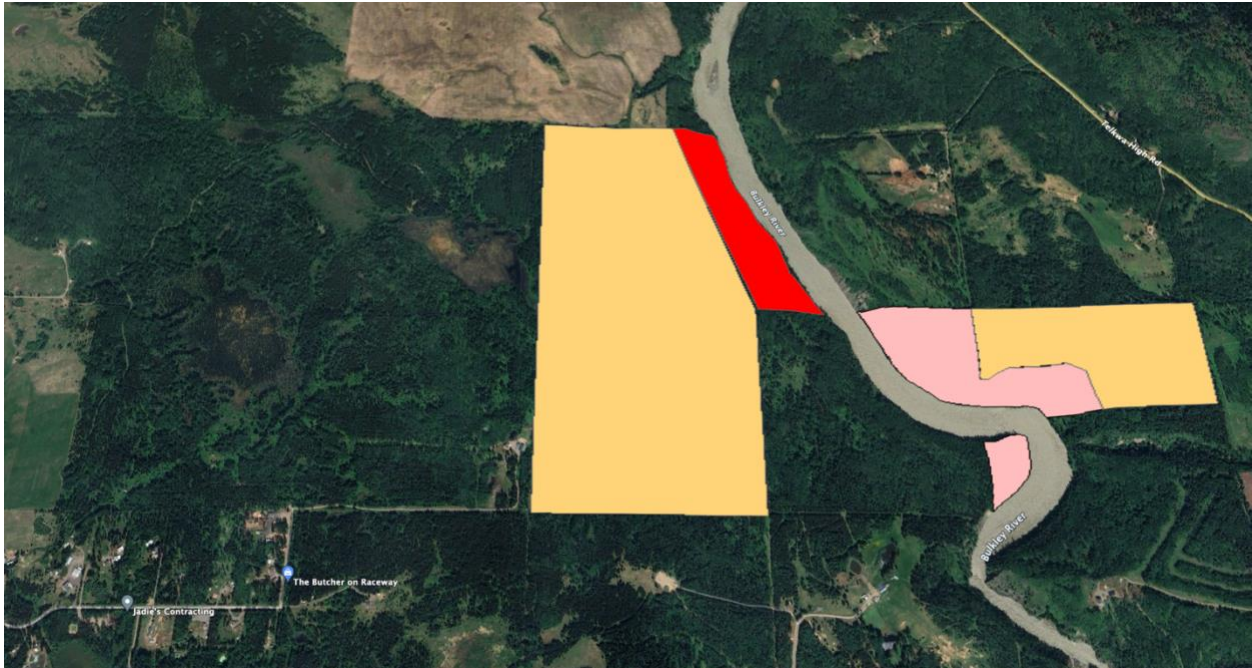


Raceway NE Agriculture Development Area (ADA) Site Inspection Report  
May 20, 2024  
Len Vanderstar, R.P.Bio  
Northern Habitat Solutions

Accompanying Participants:

Paula Bartemucci, Gentian Botanical Research  
Dean Daly, Woodlot Licensee and Owner of Adjacent Property

Agriculture Development Area (ADA) as per Bulkley Valley Sustainable Resource Management Plan (BV SRMP) in brown shade overlap on a 2024 Google Earth image; ADA of concern is west of the Bulkley River which is referred to as the Raceway NE ADA for purposes of this report. Red is a narrow band of WHMA (Wildlife Habitat Mgt. Area).



Len Vanderstar was the government biologist for Ministry of the Environment at the time of negotiations for designation of remaining public lands in the Bulkley Valley for either ADA or Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) designation in the 1990s. Consultants were commissioned to assess both soil arability and habitat to assist in the negotiations between Ministries (Environment, Forests, Lands) and the Cattlemen's Association. The designation proposal was supported by the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (BV CRB) after community consultation, as part of Bulkley LRMP implementation.

After the negotiations, several of the agreed-to parcels for WHMAs were found to have already been tenured under agricultural leases, despite initial clearance of such information provided by B.C. Lands. In addition, one WHMA was converted into a woodlot licence without any consultation. This, among other reasons, is rationale for considering an amendment to the ADA-WHMA designations where warranted via further site inspections/assessments.

Len Vanderstar was involved in some of the site inspections with the consultants at that time of negotiations, but did not personally inspect the Raceway NE parcel. Dean Daly made a presentation to the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (BV CRB) on April 15, 2024 regarding concerns about potential agricultural development on the land parcel given its habitat values and particularly its value as a rare mature forest migration corridor from the Bulkley River to Mount Evelyn and along the Bulkley River (Wetzin'kwa). Len attended the CRB meeting at that time and followed up with Dean to suggest that Len conduct a habitat assessment to either support re-designation or not. In the accompaniment of Dean and Paula Bartemucci, consultant working on the Conservation Lands Program for land inclusions, a habitat assessment was conducted on May 20, 2024.

