

BV Community Resource Board – Minutes

Mar 17, 2025

Present:

Directors: Ron Vanderstar, Anne Hetherington, Ted Vander Wart, Kevin Tyler
Secretary: Sue Brookes
Public: Dan Huisman, Skeena Cattlemen's Association
Bob Storey, Skeena Cattlemen, Woodlot Operator and Rancher

Regrets: Director John Fisher, Nicolas Dormaar

Next Meeting: Apr 21, 2025, 7pm, Smithers Council Chambers

Meeting convened at 7:05pm

Chair: Kevin Tyler

Everyone in the room introduced themselves. Welcome Bob and Dan.

There was a brief discussion on the background of the Board.

Contents of the Minutes:

1. Treasurer's Report
2. Discussion with the Cattlemen Association (CA) members
the Grizzly issue
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ADA's and land use in the valley bottom
3. Appointment/Resignation of Directors
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1. Treasurer's Report

There are no changes from last month. We have an operating budget of \$5000.00 roughly. Hosting and domain billing are coming up, plus the recording secretary has an invoice outstanding.

Project based fundraising would be possible ad hoc. An example of a previous project is the Telkwa Caribou Project, the Board was asked to host a public event. We've had a mapping project too. Winter RAMP was a big project - we are advisors and facilitators.

2. Discussion with the Cattlemen Association (CA) members

the Grizzly issue

One rancher in the Lakes District reportedly lost over 50 head a year in the last 2 years. It seems the population of grizzlies is increasing. Bob Storey lost 8 head last year. The CA wants to bring the Grizzly hunt back. Some First Nations have already opened their Grizzly hunt. The CA members present feel that the Province is not listening to their concern.

The cattle industry is becoming too expensive so without crown land and active management of these areas, they lose cattle to predators. Because of the availability of the Crown grazing areas

herds are much larger than what can be sustained on an individual farm. The later would only support herds at 20% of current sizes.

Where on the land base could the bears be encouraged versus not? The Board could start a conversation with other ecologists, ranchers and planners.

Grizzlies are territorial and when their numbers expand they take up a lot of space. In South Hazelton a sow grizzly and 3 cubs were dispatched last year. Because the dispatches aren't news, the general public doesn't have a true perception of the problem. The Provincial government is also very hard to convince.

Experience in the north indicates that the 2-3 year old males are causing the most problems, followed by old and weak bears. Most deer and moose observed in town can be an indication that grizzly (and wolf) populations are increasing.

A grizzly kill is dragged into the bush, then buried and left to ripen. Bears will sit on their kills before eating. CA have a problem with this because they have to provide a carcass and establish a grizzly was to blame in order to receive compensation for the loss.

A bear that kills a calf once will keep doing it and in turn teach its cubs. Seeding alfalfa and clover attracts bears some Forestry Operators know this and these varieties.

CA had a course a couple years ago about kill verification. A retired Conservation Officer (CO), the leader, shared the limits of what they could do for predator control. One example given was the use of a poison (no longer allowed). It was a canine poison - some name - the poison was specific to species and hugely useful.

A Director is suggesting an application for photo and GPS spatial data collection. He emphasizes that there needs to be a map - a spatial representation of what is known or recorded. It's possible the CA have considered this. We could combine their numbers with kill verification officers who have worked the area and biologists.

Skeena Region Cattlemen's Association

1. The Pleasant Valley Cattlemen (cover folks to Hungry Hill)
2. Bulkley Valley Cattlemen's Association (Smithers to Hazelton)
3. The Skeena Stockman's Association
4. The Lakes District Cattlemen Association

Action Item** 2 letters to request the Province to investigate and identify if a means of control in certain areas is warranted. The Bulkley CA will ask the BC Cattlemen to draft a copy. We will draft a second one of our own for review.

We could ask the Province what the options are. Maybe bring the hunt back in agricultural areas. We need to be specific by locations and need a spatial plan. We also need to be mindful of the corridors. We could invite the Province to a meeting. Is there a combined grizzly population count and maps? We could bring together those known by kill verification officers, CO's, biologists, and cattlemen.

Wildlife fencing

There was a brief discussion on wildlife friendly fencing. Using it in sections where there are corridors does work and can prevent unwanted deaths. It uses less barbed wire and has a double smooth wire on the top and bottom line. It's not fool-proof.

