

# Telkwa Mountains Recreation Access Management Advisory Group

Meeting minutes, May 10, 2016. Meeting convened at 5:30 PM, Round Lake Hall, Telkwa, B. C.

## Attendance/Representation:

ATVers - Dave Tolton  
Ed Hinchliffe  
Conservation - Jim Easterday  
Daphne Hart  
Hikers/backpackers - Dina Hanson  
Vince Ross (for Jonathan Van Barneveld)  
Backcountry horsemen – Eric Becker  
Mineral exploration (hobby) - Daryl Hanson  
Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition - Jay Gilden  
Skiers – Ben Ambrose (for Mike Dunbar)  
Dave Pellow  
Snowmobilers – Bill Wookey (for Wade Lubbers)  
Les Auston  
Angling and hunting - Igor Steciw

## Guests/Speakers:

Jocelyn Campbell, Ecosystems Section Head, Skeena Region, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

**Facilitated by:** Pam Penner

**Recorder:** Jill Dunbar

## Agenda

- **Opening Comments**
- **Review of Action items – completed?**
- **Review of Tables of Areas reviewed to April 21st – changes?**
- **LMRP overlap (Jocelyn will address)**
- **Houston Peak**
  - **Summer**
  - **Winter**
- **Core**
  - **Boundary expansion?**
- **Grizzly Plateau – Meat Cache – reason for abstaining?**
- **Starr Basin**
  - **Summer**
  - **Winter (final vote)**
  - **Question: What does access look like from those voting for full access and limited access?**
  - **Question: Split Starr Basin into smaller areas based on elevation?**

## Opening Comments

Pam: Additions to agenda: Email from Tony Pesklevits, discussion of what to include in package for government.

Pam: Reminder that members are to represent values, not clubs or individual opinion.

Email from Tony: Pam will circulate.

## Review of Action Items, April 20 and 21 2016 meetings

1. Tony Pesklevits will prepare a statement clarifying the new roles of government representatives in the TRAM process.

*Jocelyn Campbell will ask if this can be circulated.*

2. Tony P. will summarize the TRAM process and timeline, and circulate prior to the May 10 meeting.

*Will be forwarded to Pam by May 11.*

3. Jocelyn Campbell will talk to Conrad Thiessen about automating telemetry data and making updates available more often.

*Done. App is under development.*

4. Jocelyn C. will look into potential for access during periods of hard packed snow.

*Jocelyn: These periods can't be predicted therefore rules can't be set or enforced.*

5. Dina Hanson will prepare a statement supporting the recommendation for a date change for closure of the Core Recovery area.

*Done.*

6. Dina Hanson will prepare a statement supporting the recommendation that the Core Area remain non-motorized.

*Done.*

7. Starr Basin: Jim Easterday will prepare a persuasive paper in favour of no access for a number of years, then staged reopening,

*Jim will not be doing this.*

8. Wade Lubbers will prepare a persuasive paper in favour of full access with caveats such as education, club memberships, avoidance strategies,

*Done.*

9. Dina and Daryl Hanson will prepare a persuasive paper In favour of access during certain periods under certain conditions (such as sanctioned rides at discretion of government based on caribou and/or 50:50 shared access during certain periods (registered use).

*Done.*

10. Les Auston will write a rationale for the Grizzly Plateau winter motorized recommendation, by early April and email to Pam. (From March 14/15 meetings.)

*Done.*

## Review of Tables of Areas reviewed to April 21st

Jill will revise the table for the Core Recovery Area as discussed.

## LRMP overlap

Question from group: Does the Morice LRMP dictate what can be done in Starr Basin?

Jocelyn C.: The Morice LRMP is policy, not law. However, significant public consultation would be needed to change it. The Bulkley LRMP has Higher Level Plan Orders which are legal. In both LRMPs, caribou conservation and recovery is a priority.

Pam: Did the TRAM process arise from the LRMP process?

JC: Yes, government direction was to complete recreation plans as components of the LRMPs.

Group member: Delay in completing the plans wasn't all due to government – it was a volunteer group.

Group member: The Telkwa plan was finalized in 2008.

JC: Yes, but not endorsed by government. The Federal recovery strategy was written in 2014 and this stipulated that the province has responsibility to prepare a plan within 5 years.

