



Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board, BVCRB

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March 17, 2021

Jevan Hanchard
District Manager
Skeena Stikine District
Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development

Re: Non-Motorized Seymour Ridge

Dear Jevan Hanchard

The Bulkley Valley Community Resource Board (CRB) is asking that the public road on Seymour Ridge be restricted to authorized use. The CRB is charged with monitoring the Implementation and Effectiveness of the Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plan 1998 (LRMP).

For some historical context, in 1988 the District Manager of Forests (DM) designated the Smithers Community Forest (SCF) for multiple use. The Smithers Community Forest Steering Committee (the Steering Committee) was established and authorized by the DM to manage for multiple uses in the SCF. The Steering Committee included membership from the School District #54, the Town of Smithers, the Small Business Program of the Ministry of Forests, the BV Naturalists, Smithers Mountain Bikers, and the BV Cross Country Ski Club. The mandate included managing for education, recreation trails, harvesting, silviculture, and visual quality. The Nature Trail, the Demo Forest, Hiking Trails, Biking trails, and the Cross-Country Ski Trails were developed as a result. One of the important decisions of the Steering Committee was to designate the area north of the Ski Hill Road, south and east of Hudson Bay Forest Service Road (FSR 9) as non-motorized. This was done to protect the recreational assets. Since the formation of the Steering Committee, damage has been done to the assets including burning of several kiosk signs and putting deep ruts in the trails. The members were forced to put up gates and caretaker facilities to protect their assets. These gates were approved by the DM. The areas outside this area of the SCF allow motorized use.

In 1998, a CORE was established on Seymour Ridge as part the LRMP ecosystem network to ensure that Biodiversity is maintained in the Bulkley TSA. Disturbance in the CORE is limited to 5% by the Chief Forester. Recent estimates of disturbance for the Seymour Ridge CORE have reached approximately 20%. Subunit 10-4 of the LRMP says that *"any plan for the area must follow the Smithers Community Forest Steering Committee plan"*.

In 2007, the harvesting rights of The SCF were transferred to the Wetzin'kwa Forest Corporation (WFC). The Smithers Community Forest Society 2006 (SCFS) was formed to represent recreational use within the WFC. The Bulkley

Valley Backpackers has taken over responsibility of maintaining the hiking trails from the SCFS. WFC has worked with the societies to schedule harvests, improve infrastructure, and maintain the non-motorized designation including the gates.

In 2010, a public road was approved that accessed the Seymour Ridge hiking trails and private land. The road was opposed by the SCFS. Up until 2020 a gate was placed on the driveway to prevent non-authorized use. The owner was required to restrict access to the five trail crossings. The placement of the gate seemed to indicate that the private landowner wanted to be consistent with the non-motorized designation for the trails. However, the gate has now been removed and access has been re-established. Motorized use and damage to the trail and the CORE by firewood cutters is occurring.

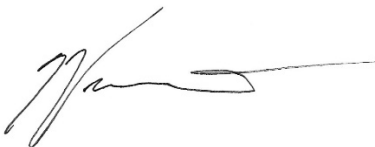
In 2013, the Recreational Access Management Plan (RAMP) was completed. The RAMP was consistent with the history of the SCF and the LRMP when it designated this area of the SCF as non-motorized.

Unfortunately, there was not a 'legal' designation for non-motorized access in 1988. The DM at the time felt that the Steering Committee, public scrutiny, and the LRMP was enough to ensure compliance with the designations. Thus far it appears that not making non-motorized access a legal requirement has failed.

The CRB is requesting that this area be:

1. Legally designated Non-Motorized as per the Bulkley RAMP to prevent further damage to the Seymour Ridge Trails and the CORE assets.
2. Restrict access to authorized use.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



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On Behalf of the Bulkley Community Resource Board