

Telkwa Mountains Recreation Access Management Advisory Group

Meeting minutes, March 14, 2016. Meeting convened at 5:30 PM, Round Lake Hall, Quick, B. C.

Attendance/Representation:

Angling and hunting - Igor Steciw
ATVers - Dave Tolton, Ed Hinchliffe
Conservation - Jim Easterday, Daphne Hart
Hikers/backpackers - Dina Hanson
Backcountry horsemen - Eric Becker
Mineral exploration (hobby) - Daryl Hanson
Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition - Jay Gilden
Skiers - Mike Dunbar, Dave Pellows
Snowmobilers – Wade Lubbers, Les Auston
Observer – Floyd Kennedy

Guests/Speakers:

Jocelyn Campbell, Ecosystems Section Head, Skeena Region, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Facilitated by: Pam Penner

Recorder: Jill Dunbar

Agenda

- Howson bridge & gate – led by Jocelyn Campbell
- Signs – led by Jocelyn Campbell
- Jim Easterday: SDRT (Sintering, Displacement, Rut Disruption, Traces) - interaction between snowmobiles and caribou
- Review of list of areas identified for group discussion/recommendations
 - Jim Easterday & Daphne Hart: Dissenting view of conservation value group for the area above the Gas Stop and proposal for complete closure to summer motorized recreation in this area.
 - Jay Gilden: Dissenting view of stewardship value re: conditional support dependent on the ATVer's commitment not to seek any rides into the Core Recovery Area and only one ride per year into the areas in the Starr Creek zone.
- Discussion of next area identified: Core recovery area (red on map) including: Hankin Plateau, Webster Lake, Hunter's Basin, Emerson

Additions to agenda

- Meeting location
- Rationale for winter motorized recreation, Grizzly Plateau

Meeting location

Meetings need to be in Smithers if digital versions of maps are required. Do we need Wi-Fi?
Discuss later this meeting.

Rationale for winter motorized recreation, Grizzly Plateau

Pam Penner: A rationale statement is needed for each recommendation even if there is a consensus on the recommendation.

ACTION: Les Auston will write a rationale for the Grizzly Plateau winter motorized recommendation, by early April.

Howson bridge & gate: Jocelyn Campbell

Jocelyn met with Conservation Officers, Compliance and Enforcement staff, and District staff to discuss options. Jocelyn has also consulted with the trapper in the area, the guide outfitter for Mooseskin Johnny, and First Nations. Decision was to replace the gate, monitor, and consider removing the bridge if there is further vandalism. Removing the bridge won't prevent access. Jocelyn is hoping for a negotiated, enforceable solution.

Question: Is it illegal to ford the river at any point?

JC: Yes, under the Federal Fisheries Act. P.I.R. owns the bridge currently. District will be taking over some of the roads in the Wildlife Habitat Area.

Comment: Thank you to Jocelyn and to Ron Donnelly for responding to this.

Signs on Coalmine Road

Pam: Do we need to take any action re the 12 signs posted on Coalmine Road?

Discussion: The signs were put up as this group was getting started. Seems like an affront.

- They are a threat to group members – it seems like the people involved will damage public property to keep access to Starr Basin.
- There is nothing wrong with them except that they are littering and defacing the landscape.
- They are on Crown land.
- Deal with it when we discuss Starr. They are allowed to snowmobile there now.
- It is not the mandate of this group.

SDRT (Sintering, Displacement, Rut Disruption, Traces) - interaction between snowmobiles and caribou: Jim Easterday

Discussion: When a group member has background research to present, it should be sent to Pam, who will circulate for the group to read outside of meeting time and then discussed.

- We want to be able to inform ourselves.
- Important information is fine but we could get into a viscous cycle of contradictory information.

Jim Easterday: In brief, sintering is a cumulative and significant effect. Snowmobiles create a hard crust that is difficult for caribou to paw through.

Review of Grizzly Plateau, Summer

See minutes of February 20 2016 for stewardship value group conditional support for Grizzly Plateau summer recommendation.

Additional areas for discussion

Discussion:

- Add Glacis Peak to Core Recovery Area
- Separate Houston Peak if management indicates it should be a stand-alone zone.
- Split Starr into subzones as needed. Houston and Smithers snowmobile groups to map out where they ride.

Questions from February 20 2016 meeting

When/where are caribou most vulnerable?

Jocelyn Campbell: During calving: Late winter/early spring

10 year caribou activity

Discussion: Group would like the more current data. In 2006 there was a large snowfall and many animals were lost.

ACTION: JC will produce a map based on last 10 years of data.

Definition of extirpation

See minutes of February 20 2016

Discussion: "Approaching 0" is vague.

- If there are less than 10 the gene pool is restricted.
- Can we define it for the Telkwas?
- If no animals had been brought in there would be none there now.

JC: This definition is used across B.C. and we cannot customize it.

Movement of caribou outside the Telkwas (collared/non-collared).

Questions: Can we have telemetry data weekly? How do we process anecdotal information?

JC: These sightings are rare. Conrad would like coordinates, sex, and whether there are calves or not if possible.

