

Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board
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February 23, 2006

Eamon O'Donoghue, Planning Manager
Integrated Land Management Bureau, Northern Region
Bag 5000
Smithers BC
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Re: Outdoor Recreation Management on Crown Lands in the Bulkley TSA.

Dear Eamon

There are a number of issues the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (BVCRB) has been dealing with in regards to recreation on Crown lands. The BVCRB expects the responsible provincial government agency to fulfill the commitment made in the LRMP *to manage the Outdoor Recreation Resource to maintain or enhance opportunities for a diverse range of recreational values and uses across the biophysical settings of the area,*

as directed by section 2.1.8 of the Bulkley LRMP. The Bulkley LRMP left recreation as an issue to be addressed by a future Recreation Access Management Plan (RAMP) process. The RAMP was an attempt to fill the gap left by the original BVCRB in their LRMP planning process. The BVCRB believes that, now is the time to complete the RAMP process to fulfill this commitment. The BVCRB held a preliminary meeting in April 2005 with the ILMB, other government agencies and local recreation groups to discuss this issue.

The BVCRB is not the only body that is concerned about recreation in the region. The need for better recreation management in the district is highlighted by there having been four Forest Practices Board complaint investigations related to management of recreation resources in the last six years. These complaints indicate that local residents are concerned about recreation management. Without attention to these issues by government agencies, recreation conflicts will continue to occur in the area, and the resource will continue to decline from abuse.

The Bulkley TSA LRMP Implementation Report, written by Tom Chamberlain in 2001 identified 85 issues from the LRMP that at that time were in various stages of being addressed. Of these 85 issues, 21 issues were related to either Recreation or Access Management Planning. As of February 2005 these 21 issues are still in "various stages of being addressed".

The Ministry of Forests 2004 *State of the Forest Report* (SOFR p. 114), recommends that: MSRMC consider developing a semi-primitive and primitive Recreational Opportunities Spectrum (ROS) target, and that it convene another RAMP process to deal with the original issues that are deemed to be either “Future Processes” or “Unresolved Issues”. Table 19 on the SOFR defines the existing status of these issues. Designation of areas for Motorized Use and Non-Motorized Use by the RAMP is also discussed within the SOFR.

More recently, the Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) has been formed in the Bulkley Valley area to address public concerns about the impacts of Off-Road Vehicles on sensitive terrain. Damage to sensitive terrain is specifically addressed in the Bulkley LRMP, and thus, the BVCRB shares the concerns of the ORA.

We perceive that there is a lack of legislative authority and ability, or will of government to enforce existing legislation. Although the Forest and Range Practices Act and Regulations contain sections that give government the power to control recreation on Crown Land, Higher Level Plan Orders have in many cases have not been completed to enable the legislation.

There also seems to be confusion as to which agency is responsible for the overall mandate to control recreation on these lands. The Ministry of Environment (MOE, which includes BC Parks), the Integrated Land Management Bureau, (ILMB) and the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and the Arts (MTSA), all have their respective roles to play in controlling recreation on Crown Land. The BVCRB feels that under existing legislation of the *Ministry of Forests Act*, the coordinating role belongs to the Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR). The MOFR should take the lead role in recreation management while consulting and cooperating with other ministries of the government and with the general public.

Prior to any potential Future Process relating to completion of the RAMP, the BVCRB believes that there must be a Government commitment to make decisions and designate orders for different uses and locations, even if “Consensus” cannot be reached. This process must include a set timeline to complete negotiations, a designated facilitator and a Terms of Reference for those parties involved, and a fixed budget. This process must also include the commitment to implement, monitor, and enforce, any related plans, Acts, and Regulations.