Here are the key observations of note:

- (i) There is substantial evidence of moose browse and aspen bark gnawing, deer, black and grizzly bear use (rub/bite with hair samples trees); Dean's remote cameras have also picked up elk, lynx, coyotes, wolves and beavers.
- (ii) Key browse species in abundance are willow species, saskatoon, aspen, rose, subalpine fir. Red osier dogwood and high bush cranberry were lacking. Meadow rue and pea vine under deciduous forest stands were common, which are forage species, notably for bears. Hazelnut was noted along the old road beside the steep ravine leading down to the Bulkley River, of which is a desired forage species for moose and its fruit is highly sought after by bears.
- (iii) Cattle use has been minimal to date, which has been good for the herbaceous plants under deciduous stands. Note: low impact cattle grazing/browsing is permissible within WHMAs under current grazing tenure.
- (iv) The land parcel has a diverse set of ecosystems, ranging from beaver ponds, meadows to deciduous and mix-wood mature forests with some spruce leading conifer stands. Adjacent private land to the west is also largely undeveloped with good ecological characteristics and mature forest cover throughout. Agriculture development has taken place to the NW outside of the ADA.
- (v) Mature forest habitat connectivity is noted to the east side of the Bulkley River and parallel to the river, as well to adjacent properties, noted in part by game trails. Historic agricultural development as well as relatively recent logging of adjacent private properties has removed adjacent mature forest habitat and reduced habitat connectivity from the east side of the Bulkley River to the subalpine and alpine habitat to the west of Highway 16. The Raceway NE ADA provides important forest habitat connectivity given the surrounding land developments.
- (vi) Overall habitat rating for moose in the Raceway NE ADA, based on a provincial 6 class system with 1 being the best is: Forage (3), Shelter (3), Thermal Cover (5). Note

that the majority of moose habitat in the Bulkley Valley is rated 3 for forage with 1 being the undeveloped willow/red osier dogwood/ cottonwood floodplains of the Bulkley River.

- (vii) Of note were a number of large bird nests throughout the land parcel, which could be raven or even northern goshawk.
- (viii) The topography is a set of terraces/benches on slopes leading down to the Bulkley River, most notably on the eastern half.
- (ix) Soil arability is good throughout, being sandy loam with good Ah horizon under deciduous stands.
- (x) Topography makes it challenging for agriculture development, and serious land recontouring would be required, so the land parcel is not favourable to easy conversion to field.

#### Recommendations

1. The Raceway NE ADA is a prime candidate for re-designation to a WHMA. The Raceway NE ADA does provide important forest habitat connectivity from the east side of the Bulkley River to Evelyn Mountain. Given that, post consensus, a number of WHMAs were struck from the list due to grazing lease tenures that were originally not noted, and one WHMA was mistakenly issued a woodlot licence, re-designation could be considered as compensation for the loss of WHMAs.
2. A field visit by representatives of the BV CRB, Range Officer from the Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture representative and an Ecosystem Biologist with Water, Land & Resource Stewardship is advisable to seek a consensus on land designation.
3. If re-designation is supported, it should go through a public consultation process for endorsement as what originally took place for the collective ADAs and WHMAs.

