

**Voluntary Recreational Access Management Group
February 22, 2001 Meeting**

Attendance List

Name	Organization	Email Address
George Schultze	MOELP	
Paul James	Houston	
Daryl Hanson	Smithers Exploration Group	
Les Auston	Houston Snowmobile Club	
Bill Wookey	Smithers Snowmobile Club	
Sean Sharpe	MOELP	

Minutes

Administrivia

- Les Auston was chosen as tonight's chairperson.
- George mentioned that Virginia Kimmett had been in contact to suggest that if the group was still looking for a facilitator, the BCH club had put forward the name of Jim Davidson.
- Noted that Rosemary Fox, Ray Chipaniuk and Virginia Kimmit were not able to attend tonight's meeting

Review of Jan 18th 2001 Minutes

- Bill questioned the meaning of it being up to user groups and the public to make voluntary compliance work. George pointed out that the objective was still to strive to achieve the desired access prescriptions. Without legislation there was nothing government could effectively do to ensure that. People have clearly stated that they do not want legislated restrictions so in order to ensure voluntary compliance will be effective enough to not have to have legislation imposed , people will have to take the responsibility to ensure that others are aware of the issue, what the consequences are and act accordingly.

Minutes accepted

Agenda Development

- hand out copies of Astrid's Thesis report
- review latest telemetry maps provided by MOELP
- review and discuss Caribou Update
- other business
- next meeting date

Meeting Notes

- 1. Copies of Astrid's thesis handed out. No discussion**

2. Review of Latest Telemetry Maps

- comments from Les and Bill that all of the locations are in the Northern part of the Telkwas so no apparent conflict in other areas.
- MOELP pointed out that only 20 collars are being monitored in the Telkwas, population is likely closer to 60 animals so just because no collars were located in those areas does not mean there are no caribou.

3. Review of Update

- MOELP concerned with snowmobile use of the Meat Cache and the area to the north of Houston Snowmobile area as evidenced by the number of snowmobile tracks observed on the last telemetry flight.
- Les explained that a large group of non-locals had been using the area last week. One of the local snowmobiler's did talk to them later in the week when he saw them accessing the Meat Cache and explained the situation. Apparently the sign at the Head of the Meat Cache is ineffective as it has fallen down and has been chewed by rodents. Les said they would replace the sign
- George said he would check to see if any of the signs in storage at Smithers would be appropriate and be back in contact with Les
- Darryl was not clear what the present status of the Meat Cache was. He was under the impression that snowmobile access was allowed.
- George explained that the Meat Cache had initially been designated as a special one-year winter motorized designation after which the data would be reviewed. In actual fact the review did not happen until Nov 99 (at the same time the proposal to enact legislation in the core area). The recommendation by the wildlife branch as a result of the data review was that caribou did frequent the area in the winter, that winter motorized use of the area to the north of the Houston Snowmobile area was not compatible with the intent of the Recovery Plan. The recommendation was that the area be non motorized. Last years (99/2000) monitoring showed that whenever caribou in that area shifted locations there was evidence of recent snowmobile activity having occurred in the areas they had vacated. The movement exhibited by the caribou in this area was notably different that of caribou to the north where there was little movement as well as no winter motorized activity.
- Les said that he was trying to ensure that people stayed out of the area, particularly when there is evidence of caribou being present. He commented that 99% of their members conducted their snowmobiling activities in the Houston Snowmobile Area.
- Sean said that the area was to remain nonmotorized with the possibility of staging special events in the area IE a one-weekend event hosted by the club for a specific venue.
- Bill pointed out that, from the Smithers side, very few people (snowmobilers) use the Starr Cr Area and did not think there was a problem considering that the caribou were on the main Telkwa Range.
- Again it was emphasised that the intent of the plan was to ensure that caribou would not avoid using available habitat in the recovery plan area because of human activity. It was also pointed out that an offer had been made last year to try to work something out with the SSC with regards to accessing the area south of Starr Cr.

4. Other Business

Brochure

- Daryl, Bill and Les thought that the brochure could be improved upon. Felt that it was a bit misleading with regards to the implications of legislated closure.
- suggested that the VRAMG publish it's own brochure.

Endangered Species Legislation

- Federal Endangered Species Legislation was being fast tracked and would possibly be going before the House this spring.
- Sean pointed out that as we had this recovery plan in place there would likely be little impact with regards to management of the Telkwa caribou

Guest Speaker

- Rick Marshall was unable to attend this meeting to provide the group with an update of the Tweedsmuir Caribou situation. George will try to set something up for the next meeting.

Snow Patrol

- Houston Club is training members for Snow Patrol, group informs users on hazard areas, access areas, avalanche awareness etc.

Compliance

- success of the access management strategy to date was brought up. There was a general feeling that efforts to date have been positive. There seems to be a greater degree of awareness hence compliance. There was recognition that, even with legislation there would never be 100% compliance so as long as things keep progressing positively with regards to voluntary compliance legislation would not be pursued.

Year end Report

- It was suggested that MOELP prepare a year end report after the season is over which could be used by the groups and the media to keep the public informed

Provincial Issues

- A question was asked what was the Skeena experience like in comparison to the other regions? Reply was that we are not sure of the details in other regions are however the impression is that access concerns regarding caribou are common to all regions. Region 5 is in the process of instituting access restrictions.
- Les has tried to access a web site for information on the Sustut area caribou. George was going to see if he could find the web address.

Project Duration

- it was asked how long would this project go on IE if the current population disappeared would the project continue
- the response was that there was no intention to keep on supplementing the herd with more animals. The whole purpose of the project was to bring the numbers back, monitor the animals to identify causes of declines, address those causes.

5. Next meeting

Location: Quick School

Date; Mar 15,2001

Time: 7:00 PM

* Note the April Meeting that had been scheduled for Thursday the 26th has been changed to **7:00 PM Wednesday April 25th in the 2nd floor meeting room in the Telkwa Town Office.** The date was changed due to a booking conflict.