

Voluntary Recreation Access Management Group Meeting Minutes

Topic: Telkwa Caribou Recovery

August 14, 2014

7:00 pm Caribou Room, NORA Building, Smithers, BC.

Attendance List:

Name	Affiliation	Contact Information
Conrad Thiessen	BC Government	conrad.thiessen@gov.bc.ca
Mel Coulson	B.V. Naturalists	melandevi@bulkley.net / 2508472468
Ed Hinchcliffe	B.V. Quadriders	riders@bvquadriders.com
Dave Totton	B.V. Quadriders	tottondv@telus.net
Jim Easterday	BVORS	jim@hiway16.com
Jay Gilden	BV Stewardship Coalition	jgilden@sbcglobal.net
Daryl Hanson	Smithers Exploration Group	dh@eaglepeakresources.com
Paul James	Lakes District Trappers	pjames@telus.net
Terry Close	Houston Snowmobile Club	terry_close@hotmail.com
Igor Steciw	SHAC Rep for B.V. Rod and Gun Club	isteciw@telus.net
Eileen Shorlier	Backcountry Horsemen	eisho@bulkley.net
Terri O'Neill	B.V. Rod and Gun, BCWF Rep	steele@bulkley.net
Jocelyn Campbell	BC Government	jocelyn.campbell@gov.bc.ca
Ron Fowler	Smithers Snowmobile Association	snowmobilesmithers@gmail.com
Bill Wookey	Smithers Snowmobile Association	emptyacres11@gmail.com
Dina Hanson	B.V. Backpackers	quickednd@bulkley.net
Brian Atherton	B.V. Rod and Gun Club	briantoread@gmail.com
Christoph Dietzfelbinger	Bear Mountaineering	info@bearmountaineering.ca
Dave Stevens	HB	geek@uniserve.com
Laura Grant	MSc. Student UNBC	grant.laura.v@gmail.com
Len Vanderstar	BC Government	Len.Vanderstar@gov.bc.ca
Ben Heemskerk	BC Government	Ben.Heemskerk@gov.bc.ca

Time Restrictions:

Unanimous decision on setting a time limit for meeting. Meeting to not pass 9:00 pm.

Introductions:

Introduction of all attendees including the group they represent.

Designation of Roles:

Dina Hanson puts forth the role of Chair.

Chair of Meeting: Dina Hanson

Dina Hanson puts forth the role of Recording Secretary.

Recording Secretary: Laura Grant

Meeting Agenda Overview:

- 1) Welcome and Introductions

- 2) Update on Telkwa Caribou Recovery (TCR) monitoring program: Conrad Thiessen.
- 3) Update on current management actions, including Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA): Conrad Thiessen
- 4) Options for scheduled ATV access to Starr Basin: Dan Rabbetoy
- 5) ATV access on Hunter Basin mining road and possible deactivations: Jim Easterday
- 6) Discussion on voluntary vs. legislated closure.
- 7) Future process for decision making on closure.

2) Update on Telkwa Caribou Recovery (TCR) Monitoring Program: Conrad Thiessen 3) Update on Current Management Actions: Conrad Thiessen and Len Vanderstar

Status of Telkwa Caribou.

Hard copies of summary monitoring report provided to all attendees. Provincially, Telkwa caribou are designated as northern mountain caribou. Federally, Telkwa caribou are designated as southern mountain caribou-Designated as threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife (COSEWIC). Recent federal recovery strategy requires immediate action against extirpation of southern mountain caribou.

Telkwa Caribou Management Plan

5 components to plan:

- 1) Habitat Management
- 2) Population Management
- 3) Monitoring
- 4) Recreation Management
- 5) Communities

Monitoring

Caribou Monitoring

Surveys

Oct 28- Fall rut count. High cow:calf ratio. High number of grizz and goats.

Winter Flights- High cow:calf ratio. 16 individuals (highest in last 4 years).

History of Counts – 1967 highest count, since then nowhere near that number of caribou. Reference to report by VRAM member that use of “suspected helicopter hunting” is inflammatory. VRAM member mentioned that they heard there was one man that shot 160 caribou in the late 1960s. Other VRAM members mention that population is variable and predator-prey dynamics play a role.

Future of Monitoring:

More collars to be deployed in 2014-2015 season. Monitoring 2013-2014 was funded by Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF), but will not be funded after this coming 2014-2015 season. Monitoring the Telkwa herd is a regional priority, but funds are not guaranteed for the future.

Human Monitoring

Infrared and metal counters to monitor people. Cameras and counters in voluntary access areas.

VRAM member asks how accurate they are as they are surprised that December numbers for Grizzly Plateau are so high.

Full analysis required.

