

October 17, 2000

Your File:
Our File: 78700-30

Dear :

Re: Telkwa Mountain Caribou Management and Access

Effective management of recreational access into the Telkwa Mountains is a critical component of the Telkwa Caribou Recovery Plan. Voluntary access restrictions were implemented in 1997 through the establishment of access zones. Despite an extensive campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of managing access through consultation, public meetings, radio interviews, newspaper articles, information brochures and signage, regular monitoring flights over the past 3 years have documented that there are still people using the area (either intentionally or in ignorance) contrary to the voluntary access restrictions.

With radio-telemetry data confirming the importance of the core area to the Telkwa Herd, and evidence mounting that voluntary access restrictions were not meeting the objectives of the recovery program, in the fall of 1999 MELP staff recommended legislation to close all motorized public access to the core of the recovery area. In response to requests from members of various user groups, MELP deferred the legislation to see if the level of voluntary compliance could be increased through increased signage and better promotion to the public by MELP staff and concerned user groups (The Telkwa Mountains Consulting Group).

In response to a request from Les Auston (Houston Snowmobile Club) for increased involvement of user groups in the recovery program, we are proposing that a "Voluntary Access Management Group" (VAMG) be established to work towards increasing compliance with access restrictions in areas and at times when it is required to meet the objectives of the recovery program. This cooperative approach will hopefully ensure minimal disturbance to the caribou as well as allow recreational use in areas that might otherwise be off limits.

The intention is to have regular meetings with representation from user groups to discuss current information on caribou movements and distribution and, what type of activities can occur that would provide recreational opportunities while minimizing disturbance to caribou. Club representatives would inform their respective clubs, post signs where and as required and do monitoring and policing of those engaged in their respective recreational activities. If through this concerted effort we are able to increase the level of voluntary compliance and meet the objectives of the recovery program, there would be no need for legislated closures. If we are not successful in meeting recovery plan objectives, then MELP and the VAMG will be forced to recommend legislation.

Members of the group will be expected to attend regularly in order to maintain continuity and to ensure they spread the word to their respective memberships who in turn pass the information on to other, non-club members. We wish to emphasize that access management recommendations

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from the ministry will be based solely on the needs and requirements of maintaining viable caribou habitat and meeting the objectives of the recovery program. It is up to the public to make voluntary compliance work. We do not see the proposed VAMG as a forum for resolving disputes between various user groups.

This letter is going out to all recreational user groups with an interest in the Telkwa Mountain area. If groups are interested in actively participating in the VAMG they should select a representative to attend the meetings. A number of groups that are affiliated with the Telkwa Mountains Consulting Group (TMCG) have chosen a single representative in the past to represent them. If you are one of those organizations and wish to propose a different arrangement, please ensure that you have a representative attend the VAMG meeting.

The first meeting is proposed for 7:00 PM, Nov. 24th at the Bulkley District forest office. This meeting is for group representatives (not an open house meeting) as space is limited. If you need further information, please call me at 847-7299 or Sean Sharpe at 847-7298 or Mark Williams at 847-7693.

Yours truly,

George Schultze
Skeena Region
Wildlife Technician

/cc: Wild game Society
Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club
Old Time Residents of Bulkley Valley
Houston Snowmobile Club
Adventure Smithers
B.V. Back Packers
Northwest Back Country Horsemen
Trappers Association
Guide Outfitters of B.C.
Smithers Snowmobile Club
B.C. Wildlife Federation
B.V. Archery Club
Smithers Cycling Club
Smithers Exploration Group
B.V. Mountain Club
Northwest B.C. Guides
Wildlife for the Future
B.V. Naturalists
B.C. Resort and Outfitters Association
Sierra Club
Federation of B.C Naturalists
Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club
Smithers X-country Ski Club
Driftwood Foundation
Houston Town Council
Telkwa Town Council
Smithers Town Council
Bill Goodacre (MLA)

Wetsuwet'en