Group member: When caribou became a threatened species under SARA (Federal Species at Risk Act) the obligations changed.

Group member: Were there any obligations after 2009?

JC: Not legal.

Pam: How do the LRMPs relate to this?

Group member: This group is only representing backcountry recreation values. The LRMP tables were much broader sectors and so have greater authority.

Group member: There was no rep for recreation at the Bulkley LRMP table.

Group member: Recreation was a big interest at the LRMP table.

Group member: The LRMP was to be reviewed in 10 years but never was.

Group member: In the Bulkley it was known that there would be a follow-up RAMP process to complete the LRMP.

Group member: In the Morice there were no biologists at the table so we endorsed the plan and moved on.

Group member: The 2013 Summer RAMP for the Bulkley did not deal with the Telkwas since this TRAM process was going to happen.

## Houston Peak

Group member: There are no trails, just rough routes. Currently use is limited, expedition-style hiking. No motorized activity. Currently it is in Zone B.

JC: It is moderate value for caribou habitat in summer and lower value for winter, as shown by telemetry data. But data can't really separate summer and winter use by caribou.

Group member: Roads and trails would have to be built to make it accessible.

JC: It is in the no-harvest zone so that is not allowed. An exemption would be required to remove trees. It doesn't need to be closed or included in the Core since it is not calving habitat.

**Vote:**

Access to Houston Peak	Final results, May 10
Summer motorized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interest. No existing access or ability to build access.</li> </ul>	Group consensus
Summer non-motorized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access endorsed. For bikes – investigation of possibility of exemption on WHA to build access would be needed.</li> </ul>	
Winter motorized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interest by snowmobilers.</li> </ul>	
Winter non-motorized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access endorsed. No time restrictions required.</li> </ul>	
Members present	

**Core Recovery Area**

Pam: Should the boundary of the Core be changed to include the Meat Cache area?

Group member: The Meat Cache should be non-motorized and included in the Core. The conservation group has presented a paper on this.

Group member: The boundary expansion was under consideration by this group because the Core has no enforceable boundary currently.

Group member: Core was originally Zone B. It is the most sensitive area. It should be left as is.

Group member: We don't go there if caribou are in there. We have discussed this and voted on the Meat Cache already.

JC: The old Core doesn't include all of the high value winter habitat that must be included.

Group member: Snowmobilers can't get from the Meat Cache to the Core.

Group member: The 2014 flights showed snowmobilers in many areas.

Group member: Intent of the Core is to restrict access. There is no motorized access below tree line so why put the boundary there?

Group member: Snowmobiles can go into high value area west of Mt Forster so Meat Cache needs to be defined carefully.

Group member: Snowmobilers already mapped out where they go.

Group member: The 2000 map shows the Meat Cache.

Group member: Telemetry flights show that caribou use in Grizzly Plateau has gone up as snowmobile use has gone up.

JC: That can't be pinned down. There is a natural line between caribou locations and recreational activity.

Group member: Habituation counts for something. Wolves aren't there until snowmobiling is over.

Group member: Grizzly Plateau is 20K acres. Adding the Meat Cache would increase it by 30 %.

Group member: We have been going in there for 20 years if there is enough snow.

Pam: So the Meat Cache is important to snowmobilers and the blue circled kernel is important to caribou. Is there any way to separate them?

Group member: There has always been the same amount of activity.

JC: The population decline started after 2006. Telemetry data was collected after 2002. We know that it is high value habitat.

Group member: But the caribou numbers declined.

Group member: There is no room for compromise in the Meat Cache.

Pam: Is there any kind of compromise possible?

Group member: Could you go snowmobiling when the caribou aren't in there?

Group member: That's what we do now.

Group member: It is possible that caribou leave when they hear snowmobiles.

Group member: Caribou are curious. They will see what's going on then go away.

JC: Has heard of caribou coming and checking things out, but we know that noise will scare them away. If machines are there constantly enough the caribou won't be there.

Group member: Has taken biologists by caribou and they didn't go anywhere, even with open visibility.

Group member: In the Seip report – it states that with continual snowmobile use there won't be caribou. 1.5 million hectares were closed in Prince George region. Anecdotal evidence isn't science.

Group member: Occasional encounters with machines is different than continuous. We need guidance from biologists.