Photos



Grizzly Bear Rub Tree



Moose Gnawing on aspen



Beaver Pond



Wetland



Brush & Forage Spp. under Deciduous Canopy

Bench/Terrace Example



Moose Browsed Hazelnut

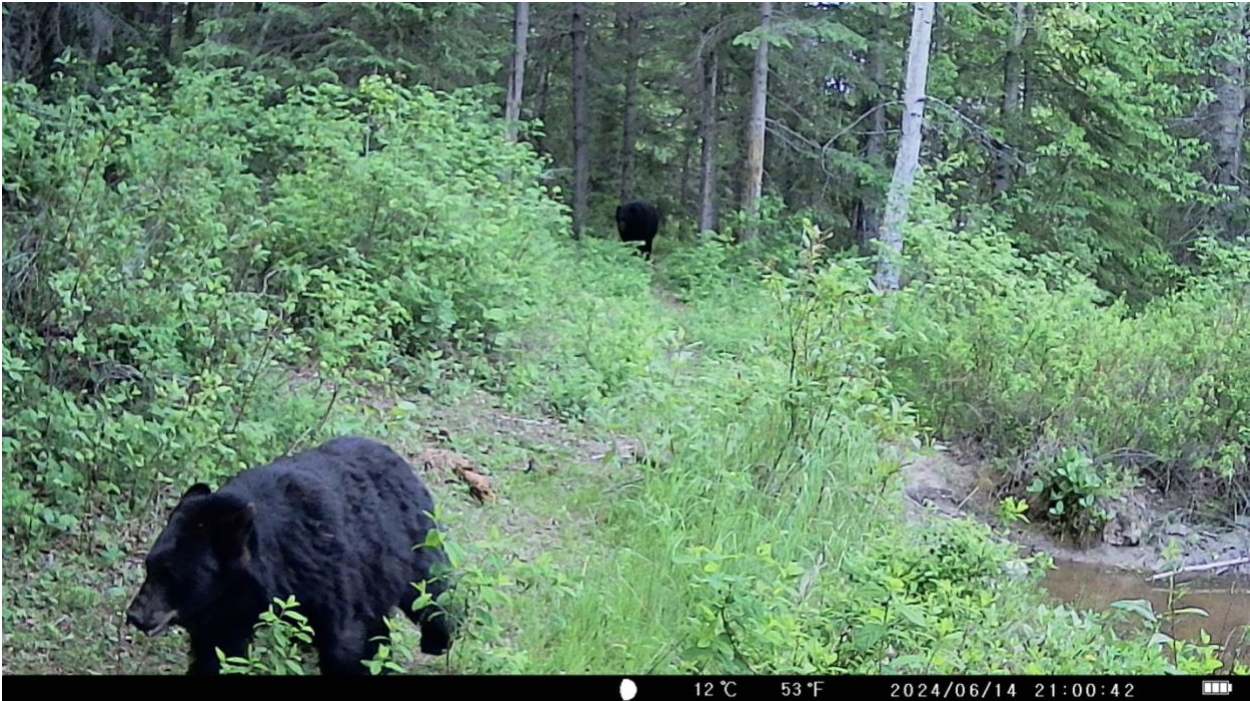


Moose Browsed Saskatoon

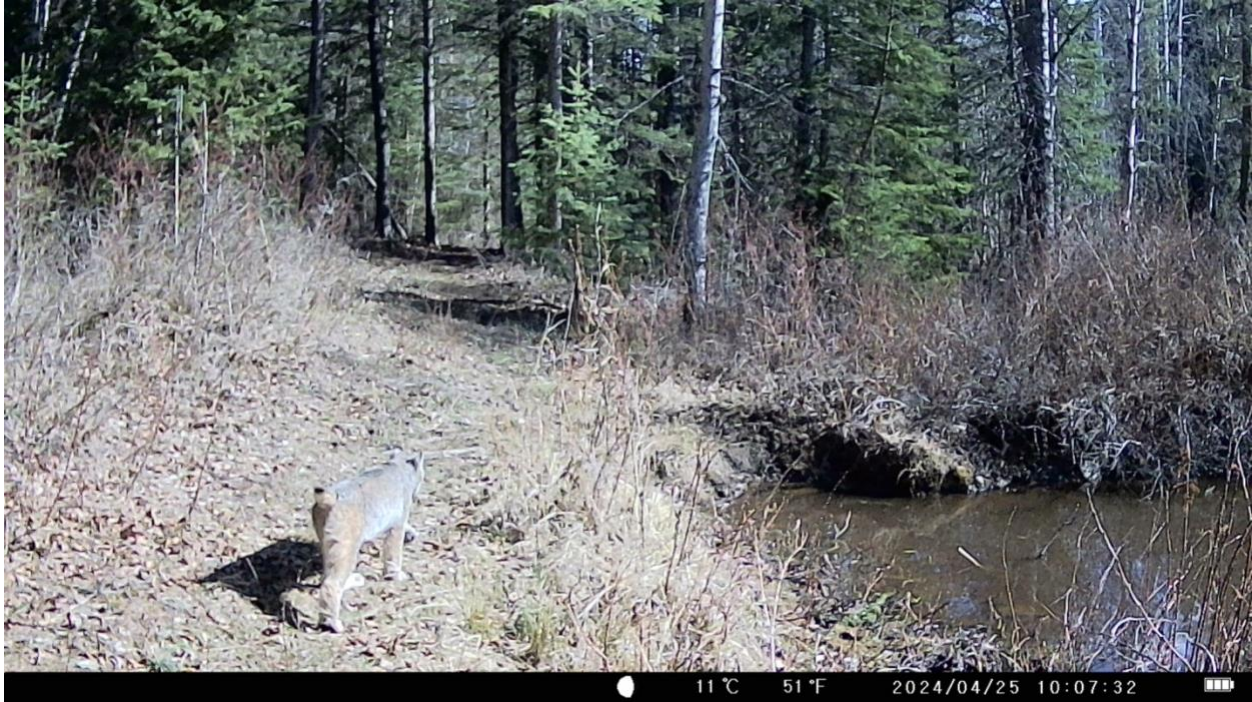


Game Trail Leading Down to Bulkley River

Example of Large Bird Nest



Remote camera capture of black bears



Remote camera capture of lynx



Remote camera capture of elk (date is incorrect)



Remote camera capture of moose (date is incorrect)



Remote camera capture of mule deer





Remote camera capture of coyote