

Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board

PO Box 985 | Smithers, BC | V0J 2N0

April 28, 2014

Mr. James Snetsinger
Area Based Forest Tenure Consultant

Re: Tree Farm Licenses

Dear Jim:

My name is Bob Mitchell. With me today are Mathias Westphal and Jack Hagen. We are all members of the Bulkley Valley Community Resource Board.

MANDATE: As you know, the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (CRB) is a collection of local citizens with a range of value perspectives who guide local land-use decisions. It was first established in 1991 to complete the Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). In 1994 the CRB completed the Bulkley LRMP, one of the first in B.C. It is widely regarded as one of British Columbia's most successful strategic land-use plans. The LRMP is still in place today and has been remarkable in its longevity, balance, and its ability to keep 'Peace in the Bulkley Valley'. The Board continues to play an important role in determining the future of land use in the Bulkley Valley and give some 'social license' to resource development.

The beginnings of BVCRB were tumultuous and chaotic to say the least. The Forest Service wanted to choose the board members and the board wanted to organize itself without government interference. A compromise was reached to have the board chosen by 3 local leaders who were involved locally in resource management. (Guenter Stahl, Ivan Thompson, Rob Roulston). They were to ensure that a balance of resource perspectives was maintained in the selection process of the CRB. The CRB works by consensus on all the issues we review.

CURRENT REVIEWS: The 12-member board is currently reviewing two proposed gas pipelines, a proposed Caribou Herd Restoration Plan as a Federal Species at Risk, updated Recreation Access Management Plans, and Circular Routes into the Morice TSA. All of the above are very controversial and threaten the very integrity of the Bulkley LRMP.

TREE FARM LICENCE: The CRB is not sure at this point on how to respond to you about the possible issuance of a Tree Farm Licence (TFL) in the Bulkley TSA. Historically, for many members of the public, a Tree Farm License has come to mean 'tree farming', where Tree Farmers use clear cut practices, herbicide brushing, and planting pure crops of one species, all for the best return on investment. It can often seem like accountants are managing licenses not resource professionals and the public often feels shut out of the process. Often it is perceived, as the name Tree Farm implies, that other values get left behind for the sake of profit. In your blog you talk about increased growth by TFL holders. We know that this equates to increased harvest. How do communities benefit from this increase in harvest if there communities don't have a saw mill? Are their benefits from an increased growth to recreation or biodiversity or wildlife or other values or just to the harvest tenure holder?

We certainly don't want impediments locked into a TFL that restricts the ability of the CRB to carry out its mandate to maintain the integrity of LRMP and guide resource development; impediments that are above and beyond those already in existence in the current forest tenures. More specifically we don't want the CRB or the public to be limited in reviewing any TFL documents related to the LRMP. This would include Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) audits, Timber Supply Reviews (TSR), Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP) audits, and TFL licence documents or anything that would compromise the strategic direction of LRMP.

SOECIES PROFILE: As you know the species harvest profile in the Bulkley has always been a concern. Historically the focus of the harvest had been on Pine and Spruce and not on Balsam and Hemlock. In TSR I, II, and III the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) was partitioned and separate licenses for Pulpwood (mostly Hemlock) and Marginal Sawlogs (mostly Balsam) were issued to ensure the profile was harvested. This begs the question as to whether the harvest profile requirements and consequential AAC under a TFL would be partitioned or would the best timber and the most productive ground be taken first? Would the existing natural species profile be maintained?

LOCATION: The CRB mandate is confined to the Bulkley TSA. A TFL that might cross TSA boundaries is a concern where LRMP strategic direction in the adjacent TSA is significantly different. Specifically the Bulkley LRMP values are spatially distributed while values in other LRMPs are not. Differences between LRMPs in joining TSAs are causing other problems for the CRB. We are currently dealing with multiple pipelines that cross multiple TSAs. Also we need to deal with access roads to the pipelines connecting those same TSAs. It will be difficult to be in a position of dealing with similar cross LRMP issues in the context of a TFL.

EXPERIENCE: We in the Bulkley already have some experience with land-based tenures including the Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Tenure and several Woodlots. So far the experience with the Community Forest has been a good one. It has several members of the community on its board of directors, some of the profits are channeled back into the Community, and it has been receptive to recreational groups such as the Smithers Community Forest Society, the Smithers Mountain Biking Club and the Bulkley Valley Ski Club. Woodlots are not really prominent because of their small size but sometimes gates controlling access have been a problem for the public.

SOCIAL LICENCE: All of the above is really about local 'Social Licence'. It is a popular phrase these days but in the case of the CRB it is 'very real'. We at the board with our balance perspectives feel that we represent a form of social licence. Social licence is not about being bystanders; it is about being connected and involved. In the case of a TFL to achieve social licence the people of the Bulkley Valley and the licence holder have to be connected not just by a formal government licence agreement made in Victoria but by respect, knowledge, and understanding, when it comes to long term forest resource development.

Thank you for your time on this important issue. If you have any questions, please contact the undersigned by email at info@bvcrb.ca.

Yours truly,

Robert D. Mitchell
Member, Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board