

(DRAFT) Voluntary Recreational Access Management Group

January 14, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Attendance List

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Agenda

- 1.) Overview of Activities Since Last Meeting (April 20, 2009)
 - Caribou Sightings
 - Budget request for 2010-11
- 2.) Proposed expansion of Telkwa Mountain Goat LEH Hunting Area
 - Review of proposal
 - Ministry consideration of implications to caribou
 - Member feed back
- 3.) Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) Designation
 - Update
- 4.) Group Reports
- 5.) Misc Discussion points
 - Access trail proposal
 - Grazing tenure application

Discussion

1. Overview Since Last Meeting (April 20, 2009)

Activites:

- No funds received by ministry has resulted in no specific activities (surveys, telemetry etc.) in the Telkwa Mountains

Caribou Sightings:

- Reports of caribou near Barret Hat November to present. Up to 7 in one group have been seen. At least three collared animals (video taped in a group of 7).
- Heard rumours of sightings near Telkwa before Christmas
- July 15th report of 14 caribou near the Camel Humps and 3 near the Hunters Basin mining Area
- July 18th weekend 19 caribou reported near Camel Humps

Budget request for 2010-11:

- Applied for Approx \$54,000 from HCTF for the 1010-2011 fiscal year
 - 3 Helicopter Surveys (June, October and March)
 - Fixed Wing telemetry flight (15)
 - Collar 6 more animals
- Concerns expressed that good information is required to make proper management decision. A bit disappointed in the inability to ensure required funding is available.
- Point made that lack of funding does not mean concern for caribou is not there nor that the Province is not committed to the recovery of the herd

6.) Proposed expansion of Telkwa Mountain Goat LEH Hunting Area

- Review of proposal
 - Proposal put forward by Skeena Hunters Advisory Group (SHAC), first in 2008 and again in 2009, to expand the existing Limited Entry Hunting Opportunity (LEH) to encompass the entire Telkwa Mountain Goat range as opposed to only a segment of it.
 - Discussed with group at April 20, 09 meeting
 - Decision initially deferred by the Regional Manager pending progress of the WHA, however given the realities of the progress of the WHA process, The manager has made the decision to recommend to the Provincial Director of Wildlife in Victoria that he supports the season.
 - VRAMG members generally felt this would not help the recovery plan because of the optics. They felt that this would jeopardize credibility for the project and undermine the efforts and sacrifices made by people to date.
- Ministry consideration of implications to caribou
 - Biologists feel that, from a goat management perspective, the proposed season would be biologically defensible and is in line with current goat harvest management strategy being applied throughout region.
 - From a caribou management perspective, the proposed goat season would have negligible if any biological impacts
 - have minimal biological impact to the caribou recovery plan
 - implementation of the season will address concerns regarding impacts to Telkwa caribou and dated inventory information by;
 1. Basing the hunt on a conservative goat population estimate (100), use a 4% harvest rate and issue a conservative number of LEH authorizations (7) to let resident hunters harvest approximately 3 goats annually (share determined by the allocation policy).
 2. Respect the sensitivity of caribou to disturbance by ensuring the season dates (Aug 1 – Sept 30) are in line with those recommended for Voluntary compliance users (July 15 – Sept 30)
 3. Put in regulations that makes it mandatory for goat hunters to recognize the non-motorized zone (non motorized above 1100 M) which is currently voluntary for other users.
 4. Harvests are closely monitored through compulsory inspection and steps can/will be taken if dictated.
- Member feed back
 - At the April 20, 2009 meeting VRAMG participants had three concerns regarding proposal, biological impacts to the goats, biological impacts to caribou and potential undermining of the recovery efforts and future support by of the people they represent due to the apparent inconsistent message this gives.
 - Concern regarding the accuracy of inventory data

- Concerns still exist however considering that the way the season is being proposed would result in goat hunters being the only group of people that would be legally restricted by number participating, when they can access the area and how they access area. This is a strong message that regarding the seriousness of the recovery effort.
- Reminder that the initial objective of the group was to try to support recreational activities in the area provided that impacts to caribou were addressed.
- Hunters are also eyes and ears out there

7.) Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) Designation

- Caribou habitat perhaps a bit more problematic to manage than for other ungulates due to the associate generally higher economic impacts
- Initial WHA proposal has been reviewed by scientific panel (D. Seip, D. Steventon, D. Cichowski)
- Plan undergoing an impact assessment looking for balance
- Constrained by forest impact budgets directed by provincial policy and LRMP direction.
- Generally supported by MOF and licencees however some concern around impacts to the harvestable land base
- Work is continuing by technical people to address the THLB concerns
- hopefully within the next 2 months package can be forwarded to stakeholder parties for review and consultation
- WHA have no specific term length once they are in place but can be revisited and reviewed.

8.) Group Reports

- No reports from groups

9.) Misc Discussion points

Two applications have come in for activities in the Telkwa Caribou Recovery Area highlighting the continual pressures for encroachments within the Area.

- Access trail proposal for MOTSA
 - Proposal has been received to construct an access trail into Burnie Lakes
 - Concerns regarding potential implications of trail , increase use and proliferation of access
 - Concern around illegal Access trails within Recovery was one of the primary concerns that precluded the formation of the original Telkwa Mountains Voluntary Access Committee
 - No clear RAMP in place yet, No completed Park Management Plan
 - Ministry feels development application premature
- Grazing tenure application
 - Guide outfitter with existing tenure has /is applying for grazing tenure in order for him to operate using horses to conduct his guiding business
 - Decisions will be based upon consideration of caribou recovery and impacts to caribou.