

# Telkwa Mountains Recreation Access Management Advisory Group

Meeting minutes, March 15, 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, Jonathan Van Barneveld  
Backcountry horsemen - Floyd Kennedy  
Mineral exploration (hobby) - Daryl Hanson  
Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition - Jay Gilden  
Skiers - Mike Dunbar, Dave Pellows  
Snowmobilers – Wade Lubbers, Les Auston

## Guests/Speakers:

Jocelyn Campbell, Ecosystems Section Head, Skeena Region, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations  
Brandy Hughes, Recreation Officer, Nadina/Skeena Recreation District, Recreation Sites and Trails BC

**Facilitated by:** Pam Penner

**Recorder:** Jill Dunbar

## Agenda

- Mapping
- Continued discussion of Core Recovery area, and access to Meat Cache. Areas for review: Add Glacis Peak to Core Recovery Area, split out Houston Peak if needed. It is used for hiking; access is from Chisholm FSR.

## Mapping

Jocelyn Campbell: Some maps displayed at this meeting use kernel analysis to show 50% and 95% probability of telemetry locations occurring within the areas outlined. Years 2002 to 2016 are represented. There is also a map showing legally held tenures. An image showing current zones outlined (not coloured in), and landmarks is also posted.

## Review of Core Recovery Area

Pam: Do you want to include an elevation line with the Core Recovery Area recommendation?  
Discussion:

- Different criteria are needed for east and west sides of the area.  
JC: The WHA goes to the bottom elevation of the ESSf because caribou need a forested buffer around the higher elevation areas.
- No one accesses the area via the east boundary. All the access is from the north/northeast.

- If there is no caribou use in an area, should we include it in the Core? Based on current telemetry?
- Isn't the WHA enough to meet the needs of the caribou?  
JC: Caribou are in the flatter terrain. Remember, we are planning for 150 caribou.
- It is harder to enforce the boundaries if not tied to an elevation. There is not a big area difference between 1100 and 1400 m except for the northeast chunk.
- Elevation is used in a large part of the province, unless there is a natural feature.
- With current technology we know where we are at all times.
- People are only entering at certain points, where access can be controlled.
- Are the caribou staying low to travel between areas?  
JC: No, they are staying high. When they move fast we don't get telemetry data. E.g. when they cross Mooseskin Johnny.
- How much recreation value is in the area between 1100 and 1400m?
- Only the linear access through the trees.
- We should plan for the future wave of recreation development.
- When the original boundaries were set in 1998, how many animals were there?
- 6 -8. Boundaries were based on critical habitat.
- They travel more widely than we might think. Are we going to create a huge area?
- The Houston Hikers have made a big effort to develop trails and get people out hiking. If there were an old mining trail it would be used a lot. We shouldn't limit recreation opportunities.
- If we set it at 1100 m it would take out the Meat Cache.
- We need to discuss the Meat Cache.

### **Access to Meat Cache**

Discussion: Snowmobilers have mapped where they ride. There are signs. Maps and brochures are distributed. It is accessed from Grizzly Plateau and is above 1400m. There is one access point.

- Is the trail linear?
- It is a wide draw. It is a big area but not all of it is rideable. About 10 riders use the area on a given day.
- The Core area should be expanded to Grizzly Plateau including the Meat Cache. Future of the caribou is important.
- What do snowmobilers do if they see caribou?
- They go elsewhere. Telemetry data is passed out. Cameras are there. Violations have not been seen. Only club members go in. Flights over the years have shown that the caribou numbers are small.
- We should close it to winter use and see what the caribou do. There may be more movement across the area. Close it for 3 years.
- Is there movement now through the Meat Cache?  
JC: The only place where we know for sure there is movement is across Mooseskin Johnny.
- The third principle says that the rules must be enforceable. Does that mean by clubs or government?

JC: Both. Peer enforcement is important.

- When you ride there do you stay all day?
- We spend time on the slopes. It ends in April because the lower elevation thaws. It is dangerous in the summer. We could look at timing.
- In spring there is a hard snowpack. Wouldn't make a difference to wolves if snowmobiles were in there or not.
- There have been caribou population ups and downs even though the area has been used since the 1990's.
- In Blue River there can be 330 riders and caribou together.

JC: The herd is declining at the Groundhog Mountain area at Blue River. Most of the rest of the area is closed. It is important to set aside large areas of unused terrain for the caribou.

- The Meat Cache access was agreed to by sledders and biologists. Why revisit it?
- Concern is that fairly intensive human activity impacts the caribou.