\$25 free miner's license

Q: If someone buys one, are they an industry user rather than a recreational user? And therefore have access to the Telkwas – all zones that are under industry user agreement?

JC: Can't answer this question.

Reason ATVers are banned from Grizzly?

JC: Most closures are to avoid damage to alpine but unsure of the specific answer for Grizzly.

Discussion: Recommendations came from the original meeting.

- Where are the records?
- The first document wasn't dated but clearly states what was discussed.

Legal tools to prevent access by hikers

JC: 1) Section 58 of the Forest And Range Practices Act: Used to protect recreation resources and

2) Section 7 of the Wildlife Act: Used to prevent a person from entering a Wildlife Management Area. A WMA would have to be imposed over the Wildlife Habitat Area in the case of the Telkwas.

Comment: Section 58 is used in Blue River area.

ACTION: Les Auston will present information on this to the table.

Comment: What about First Nations? There should be an awareness of this.

JC: It's a Section 35 Constitutional right. We can't address this with this group.

Grizzly Plateau

Pam: The winter recommendation is tentative. For summer, there is general agreement, with dissenting views. The disagreement centred on the wording, "Depending on caribou use, one motorized ride allowed per year by permit at the discretion of MOE" versus "Depending on caribou use, organized group rides allowed by permit at the discretion of MOE" (see vote below).

Discussion: Conservation value group: Have changed the date in their proposal to coincide with LEH dates, so September 15 is changed to September 30 for summer non-motorized access on Grizzly Plateau and the Core Recovery Area.

- Would access permits be for clubs, organized groups, or individuals?
- It could be any organized group.
- If not a club, then the clubs should know about it so they could join the ride.
- Permits issued to clubs encourage self-regulation.
- Would be lamentable if a group from outside the area used up the one available ride, therefore it should be an organized group.
- There will be disgruntled people whether they are club members or not.
- It is up to the biologists.
- Both motorized and non-motorized traffic have impacts on the caribou.
- It is not a motorized vs. non-motorized issue. Hikers can go anytime unless there's an order-in-council.
- Do you have to be a member of the snowmobile club to use the groomed trails?
- No, but a fee must be paid.
- Why not charge to go on a sanctioned ride?
- The money is to go to trail maintenance and if there is no maintenance agreement you couldn't charge.

Pam: What is the thinking behind *one* ride?

Comments: It is enforceable.

- It was dependent on what we recommend for other areas. Quadriders would give up access to Hunter's Basin for one ride into Starr and one into Grizzly.

Vote:

To remove the number "one" ride: 7 in favour.

To leave in "one": 4 in favour.

Abstained: 2.

ACTION: Eric Becker will prepare a statement presenting the case for removal of “one”. Jay Gilden will prepare a statement presenting the case for keeping “one”.
Deadline March 21 2016.

Core Recovery Area (including: Hankin Plateau, Webster Lake, Hunter’s Basin, Emerson, and Glacis Peak)

Discussion: The agreement that has been adhered to for years is that it will be closed for summer and winter except for a window of time to hike.

- We don’t know how the boundaries were defined. Should we base them on biogeoclimatic zones or elevation or some other factor that can be assessed? Should we be looking at a larger area? Can they be altered?

- Boundaries must be easy for users to identify.

Jocelyn Campbell: The boundaries are difficult for Conservation Officers and users to deal with. Looking at clusters of telemetry shows levels of use. Caribou do use the ESSf but we can’t see this in the telemetry data. The Kernel analysis method will help. 1100 m could be a rough elevation band. Boundaries can be altered. TRAM may want to include a sunset clause where recommendations (i.e., closures) are reviewed at a set period of time.

ACTION: Jocelyn Campbell will bring mapping showing kernel analysis to tomorrow’s meeting.

Comments: We should define all the Core Areas with the same objective criteria.

- We need to use natural boundaries to be clear.
- We can’t make small exceptions or have areas that don’t connect to each other.
- How many hikers are acceptable?
- Hikers impact caribou.
- Hikers help to monitor use.
- We want to provide recreation access. Access for hikers in the Telkwas is declining.
JC: Bikes have as much impact as quads. They move across the alpine quickly and cause erosion.
- What about horses?

ACTION: Jocelyn will do more research into impact of horses.

- We need enforcement of the rules in this area – both peer and gov’t
- We need to educate users/community
- Need to post signs re: closures
- What elevation? 1100? 1400? Something else? (i.e., 1250). Same on both sides of Core area or different?
- We are making recommendations for mandatory management practices to government – compliance will not be voluntary any more.
- How many active claims are there in the Core Area?

JC: We are working with Mines Inspectors to ensure best management practices are followed. We review Notices of Work. We are discouraging active mining.

Vote:

To change the date of non-motorized access from July 15 to August 1. In favour: 10, against: 2, abstained: 1. Eric (against) agreed with consensus of group.

ACTION: Jocelyn will find out what elevations the Core Area boundaries are, for next meeting.

ACTION: Les Auston will contact Jonathan Van Barneveld re: details of Houston Peak area.

Next Meeting: March 15, 2016. Topic: Access to Meat Cache

Meeting adjourned 9:15 PM