

BVCRB - Response to Tyhee Mountain WHMA

Contact photo

From Jeff McKay

To Bentley, Cam FLNR:EX, Darrell.Whelan@gov.bc.ca

Cc Matt Sear, Christoph Dietzfelbinger, Bob Mitchell, Ted VdW, Eric Becker, Susan, info@bvcrb.ca, John Fisher, Ron Vanderstar

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Summary Headers Plain text

Good morning Cam and Darrel,

The Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (BVCRB) wishes to submit a communication regarding the ongoing developments at Tyhee Mountain Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA), and the other conservation focussed lands within the Skeena region of similar nature. The issue of cancelled WHMA lands has been a large topic of discussion for the BV Community Resource Board since the discovery of this issue. Discussions with District staff and requests to understand the rationale behind the decision to cancel these land designations have not been forthcoming, clear or satisfying. This issue has clearly escalated in recent weeks with other interest groups, private citizens, subject matter experts and media drawing attention to this matter.

The BVCRB takes issue with some statements made by the Ministry about consultation with the BVCRB related to the Tyhee Mountain WHMA. In a June 8th, 2023 Interior News article, the Ministry indicates, "The harvesting plans were reviewed by the Bulkley Valley Community Resource Board and falls well within the harvest area limits recommended by the BVCRB".

The BVCRB reviewed its meeting minutes, and the last communication from BC Timber Sales staff was a presentation (June 15, 2020) of the developing operational plan, which concentrated within the Serb Creek and Mulwain Creek areas. There was no mention of Tyhee Mountain WHMA. The BVCRB does not review compliance of specific operations, approve of harvesting area limits, or determine other parameters of harvesting or land use. These are the responsibilities of the licensees, and subsequently fall to the forest professionals within their own requirements under the Professional Governance Act. These professionals are obligated to ensure that the intent of all legal requirements are fulfilled, including components of the Bulkley Valley Land and Resources Management Plans (LRMP).

The BVCRB has made several unanswered requests for meetings to discuss the Tyhee Mountain WHMA specifically, and BCTS forestry operations in general. No details have been shared with the BVCRB about the Tyhee Mountain WHMA. No maps or details of how proposed forest activities comply with the LRMP have been shared. The BVCRB feels that the Ministry has misrepresented the consultation performed with the BVCRB to date, and mischaracterized the role of the BVCRB in reviewing and "approving" specific forest operations in our valley. The BVCRB does not have the authority to approve or enforce, and communication with the BVCRB is not equivalent to a thorough LRMP compliance review.

Can the ministry clearly present any planning documents (maps, communication logs, decision details) about the Tyhee Mountain WHMA specifically, and the WHMA cancellation decision more broadly?

The BVCRB encourages the ministry to review the meeting minutes of the most recent BCTS discussion posted publicly here: https://bvcrb.ca/images/uploads/documents/crb_fnlminJ15_20.pdf

The Provincial Government's stated policy is to encourage, not undermine, the kind of local planning effort represented by our LRMP/SRMP, and to increase protection of valued habitat. The BVCRB does not feel that decisions made to date align with Premier Eby's mandate letter dated December 7th, 2022, where he prioritizes the Province's position, "underlined by our commitment to forest policy modernization, transformational initiatives and meaningful land use plans that protect wild spaces, irreplaceable old growth and rare ecosystems are essential to delivering this vision The BVCRB feels that BCTS' currently proposed forestry activities and the Province's current actions are not faithful to this mandate.

Thank you for the review of this issue. The BVCRB continues to encourage all Ministry staff, including BCTS, to better communicate decisions that impact the efficacy of the LRMP. We are open to having representatives join our in-person meetings, or to be included on any relevant emails at info@bvcrb.ca

On behalf of the BVCRB,

Jeff McKay
BVCRB Chair