JC: Areas that have at least 50% probability of caribou occurrence (by the kernels) should be left for caribou in my opinion. Remember Principle 1.

Group member: Mountain goats will leave even with non-motorized activity – we should be talking about non-motorized.

JC: There is an opportunity to divide it.

Group member: The previous vote was split. Government will consider this. They will define where the Meat Cache is and where machines can go.

Group member: The recovery team will sit down with the snowmobilers or they won't, once this process is done.

Group member: Can you use the Meat Cache without using the high value blue circled area?

Group member: Will meet with Jonathan to make an overlapping map.

Group member: What is "limited access"? This didn't come up in the first vote.

ACTION: Les Auston will meet Jocelyn Campbell on May 11 to prepare the overlapping map for Meat Cache.

Pam: Proposal for Meat Cache looks like this:

(1) Area gets cut off at Houston Tommy headwaters (this was redefined as Denys Creek on May 11<sup>th</sup>) to the North only, OR

(2) Area gets cut off at Houston Tommy headwaters (Denys Creek not HTH) to the North AND the western boundary is at the 50% kernel (blue circled area).

Group member: (2) makes the area too small. And it is not critical.

Group member: In the original vote, 4 people voted for no access. This proposal just defines the boundary.

Group member: This is a much bigger area than the area mapped in 2000.

Group member: Does the data for kernels go back to 2002?

JC: Not sure if it is 2002 - 2016 or 2006 - 2016.

Group member: Either way, the herd was at its peak.

Group member: Why are we redefining the area?

Pam: We are trying to reach a solution.

Group member: If people are willing to compromise a bit that will help but redefining the area might not.

Group member: Snowmobilers already have the Grizzly Plateau recommendation. We are considering adding the Meat Cache and then looking at areas to the West. This will have a big impact and we are not looking at the big picture.

Group member: The snowmobilers appear to be agreeing to give up some area.

Group member: Would like to know what limited access includes.

Group member: The snowmobilers won't go for sanctioned rides.

Group member: How many riders go into the Meat Cache?

Group member: Not many this year due to a low snowpack but with good conditions there would be 10 – 15 riders in there for a few hours.

Group member: When access is disallowed you give up respect for an area. If you have a defined area you have some dialogue with the users, at least.

Group member: We have enough information to vote on this. Things can change in the final agreement.

Group member: That was the problem with voluntary compliance. Now whatever government decides will be legal and binding. Renegades will back off once machines have been confiscated a few times.

One of the group members read out the 2003 agreement re the Meat Cache.

Group member: Biologists would be able to define limited access – perhaps we should go with that.

JC: Using a spatial limitation (i.e. Houston Tommy drainage) is probably better than a temporal limitation. Recommendation is to go with option (2).

**Vote**

Access to Meat Cache	Results, May 10
In favour: Area gets cut off at Denys Creek to the North ONLY.	8
In favour: Area gets cut off at Denys Creek to the North AND the western boundary is at the 50% kernel (blue circled area).	4
In favour of full closure	1
Abstaining (reason: would like to vote for 2 <sup>nd</sup> option but with limited access.	1
Members present	14

Group member: Very concerned that Jocelyn's recommendation for option (2) was disregarded by those who voted for the first option.

Group member: This actually allows more motorized activity than the 2003 agreement. To protect the caribou why not stick with the 2003 agreement at least?

Group member: Data is skewed – it uses data from when the herd was at its peak.

JC: We are managing to full carrying capacity, not for 16 caribou.

Group member: Why are we here if the biologist's viewpoint is the only one that counts?

Group member: The government wants to know what the users think then they can do the best they can.

Group member: We should throw this vote out. We tried to come to a compromise, but couldn't, so it is up to government to make the decision.

Group member: This vote shows some concession.

Group member: But the concession doesn't take into account the caribou.

Group member: Some people who voted for no access have compromised. This must be acknowledged.

ACTION: Les Auston will write an amendment to his paper.

Jay Gilden will write a paper supporting option (2).

Jim Easterday's paper stands.

JC: When you discuss Starr, recognize that the high value areas are not all on the table for unlimited recreation. The final package will be reviewed by a panel of biologists and if it has unlimited recreation it won't be accepted.

**Meeting adjourned 9:30 PM**

DRAFT