



To: Adrian DeGroot
Bulkley Valley Community Resource Board
Smithers, BC

April 2, 2007

Dear Adrian

The long delay in the completion of the Bulkley Valley Recreation Access Management Plan (RAMP) of 1997 is creating a very troubling situation. There are many map areas left Unresolved, Non-designated or Future Process. In addition, there are many areas not mentioned in the RAMP that should be designated for recreation use.

Meanwhile, administration of public recreation regulations in the Forest and Range Practices Act has been moved from the Ministry of Forests and Range to the new Ministry of Tourism, Sports and the Arts (MTSA). Local MTSA staff members are now receiving proposals for new trails and recreation sites. Each proposal is referred to the appropriate agencies and to known stakeholders. MTSA staff are obliged to accommodate as many requests from recreation user groups as possible, which would be fine if they had direction from a completed RAMP. But the RAMP is still not complete after ten years, and in spite of the clear promise in the document that "...the Plan be the subject of a five year review in the year 2002".

MTSA staff are in an impossible position. Their decisions on trail and recreation site proposals will now influence whether the areas that are undesignated in the RAMP will become motorized or non-motorized. Whether it's dealing with old trails or establishing new trails, MTSA staff decisions will alter the possible outcome of a re-opened RAMP.

When a proposal is submitted, MTSA staff ask for feedback from stakeholders, but that process doesn't come close to the effectiveness of a RAMP table where representatives from all user groups have a chance to hear each other's concerns, to negotiate and to compromise enough to reach a consensus. In a RAMP process, a facilitator can act as a third party to persuade stakeholders to back away from hard bargaining and to negotiate a compromise. A RAMP table is open to public scrutiny and face-to-face discussions can promote compromise.

The MTSA process is neither public at all times nor does it have a dedicated facilitator. As much as MTSA staff can try to be fair and accountable to the community, the MTSA process cannot begin to match a RAMP table. It is completely unfair for the MTSA staff to be saddled with making decisions that should be made by participants at a RAMP table who are totally familiar with the issues and have a stake in making the necessary compromises.

Let's compare the RAMP process to the MTSA process.

	RAMP	MTSA
Decisions	Coordinated decisions by the entire table over along period of deliberation	Ad hoc decisions, one proposal at a time
Negotiation and compromise	Room for negotiation and compromise	Poor or no opportunity for negotiation and compromise
Feedback	Ample opportunity for presentation and feedback	Feedback may be remote and disconnected from the process
Facilitation	Dedicated facilitator can remind participants of their responsibilities	No facilitation by a third party
Balance	Face-to-face negotiation promotes listening	No opportunity for face-to-face talk
Lobbying	Representation from each user group is limited to two	No limit to the amount of lobbying
Consensus	Decisions are by consensus and by government if no consensus is reached	Final decision is by MTSA staff
Representation	Representatives from all user groups at the table	Direct representation from only the group making proposal
Knowledge	All participants have knowledge of the issues and the backcountry	Knowledge may be one-sided, applicants may know more than the MTSA staff.
Community values	Wide representation from community and consensus agreements ensure community benefit. Government should make a determination if there is no consensus so that all issues are resolved.	No "Big Picture" from completed RAMP and piecemeal representation may lead to decisions not in community interest

We should emphasize that the MTSA staff is doing a great job with the resources available and we are in no way critical of their work. MTSA has an important role in documenting trails and approving new trails and recreation facilities but their work must fit existing community planning. Their work should not replace community planning or interfere with it.

The solution is for the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB) to schedule a re-opening of the RAMP immediately. All proposals made to MTSA that involve Crown land currently listed in the RAMP as Unresolved, Non-designated or Future Process should be postponed until the RAMP is completed. Otherwise the community may have to live with decisions made without full public participation and the MTSA staff will be asked to make decisions beyond their mandate and resources.

Yours truly,

Jim Easterday
For the BV Outdoor Recreation Society

CC Dave Byng, Assistant Deputy Minister, ILMB
Eamon O'Donoghue, ILMB
Kevin Eskelin, MTSA
Fred Oliemans, ILMB

The BV Outdoor Recreation Society (formerly the Outdoor Recreation Alliance) is a citizens group made up of non-motorized and motorized users concerned with the conservation of alpine and sub-alpine terrain and the responsible use of off-road motorized vehicles in the Bulkley Valley of British Columbia, Canada. Visit our website at www.bcnorth.ca/atvdamage/