ADA's and land use in the valley bottom

The WHMA cancellations were mentioned because this is causing intensification of development in the valley bottom. The Board explained how the scarcity of lands are driving planners to look at corridors in more detail. Looking at some parts of ADA's and removing them from the ADA designation might be worthwhile in order to preserve corridors and ecosystems. If they aren't arable, they might be helpful in establishing corridors. This could also be helpful to the farm. The CRB recognizes the value of farming in the Bulkley Valley.

Bob remembers 20 years ago sitting down with the Province and going over all the valley acreages. He shared his knowledge and experience willingly and it was recorded. With these cancellations those recordings have probably been destroyed.

3. Appointment/Resignation of Directors

John Fisher provided his resignation from the Board. He will be missed.

Twelve Directors would be ideal. There was a brief discussion on how to make Board meetings more effective.

4. Correspondance

1) There was a response in email from Cam and Tara regarding our last letters. If you need this sent again let the secretary know.

2) The discussion of the **Canyon Creek Ski Area** was revisited.

3) A meeting that was scheduled by the Ministers on Mar. 18, 2025 to discuss WHMA cancellations has been cancelled and Len has now been referred to James Cuell. In the letter the Minister also recommends that a presentation be made to the Bulkley Morice FLP. The Minister's letter states the purpose of this process is to review and carry forward the objectives of the LRMP.

Problems with this statement:

- 1) the Bulkley Morice FLP process is forestry specific. The cancellations are not forestry specific but will be subject to multiple forms of development applications.
- 2) Lori Halls' one letter of 2024 where she defended the cancellations had 13 obvious errors. She has insufficiently acknowledged these discrepancies despite a personal letter sent by Anne in response and summarizing them in a chart.
- 3) even the Auditor General agrees the cancellations did not follow due process.
- 4) these blocks are actively being logged despite them being CORE Ecosystems, Old Growth, WHMA's and/or falling under the LRMP
- 5) the cancellations were clearly an abuse of process.
- 6) this is a symptom that indicates that we are on our last timber stands. Despite their little yield or economic timber value, they are being offered for logging.

Solutions:

A Director put forward a possible win/win solution:

- 1) pause BC Timber Sales and logging plans and go back to a tactical plan for the 6000 ha which would include the Canyon Creek Ski Area and Tyhee Lake Trails.
- 2) Volumes can still be sold through the district but it could be specific targeted contacts to local operators and local secondary manufacturing.

In addition there is a Town of Smithers, Forestry Reserve Fund, valued at roughly \$150 000. This fund is for specific forestry industry solutions that support local jobs. We could set up the 6000 ha tactical plan as an adaptive management pilot. Anne has already asked a few small operators and companies if this would be of interest and feasible, she awaits their answer. The pilot could include the Wetzinkwa Community Forest and/or the Canyon Creek and Thyee Mountain WHMA's. It still requires a Section 169 sign off by the Province. This could be the method to bring habitat back sooner, forest back sooner and employ local contractors.

Action Item** Anne to invite James to a CRB meeting or meet at his office.

The **UBC Law School** practices environmental law and may be able to comment or provide insight on this issue. Perhaps this is a future agenda item.

5. Motion to approve previous minutes

December 2024 January 2025 and February 2025. This motion deferred.

We revisited the discussion of the **Canyon Creek Ski Area**

6. Action Items

1. The BC Environmental Office (EAO) has contacted Ted who confirmed the Board would be interested in remaining part of a Technical Working Group (TWG) for the Telkwa Coal environmental assessment process. He will serve as the contact for this.
2. Nick Dormaar and Anne will be meeting with an associate from the Lake Babine Nation to work through ideas and potential solutions regarding the Forest Landscape Planning (FLP) process.
3. FLP Forestry Working Group (FWG) Update:
 - Anne's energy, field work, papers and government background are brought to the FLP technical working group table where she is joined by others.
 - Anne spoke with Cheryl Brown of the Kalum PIC. Cheryl will consider how they could contribute to the FLP technical working group.
 - there is a potential forestry proposal for canopy retention partial cut support for block plans using Swedish Harvester Forwarders. Anne please confirm whether this is the Mike Buirs and Patchworks project for Goshawks? Where is this?
 - First Nations could be advised on:
 - using their own proprietary criteria and scales for the FLP process. The paper '*A new model for selecting valued components in environmental assessment*' is a Metlakatla study on cumulative effects management.
 - identification of loopholes, jargon, or terminology that could jeopardize success of the project

References:

Patchworks demo link:

https://spatialca-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/tmoore_spatial_ca/EW3i0dZLoptNkMef_jJswas-BvxPF74zvCrMu05xn66Dbw?e=xOJKDK

Adjourned 9:30pm.