



Reference: 259828

December 9, 2020

**VIA EMAIL:** [Matt.Sear@westfraser.com](mailto:Matt.Sear@westfraser.com)

Matt Sear  
BVCRB Chair  
Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board

Dear Matt Sear:

This letter is in response to your letter of November 18, 2020, on behalf of the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (BVCRB) enquiring about the status of land protections for the Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs). I understand these questions are arising following the removal of *Land Act* section 16 and 17 withdrawals previously in place on many of these parcels. This process was undertaken to ease the administrative burden associated with the processing of Crown land use applications. To be clear the overarching goal here was not to remove protections where they are required to conserve values, but simply to clean-up the land administration by cancelling those authorizations where the justification provided by the holder of these reserves, did not warrant maintenance or renewal. I would like to note, that in some cases, where justified, the *Land Act* reserves have been renewed or were not removed.

As you are aware, in 2018 consideration was given to the transfer of authority of these lands from the *Land Act* to the *Wildlife Act*, for which the BVCRB provided a letter of support. On review and further consideration in 2018 it was determined by the ministry that this transfer of authority was unnecessary. By their nature and location, the management of WHMAs principally involved the regulation of forest sector activities.

It is concluded that there is little to no incremental management benefit to transitioning the WHMA areas into Wildlife Management Areas under the *Wildlife Act*. The existing administration through Forest Stewardship Plans (FSPs) under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* is adequate. A transition to WMAs would result in an increased administrative cost for government and to stakeholder and clients without a justifiable benefit to conservation. The forest licensee community is aware of the WHMAs and the FSP based management regime is fulfilling the intent of the Bulkley Higher Level Plan Order for the management of these areas.

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Notwithstanding the above, I recognize that land management is dynamic and over time indigenous community interests, community values and habitat conservation needs are constantly shifting. With this in mind, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development will undertake a review of the Land and Resource Management Plan Agriculture – Wildlife Zone to assess if any gaps exist, and what measures would be necessary to achieve the intent. If you have any further questions please contact Jevan Hanchard, Skeena Stikine District Manager, at 250-847-6305 or David Skerik, Director of Resource Management, Skeena Region at 250-876-7062.

Sincerely,



Geoff Recknell  
Regional Executive Director

pc: Jevan Hanchard, District Manager, Skeena Stikine Resource District

David Skerik, Director of Resource Management

Bobby Love, Director of Authorizations

Buhr, Glen, Stewardship Officer

Bob Mitchell, [forestrail@gmail.com](mailto:forestrail@gmail.com)

Susan Brookes, [notonsea@hotmail.com](mailto:notonsea@hotmail.com)

Christoph Dietzfelbinger, [info@bearmountaineering.ca](mailto:info@bearmountaineering.ca)

Jeff McKay, [jeffmckay8@gmail.com](mailto:jeffmckay8@gmail.com)

John Fisher, [jmfisher134@gmail.com](mailto:jmfisher134@gmail.com)

Ted Vanderwart, [tedvanderwart@gmail.com](mailto:tedvanderwart@gmail.com)

Ron Vanderstar, [ron@tyhee.ca](mailto:ron@tyhee.ca)

Eric Becker [bvsolutions@gmail.com](mailto:bvsolutions@gmail.com)