



# MUSKWA-KECHIKA MANAGEMENT AREA

BC's Working Wilderness

SUMMER 2007 NEWSLETTER

## WHAT IS THE M-KMA?

The Muskwa Kechika Management Area (M-KMA) is a globally significant area of wilderness, wildlife and cultures, to be maintained in perpetuity, where world class integrated resource management decision-making is practiced ensuring that resource development and other human activities take place in harmony with wilderness quality, wildlife and the dynamic ecosystems on which they depend. The M-KMA was designated in legislation (M-KMA Act, 1998).

## WHERE IS THE M-KMA?

The M-KMA at 6.4 million hectares is approximately twice the size of Vancouver Island. It is located in northeastern British Columbia and is bordered by the communities of Fort Nelson, Fort St. John and Mackenzie. The M-KMA lies in the traditional territories of First Nations bands Kaska Dena, Treaty 8 and Carrier-Sekani (Tsay Keh Dene). The northern Rocky Mountains run through the eastern M-KMA while the Cassiar mountains run through the western border.

## HOW CAN I GET TO THE M-KMA?

Visitors can travel to the M-KMA by taking the world famous Alaska Highway which runs through the area. The Alaska Highway enters the M-KMA at Tetsa River, located at Mile 351. Other points of reference along the Alaska Highway in the M-KMA are Toad River, located at Mile 422, and Liard River, located at Mile 496. These locations are measured in miles for historical reasons as the Alaska Highway was built mostly by the United States Army during the Second World War.

Between Tetsa River and Summit Lake is Stone Mountain Provincial Park. At the highest point along the Alaska Highway, Stone Mountain Provincial Park is known for its spectacular natural scenery. Stunning views and camping greet visitors at Muncho Lake Provincial Park, and a warm soak further along the highway at Liard River Hot Springs is a welcome treat. For back-country adventurers there are also more remote opportunities.



MUSKWA-KECHIKA  
MANAGEMENT AREA

There are short routes from the Alaska Highway that extend into the M-KMA. These routes are designated for recreational vehicle access. There are specific restrictions on the size and width of the vehicles allowed into the area. These are called "designated access routes" and are under the M-KMA Access Management Area, which is designated under the *Wildlife Act*.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE M-KMA?

Visitors to Fort St. John can drop into the Muskwa-Kechika Information Office located in the Visitor Centre in Fort St. John, BC. The office, which has a small resource library and reading area for those interested in learning more about the M-KMA, welcomes visitors from all over the world. To find out more about the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area visit [www.muskwa-kechika.com](http://www.muskwa-kechika.com).

## DID YOU KNOW...

- The driving distance from Mackenzie to Fort Nelson is 687 kilometres
- The distance along the Alaska Highway from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson is 387 kilometres



## PREDATOR-PREY RELATIONSHIPS

The M-KMA supports one of the largest intact predator-prey systems in North America. Dr. Kathy Parker and graduate students at UNBC conducted research to define the relationships among the large ungulates (woodland caribou, Stone's Sheep, moose, elk) and the large predators (grizzly bears, wolves) in the Besa-Prophet Rivers area of the M-KMA.

During the four-year study, they used global positioning satellite (GPS) radio-collars to map the distributions and critical ranges of each species. Wolves tended to use the largest areas, and Stone's Sheep the smallest. There were three general caribou calving areas, each with differences in food availability and predation risk. The researchers used satellite imagery to map vegetation communities on the ground and resource models to determine what habitats animals selected for from what was available to them on the landscape. They also determined pregnancy rates from blood samples and body condition from ultrasound measurements in caribou, and stress levels from fecal hormones in Stone's Sheep.

From the chemical signatures of the predators and prey, it appears that grizzly bears in the Besa-Prophet are primarily plant eaters, but increase prey consumption in the fall. Wolves consume numerous prey species, but their diets are dominated by moose and elk in the summer and fall.

Data from this project will be used to update wildlife habitat models and to monitor the status of these key species, as well as to help improve land use plans. Knowing how the predator-prey system functions is important for assessing the cumulative effects of increased access and management actions in the M-KMA.

Funding for this project was provided by the M-KMA with other generous contributions from UNBC, HCTF, the North American Foundation for Wild Sheep, and others.

## SULPHUR/8 MILE STONE'S SHEEP PROJECT

The M-KMA is home to Stone's Sheep, a hooved animal that is found in the mountainous and rocky terrain of British Columbia and the Yukon.

The Sulphur/8 Mile (S8M) Stone's Sheep Project is the first research project of its kind to focus on measuring the effects of human activities on Stone's Sheep in the M-KMA's Sulphur/8 Mile area. The project provides direction to help manage and lessen disturbances to the sheep and monitors their current population size, structure and demographic trends.

There is a moderately-high value of oil and gas reserves in the S8M pre-tenure plan area, where Stone's Sheep live. Oil and gas tenure sales are deferred until the research project is completed. The data collected from studying the Stone's Sheep will help determine future resource exploration in the S8M pre-tenure plan area and will also provide information for future research on other areas where they live.

The project observes Stone's Sheep in the north-east corner of the M-KMA, an area that covers about 5,700 square kilometres and includes the communities of Toad River and Muncho Lake.

The Stone's Sheep Project is a multi-stakeholder initiative that has the support of the Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board (M-KAB). The project has received some funding from the M-KAB.

For more information on the Stone's Sheep Project visit [www.synergyecology.ca/S8Msheep/](http://www.synergyecology.ca/S8Msheep/)



## QUICK FACTS

- Stone's Sheep are ungulates, a term referring to hooved animals.
- Mature Stone's Sheep weigh between 57 to 90 kilograms and have a dark, blue-black colouring and stubby white tails.
- They are named after Andrew Jackson Stone who discovered them in 1896. The Latin name for Stone's Sheep is *Ovis dalli stonei*.
- Stone's Sheep mature slowly and have low reproduction rates. Their breeding season takes place in October and early November. The typical gestation period of a Stone's Sheep is about six months.



### Muskwa-Kechika Information Office

C/O Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board Coordinator  
 Suite 200, 9523-100th Street  
 Fort St. John, British Columbia  
 Canada, V1J 4N4  
 Tel: 250.262.0065  
[www.muskwa-kechika.com](http://www.muskwa-kechika.com)