JC: Flatter areas of terrain are critical for caribou – including the Meat Cache.

- Could there be a trade for areas to the east?
- No. The edges are refugia and good calving habitat.
- There's no interest in snowmobiling on the flatter areas.
- Has activity in the Meat Cache reduced caribou numbers?

JC: It's a combination of factors. Activity makes them move to less favourable areas. Your job is to find a balance access for recreation and areas for caribou.

- If we specify timing – what would the best period be?

JC: Not sure. Feb/March is a tough time for caribou.

#### **Vote:**

To leave Meat Cache agreement as is: 8 in favour. 4 against unrestricted. Abstained: 2

- Caveat: Timing should be considered.

**ACTION:** Les Auston will prepare a statement in favour of snowmobile access to the Meat Cache. Jim Easterday will prepare a statement about closing access to the Meat Cache. Jocelyn Campbell will contact Mark Williams and Conrad Thiessen for background rationale. Pam: This is a preliminary position. We will take another vote once there has been time to consider other options.

Brandy Hughes: What is preferred by the caribou: Smaller area with no use, or larger area with dispersed use?

JC: In a smaller area they are more prone to impacts from natural events.

- We need additional scientific information. There is a global caribou decline. Some of them could be leaving the Telkwas. Could the elk be causing some impact? There is more to know.
- This is going to be legislated. We need to create a package that will conserve the caribou – otherwise government won't buy it.
- We would like to save the caribou. but we are only addressing one aspect.

Pam: This group can recommend that other factors must be addressed.

**ACTION:** Igor Steciw will prepare a statement, to be included in overall recommendation package to government, that government must address additional factors – predator management and environmental.

JC: A possible solution for the Meat Cache is to put a buffer zone around the kernels. A 70% kernel map can be made.

JC: will ask Laura to do model that shows other gradations not just 50%

Pam: Will the people who are preparing position statements add possible compromises?

Snowmobile group: Will consider this.

Conservation group: Has no alternate position.

- What if we close it completely, and government agrees? Would area be reopened if we find out that the recreational activity was not the contributing factor?
- Government had never reopened a closed area.
- We should include a recommendation in our report that the plan be monitored.
- If the population rebuilds there could opportunity for snowmobiles to go back into an area.
- There can be timing and/or geographic compromises. Government will buy in if more of us are behind it.
- It's the motorized users who are giving up access.
- Skiers are at risk as well.
- Backpackers are honouring the agreements.
- What would stop anyone from going there?
- There is Section 7 and Section 58.

Brandy Hughes: Section 58 protects the recreation values e.g. if there is a conflict. It is not in place to protect caribou.

- Section 58 could be used if people go against the plan.
- Might government impose Section 7 on this?

JC: They would ask us what the stakeholders think.

- We need expert advice.

JC: Has a grad student working on recreation and caribou in the Telkwas.

- We already have the information that we need. We need to move forward.
- Can we get the additional line work before the next meeting? It is the best available info and we can think about it before then.
- If we don't decide, the Federal government will impose a solution. There's a chance that it could be more restrictive.
- We do need to keep current. 20 years ago there was less traffic and machines couldn't go where they do now.
- Each group should state what their top priority area is and when they want access to it and then we close everything else. Let's see how that looks. Would like this out on the table.
- Are there snowpack records to correlate with caribou numbers over the years?

JC: It's a potential indicator. Government doesn't do this research. The grad student might be looking at weather patterns.

- We should be monitoring weather now if we're not.

**Vote:**

In favour of each group stating their top priority area and closing everything else: 5. Against: 7. Abstained: 1

Decision: Daryl withdrew proposal because it didn't have full consensus.

## **Next Meetings: April 20 & 21, 2016**

### **Agenda items:**

- **Changes/additions to agenda?**
- **Grizzly Plateau: Number of rides**
  - Presentation by Eric, in favour of removal of "one" ride
  - Presentation by Jay, for keeping the number of rides to "one"
  - Discussion by group
  - Recommendation
- **Access to Meat Cache**
  - Presentation by Les, in favour of snowmobile access
  - Presentation by Jim, against snowmobile access
  - Discussion by group
  - Recommendation
- **Statements in favour of and against preliminary recommendations**
- **Starr Basin – should it be divided? (i.e., east, west and northwest of Mooseskin Jonny)**
- **Guest speaker (if available): Mark Williams to explain reasons for current boundaries and caribou movement data/patterns.**

**Meeting adjourned 9:35 PM**