntary restrictions.
- The perception is that there is a growing number of recreationists using the area. The amount of non-compliance seems to be increasing noticeably summer use in the non-motorized areas and people taking dogs into the area.
- Some of the non compliance is due to ignorance where people claim to be unaware of the restrictions but significant amounts of people admit to being aware of the restrictions but choose to defy them.
- The VRAMG feels that an awareness campaign is required, some of the signs need to be spruced up or replaced, more media coverage from Prince Rupert to Prince George is required
- People do not understand how their individual activities can be a factor.
- More people coming into the valley.
- ATV industry is exploding and numbers of ATV users and the number of ATV's out there are growing across the continent. Resource managers across North America facing management challenges.

- People using the area will feel they have had something taken away should their activities be restricted in spite of the fact that the Telkwa caribou recovery area is not the same as a general use area.
- Some sort of recreational use and compliance monitoring program should be implemented and the data collected, though not necessarily essential for making management decision regarding risks to caribou, could aid managers
- All user groups have some impacts on the caribou
- New evidence to support that winter motorized use reduces the effectiveness of habitat and displaces caribou.
- Expanding industrial development access is providing more opportunities for motorized recreational users to access the non-motorized designated areas.
- New signs have been ordered for the Hunter's Basin and Hankin Plateau access points.

4. Recommendations and Action Items

Recommendation: The VRAMG recommends that the Province initiate steps to implement Summer non-motorized legislation in the non-motorized areas before the 2007 season.

Due to the increasingly difficult logistics of controlling ATVs and other summer motorized activities, the increasing amount of users, the perceived increasing numbers of users defying the voluntary restrictions in the area and the inability of the VRAMG to achieve voluntary compliance in spite of the information campaign, the signage and the peer pressure, the reps feel that they no longer wish to be the ones who address this issue.

Action Item 1: George to draft an information bulletin on the caribou to be reviewed by the group before submitting it to the local newspapers (Prince George- Prince Rupert).

Action Item 2: George to get new signs and replace existing ones on the Hunter's Basin and Hankin Plateau Areas

Action Item 3: George to contact the Smithers Snowmobile Club to see about updating the sign for the area south of the Telkwa as the current one does not properly denote the proper access restriction or agreement.

Action Item 4: George to review the Caribou Recovery Plan and re-evaluate caribou population objectives.

Action Item 5: George to look into options, procedures and timelines for implementing legislation.

Action Item 6: George to contact the newly formed Bulkley Valley ATV club

5. Next Meeting: The VRAMG would like to hold another meeting the beginning of November and possibly have the Regional Manger of the Ministry of Environment, Hugh Markides, present to discuss legislation implementation.

- If any group wishes to send a representative to participate actively at the next meeting please contact Dina Hanson or George Schultze so that you will be apprised of the date when next meeting date is set.
- As always, if any group has any comments, questions or points they would like to have discussed and considered at the VRAMG meetings they can pass the information on to one of the active participants so that it can be tabled at the next meeting.