



July 27, 1992

File: 700-5A
Babine River LRUP

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Results of Public Input and Decisions Regarding the
Babine River Local Resource Use Planning Process

It is with great pleasure that the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks, is now in a position to provide information to you and others regarding the results of the public review of the report entitled "Options for the Babine River Area". Also attached is an information update which outlines management decisions which have been made to date along with the intended direction for future planning activities in the Babine River drainage.

The information package has been forwarded as a result of either the interest you have shown in the Babine River area or input you have provided during the course of the planning process.

We would like to thank you for your interest in important resource management issues in the Babine River area.

Yours truly,

L.P. Pedersen
Regional Manager
Ministry of Forests
Bag 5000
Smithers, British Columbia
VOJ 2N0

R.G. Anderson
Regional Director
Ministry of Environment,
Lands and Parks
Bag 5000
Smithers, British Columbia
VOJ 2N0

Attachment



RELEASED BY:

Regional Manager
Ministry of Forests
Prince Rupert Forest Region
Smithers, B.C.
VOJ 2NO
847-7500

AND

Regional Director
Ministry of Environment, Lands
and Parks
Skeena Region
Smithers, B.C.
VOJ 2NO
847-7303

July 27, 1992

DECISIONS MADE ON BABINE RIVER LOCAL RESOURCE USE PLAN

SMITHERS -- The Forest Service and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks have made decisions on a land use strategy and access route for the Babine River area, following a public review of options.

The decisions are:

- The wilderness qualities along the river will be maintained while allowing carefully managed forest development elsewhere;
- The Shenismike Creek access route is approved in principle as the main access route north of the Babine within the Kispiox Forest District; and,
- About 14,000 hectares within the Babine River Local Resource Use Plan is being referred to British Columbia's new Protected Areas Strategy as a candidate wilderness area.

In addition, an integrated plan will be developed and applied to future activities within the drainage to meet timber production, grizzly bear, fisheries, biodiversity, scenic and other resource management objectives.

A summary of the public comments on the options report for the Babine River Area is available at the regional offices of the Forest Service and Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and the Bulkley Forest District in Smithers; and at the Kispiox Forest District Office in Hazelton.

Background

The Babine River flows from Babine Lake to the Skeena River, crossing 100 kilometres of mountainous and high plateau terrain in northwest B.C.

In 1988, plans to bridge the Babine River and increase access into the area for timber harvesting conflicted with recreation and tourism interests.

A planning process was established along with a steering committee and a technical advisory committee (TAC).

The planning area, 10 kilometres wide and 90 kilometres long, spans the Babine River from its outlet at Nilkitkwa Lake to the Kisegas Indian Reserve.

On November 7, 1992 the report *Options for the Babine River Area* was released for public review. The report presented:

- 3 land management alternatives;
- 3 access route alternatives;
- details on a TAC consensus option; and,
- resource planning information.

Decisions were made after considering results of the public review.

Access Planning

A coordinated access management plan (CAMP) will be developed for the Babine River drainage area. Key concerns will be timber harvesting, the protection of grizzly bears and grizzly bear habitat and the impacts of access on the river corridor.

The Shenismike Creek route is approved in principle for the main access road to areas north of the Babine River within the Kispiox District. An alternate route involving a mid-stream bridge crossing of the Babine River near Gail Creek will not proceed.

The Shenismike Creek access route will not be built until an injunction over the Sam Greene bridge crossing has been lifted and/or a suitable alternative is agreed upon with the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en peoples.

* The proposed road location into the Big Slide Chart area within the Kispiox Forest District was located further away from high-use grizzly bear river habitat.

River Corridor Planning

The wilderness zone proposed by the TAC, will be advanced as a candidate wilderness area under Section 5.1 of the *Forest Act*. It averages 1.8 kilometres in width and is centered on the river.

The Protected Areas Strategy announced in May 1992 includes the Babine River in "Category Two" - an area to be decided by 1993. The proposed wilderness area is being referred to this process for decision.

A special management zone will buffer the wilderness area. It extends to about two kilometres from either side of the Babine River, about 21,000 hectares.

~~Harvesting will be deferred in the special management zone until a plan to regulate small-scale forest management activities is developed.~~

A new planning process called "Limits of Acceptable Change" (LAC) will be used to develop a plan for the river corridor. Its goal is to keep change due to the influence of people within socially acceptable limits.

An assessment of the need for and the location of potential mid-stream, walk-in access to the river will be made through the LAC process.

A questionnaire to gather information on social preferences will be sent to river users and advertised in local media by September, 1992.

Recreation, tourism and environmental objectives and monitoring standards for the wilderness area will be developed in consultation with the public.

Watershed-based planning

The Forest Service and Environment Lands and Parks will develop an integrated plan for that portion of the Babine River watershed downstream of Nilkitkwa Lake by April 1993.

This plan will be linked to the river corridor plan in recognition that resource values and uses along the river and within the drainage are inter-related.

~~The integrated plan will feature management zones with guidelines for areas that require special management for the protection of grizzly bears, fisheries, biodiversity and old-growth.~~

A consulting firm, Keystone Bioresearch, will identify areas requiring special protection within the watershed. The report will be completed by December, 1992.

"Total chance" plans will be required prior to harvesting approval once the integrated watershed plan and CAMP are in place.

Until then, the district managers of the Bulkley and Kispiox Forest Districts will approve timber harvesting plans that meet the intended direction of the integrated plan.

In recognition of high fisheries values, a sediment monitoring program began in May 1992, in the Nilkitkwa sub-watershed of the Babine River. This is a joint project between the Forest Service, Pacific Inland Resources and Repap Smithers Inc.

General Planning:

The impacts of the wilderness zone and integrated resource management in the watershed on timber harvest levels will be assessed through the Bulkley and Kispiox District forest land management planning processes.

Potential reductions in the current timber harvest levels for the wilderness zone are about two per cent for the Bulkley District and one per cent for the Kispiox District.

Native and other affected individuals or groups will be consulted during plan preparation.

All draft plans will be available for public review.

For further information on the Babine River planning process, contact:

Janet Gagne
Planning Forester
Ministry of Forests
Smithers, B.C.
Phone: 847-7500

Brian Fuhr
Head, Habitat Section
B.C. Environment, Lands
and Parks
Smithers, B.C.
Phone: 847-7303