Fixed wing flights also used for assessing recreation use of Telkwas. Skiers are harder to detect, limitation of the fixed wing method.

VRAM member asks how many caribou wintered in Telkwas in relation to recreational activity. Wonders about caribou moving into valley? Hard to monitor in valley.

VRAM member mentions negative impacts of forestry on food availability for caribou.

Habitat Management

Len Vanderstar:

Working on WHA through forest practice and range act. Trying to offset loss of timber for companies, while trying to keep biodiversity.

Two Management Zones

- 1) No harvest zone (provide large undisturbed area of alpine, subalpine and mature forest)
- 2) Seral-stage management zone (General Wildlife Measures provide seral-stage targets to manage early seral ungulate habitat).

Planning to put a legal order in for Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) for 20 years. Constrained by policy on timeline, but process is underway and current deadline for process is January 2015. WHA process does address recreational use, just manages industrial use

VRAM member asks if local first nation is on board with strategy?

VRAM member asks if migration routes have been studied. How did this affect the decline?

Population Management

Options:

- 1) Augmentation (south selkirks - not a success, 90's Telkwa augmentation - a success)
- 2) Maternity Penning (Revelstoke and Chetwynd). Pregnant females in enclosure and give calves a chance to be stronger. Telkwa caribou are showing high cow:calf ratio, so this may not be necessary now.
- 3) Reduction of Predators:
Directly and Indirectly (primarily prey reduction and habitat).
- 4) Supplemental Feeding

VRAM member suggestions:

- 1) Open an elk hunt. Elk population is increasing and having a negative effect on caribou and deer populations.
- 2) Predator reduction has been successful elsewhere (NE BC)
- 3) Is there enough food for them in the Telkwas alone? Habitat supply was evaluated and shown to have the capacity for a large number of animals.

Recreational Management:

Extent of Recreational Management:

- 1) Voluntary recreation access in place.
- 2) Social media has been used to ensure people are aware where caribou are in Telkwas. Not sure it's success.

Signs are old and confusing. Funding in place to replace signs. It would be valuable to have a small group of people that would like to talk about content of future signs. Further talk on this matter.

4) Options for Scheduled ATV Access.

VRAM member asks who has the keys to the gate at km 19 on the Telkwa FSR. Should this lock be changed so that people cannot get in there? Len to follow up with Ron Donnelly on this matter.

ATV Club asks for one trip into Santa Maria mine area (**Starr Basin**) in late September of this year (2014). The next year a trip onto **Grizzly Plateau** (2015). ATV club will trade these two trips for the Hunter Basin trips. Motion to vote. Vote results: 2 No, 20 Yes. Conrad and Ben to follow up with ATV club on this matter.

VRAM member notes that **Grizzly Plateau** trail is getting used in summer by ATVs weekly despite the rule only allowing access until the Gas Stop.

Starr Basin is regularly accessed in winter and summer. VRAM member states that there needs to be a solution for the **Starr Basin** cabin.

VRAM member voices that Smithers Snowmobile Association is committed to the program. Weekly updates put out to membership. GPS units, need to work on it in the coming years. The member also notes that there is upcoming legislation that all ORVs in the province must be registered and insured. This will address some of the current concerns regarding enforcement raised in the meeting. It's not just enforcement by govt officials, its locals and members of the club.

5) ATV Access on Hunter Basin and Possible Deactivations: Jim Easterday

Suggestion that deactivation of roads is a possible management action.

VRAM member would like horses to be able to pass on these roads.

Jim Easterday makes a formal request to Conrad Thiessen to investigate deactivation as a possible management action.

6) Discussion on Voluntary vs. Legislative Closure

VRAM member voices that original group (Telkwa Mountain Consultation Group) started in order to stop prevention of motorized use.

VRAM member voices that they want to stay with voluntary access and work with it.

VRAM member mentions that voluntary access management has been tried and hasn't worked. Motorized and others use at their own will. Current approaches are not working.

VRAM members discuss snowmobile tracks and predation. A request from another VRAM member is made to see formal documentation of tracks increasing predation on caribou.

Discussion to be continued next meeting because of limited time.

7) Future Process for Decision Making on Closure

Group exists in an advisory role to government. Decisions made by the group are to be used as advice by statutory decision makers in their decision making process. Need to decide on how decisions are made in the group. By consensus or majority vote?

Terms of reference could be developed. Not all VRAM members agree.

Will need to be determined at next meeting because of time constraints.

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday, Oct 29th 2014. 7:00 pm at NORA Building.

Suggestions for Meeting Agenda

- 1) Update on Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA)
- 2) Continue discussing Voluntary vs. Legislative closure
- 3) Discussion of how decisions are made within group. Option of facilitator.
- 4) Any further ideas should be forwarded to Dina Hanson.