The Terms of Reference must include: a Balanced Recreational Opportunities Spectrum (ROS) for all outdoor recreational users, including: summer and winter and motorized and non-motorized uses. This would provide for a range of recreational opportunities across the TSA, ranging from rural access to primitive wilderness. Additional consideration must also be given to ensure a balance is maintained between public and commercial recreational opportunities. Items to include into the this process would include: the Telkwa Caribou Herd Recovery Program and the Voluntary Access Management Group (VAMPG); the North East Slope Trails Group (NESTG) trail system; any potential future development of the Ski Smithers area; MOF Recreation Sites

and Government's commitment for funding to maintain existing facilities. The process should also be inclusive of First Nation interests, such as to ensure consistency with the Wetsu'wet'en First Nations Territorial Stewardship Plan.

The BVCRB realizes that there is an ongoing provincial process regarding licensing and registration of Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs). We believe that licensing and registration legislation will aid government in enforcing legislation and management plan provisions to protect ecosystems and manage recreation values that are presently being ignored.

The BVCRB requests that the Skeena Managers Committee, ensure that a RAMP, (or Outdoor Recreation Strategy) for the Bulkley TSA is completed in a timely fashion. The BVCRB realizes that this may not be an easy task, but it can no longer be ignored.

Currently, the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB) is compiling and consolidating recreational land access agreements, made since the current RAMP document, as a precursor to future attempts resolving any outstanding recreational access management issues.

The BVCRB proposes that the following 10-step process be adopted and implemented by government. The first four steps have already been agreed to by the ILBM.

Step 1: Clarify Roles and Responsibilities between agencies,

This is a provincial issue that needs to be addressed, as identified by the Forest Practices Board (FPB) Special Report on Access, 2005.

Step 2: Consolidated Map of Hudson's Bay Mountain.

Step 3: Consolidated RAMP Plan (of Existing and New Agreements)

- a) The Harold Price Ski Cabin has an agreement in place,
- b) Scallon Creek, Starr Creek, Hankin Plateau, Hunter's Basin...
Both Winter and Summer Use should be covered by the Caribou Plan and the Volunteer Access Management Group (VAMG),

Step 4: Communication Plan and Strategy

Due: March 31, 2006

Completion of the first four steps of the process would then need to be followed by:

Step 5: Complete the RAMP by Addressing and Resolving Unresolved and Future Process Areas

- a) The Blunt/ Seaton winter access remains "Unresolved".
- b) Driftwood / Rieseter is to be a "Future Process" involving the BC Parks
- c) The Upper Nilkitkwa is to be a "Future Process" for both Winter and Summer Access.
- d) Serb Creek remains "Unresolved".

e) The North East Slope Trail Group (NESTG) area needs to be included into the RAMP completion process.

Step 6: Designate Zones of Use, through Regulation by March 31, 2007

Steps 5 and 6 should be included into the ILMB's fiscal budget for 2006-2007.

(or whichever agency is responsible for the planning of outdoor recreation on Crown lands)

The process would then include:

Step 7...implementing the plan,

Step 8...monitoring and enforcement

Step 9...assessing its effectiveness, and

Step 10 ..adapting the plan as needed.

As the BVCRB is meeting March 22 to discuss recreation with your staff, could you please provide us a written response, prior to March 15, 2006, as to how government agencies will ensure our outdoor recreational resources will be managed in a sustainable manner, and how the issues raised in this letter are to be addressed? The BVCRB expects government agencies also place a high priority in resolving recreational access issues in the Bulkley TSA, and to ensure that adequate funding is applied to facilitate this project. Your support for and participation in a RAMP completion process for the Bulkley TSA would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Adrian de Groot, Chair
Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board

Cc: Hugh Markides, Ministry of Environment, Regional Manager,
Fred Oliemans, Integrated Land Management Bureau, Planning Team Leader,
James Cuell, ILMB, Strategic Planning Biologist,
Barry Smith, MOFR Skeena/Stikine District Manager,
Danelle Harris, MOTSA, Regional Manager Adventure Tourism,
Dennis Mackay, MLA, Bulkley Valley-Stikine