



April 19, 2021

VIA EMAIL: gregk@skeenawild.org

Greg Knox
Skeena Wild Conservation Trust

Dear Greg Knox:

Thank you for your letter dated April 6, 2021, regarding concerns over 16 & 17 *Land Act* cancellations designated for Conservation and Public Use Purposes. I would like to make you aware that the Map Reserve Review Project (MRRP) that was conducted in the Skeena Region that led to the cancellation of some of the S. 16 and S. 17 withdrawals in Skeena Region was recently reviewed by the Office of the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson found that the project followed all applicable *Land Act* policies and procedures, including the Land Procedure: Management of Crown Lands for Conservation Purposes. Your claim that Section 4.3.1 of the Land Procedure was not followed is not supported by the Ombudsperson's review. I have enclosed the closing report from the review for your reference.

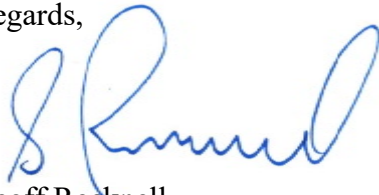
Consistent with *Land Act* policies only federal and provincial government agencies and government corporations may apply for the establishment of reserves, withdrawals, notations, and prohibitions. An applicant can also be a municipality or regional district. Should an application be approved the applicant becomes a holder of the reserve, withdrawal, notation, and prohibition. Through the MRRP all holders of S. 16 and S. 17 withdrawals were contacted with a request to provide a rationale for each withdrawal's retention, amendment, or cancellation. A number of these holders were municipalities and regional districts. Everyone who was contacted provided a response to our referral requests. All responses were considered by the decision maker.

Current *Land Act* policies and procedures do not require public engagement with community groups such as the Kalum Plan Implementation Committee or Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board. Where a withdrawal will impact the issuance of a replacement tenure, the tenure holder may be given reasonable notice that the tenure will not be replaced. There is no requirement to engage with adjacent land or tenure holder when considering the establishment, amendment, or cancellation of a withdrawal. Where the establishment, amendment, or cancellation of a S. 16 and S. 17 withdrawal has been determined to have an impact on an aboriginal right or title claim the province does undertake consultation with potentially impacted aboriginal groups. As these withdrawals do not establish rights over Crown land to a third party and the majority do not authorize physical developments, consultation with impacted First Nations is not a common occurrence.

While you believe there is no HARMS in providing the information that you've requested, the province does have an established process to follow when considering when to provide information to members of the public. It does so consistent with the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act* (FOIPA). I will ask that your community group follow the established FOIPA procedures to ensure you are provided with the information you seek and that the established process is followed.

The province remains committed to a respectful and trustful relationship with the conservation and recreational communities within Northwest BC. It does so in part by ensuring that all legislation, policies, and procedures are followed. Looking forward, Skeena Region FLNRORD will be initiating regional strategic planning for conservation lands and I look forward to engaging with you when that process is underway. If there is an urgent conservation risk that we are not aware of please let us know. Our lead for conservation lands is Chris Schell (Chris.Schell@gov.bc.ca).

Regards,



Geoff Recknell
Regional Executive Director
Skeena Region

Attachment: Office of the Ombudsperson Closing Summary

cc: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development
Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Eamon O'Donoghue, Assistant Deputy Minister, Regional Operations, North Area
Bobby Love, Director, Resource Authorizations Division
David Skerik, Director, Resource Management Division
Chris Schell, Ecosystems Section Head, Resource Management Division
David Brown, Regional Director, BC Parks and Conservation
Nancy White, Planning Section Head, BC Parks and Conservation
Jennifer Psyllakis, Director, Wildlife and Habitat Branch
Steve Gordon, Habitat Manager, Resource Stewardship Division
Christina Waddle, Conservation Lands Analyst, Resource Stewardship Division
Provincial Conservation Land Partners