



*Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board's*

*Report to the Premier  
and the  
Public of British Columbia*

*March 2015*

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

### Premier Clark and the Public of British Columbia:

We are pleased to report out on what has been happening in British Columbia's working wilderness - the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (M-KMA) in north eastern B.C. Since its creation the M-KMA has been guided by a diverse Advisory Board (Board) that includes First Nations, industry, local government, guide outfitters, environmental and tourism specialists and others. The board maintains a positive and respectful relationship with the government and provides advice and guidance for actions taken within the borders of the M-KMA as well as annually reporting back to the Premier and the public of British Columbia.

*This report  
covers the years  
2010 – 2014...*

This report covers the years 2010 - 2014 and briefly highlights a number of goals that have been met or that were worked on as we implemented our Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan. These accomplishments are a direct result of Board members actively participating on various working groups as well as through collaborative partnerships with the members of the North East Managers and Omineca Managers Committees of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), the Ministry of Energy and Mines, BC Parks, etc. We remain vigilant to adapt and adjust our plans, actions, and advice to reflect an ever changing world and to ensure that the complex and challenging balance between wilderness and land management activities within the M-KMA perseveres.

We will continue to work collaboratively with Government and others to ensure activities within the M-KMA reflect the balance of values envisioned for this special management area. To that end, we will pay particular attention to developing clear, integrated, meaningful and measureable advice and guidance to guide proponents and decision makers well in advance of any development proposals.

At this time, it is appropriate to acknowledge and thank Ross Peck and the late Tom Briggs (former chairs) for their generous investment of time and energy working with the Board over the last several years. Both Tom and Ross significantly contributed to the success of the M-KMA. I also wish to acknowledge and thank the current, and former, members of the Board for their invaluable contribution and commitment to the management of the M-KMA.

Finally, it is with profound sadness that we dedicate this report to the late Tom Briggs and Butch Morningstar. They were great advocates for the M-KMA and the Advisory Board. They were men of high moral character, integrity, compassion and dedication. They are dearly missed.

Respectfully submitted



Stephanie Killam, Chair  
Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board

**Note:** All items marked with an asterisk are documents that can be found on the Advisory Board's website: [www.muskwa-kechika.com](http://www.muskwa-kechika.com)

# 1. Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area\*, located in north-eastern British Columbia, is an area of land designated for varying levels of protection, conservation and use. The management goal for the M-KMA is to ensure that wilderness characteristics, wildlife and its habitat are maintained over time while allowing resource development and use, including: recreation, hunting, timber harvesting, mineral exploration and mining, oil and gas exploration and development. The integration of management activities, especially related to the planning, development and management of road access within the M-KMA, is central to achieving this intent. The long-term objective is to return lands to their natural state, as much as possible, as development activities are completed.

*This pattern of management is a unique approach...*

Conceived through the Fort St. John, Fort Nelson and Mackenzie Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) process and established by legislation in 1998, the Management Area is a unique model for sustainable land use, resource planning and management. The Management Area is not a park; rather, it is comprised of a variety of zones with differing levels of resource management ranging from provincial parks and ecological reserves (where resource extraction is not permitted), to resource management zone categories where objectives and strategies determine the level of human activity.

This pattern of multi-resource management zones is a unique approach to managing the land base, including maintaining wilderness, wildlife and cultural values while allowing resource development in areas designated for that purpose.



Few places on earth match the significance of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area in terms of beauty, isolation, biodiversity, wildlife, wilderness, natural resources, and spiritual and cultural values.



## 2. Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board

The Board<sup>1</sup> is enabled through a specific legislative framework. The *Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act*\* directs the Premier of the Province of British Columbia to appoint an Advisory Board. The *Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan Regulation*\* establishes the role and responsibility for an Advisory Board.

The Board advises government on natural resource management, strategic land use planning, research, and monitoring within the M-KMA.

The Board is a volunteer based model that is appointed by the Premier with a membership that represents a cross section of society as well as a variety of perspectives. The Board:

- Continually strives to ensure that activities within the area are consistent with the objectives of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan;
- Reports, at least annually, to the public and the Premier about the Management Area, any issues related to the management of the area and the work of the Board; and
- Encourages and supports coordination and collaboration both within the Board and with its partners while valuing and nurturing diversity of perspectives and opinions; to ensure balanced decision-making and advice/guidance.

### 2.1 Advisory Board Mission Statement\*

Provide respected and trusted advice that ensures the dynamic ecosystems, wilderness, wildlife and cultural diversity of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area are maintained in perpetuity

### 2.2 Advisory Board's Vision for the Management Area\*

The Muskwa- Kechika Management Area 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.

## 3. Overview of Activities in the Management Area

The Province of British Columbia tabled a report on activities in the M-KMA in December 2013\*. Their previous report covered the years 2009-2011.

The following is an overview of activities (tenures, permits, licenses, etc.) within the M-KMA from the Government report on the Management Area as of 2013:

### 3.1 Traplines, Guide Outfitter Territories, Licensed Transporters and Licensed Angling Guides

- 53 trap lines<sup>2</sup> are fully or partially within the M-KMA;
- 24 Guide Outfitters have territories<sup>3</sup> fully or partially within the M-KMA;

<sup>1</sup> Biographies and photos of members can be viewed at <http://www.muskwa-kechika.com/advisory-board-2/advisory-board>

<sup>2</sup> Traplines are a long standing tenure in British Columbia and are managed by the Ministry of Environment

- 6 Licensed Transporters<sup>4</sup>; and
- 15 licensed angling guides.

### 3.2 Oil and Gas Tenures

- 35 well authorizations; and
- 30 natural gas tenures have been issued up to 2009 – no data available to 2013.

### 3.3 Mineral Tenures

- 54 Mineral<sup>5</sup> Claims were issued in 2013 bringing the total number of claims to 895; and
- 1 Placer<sup>6</sup> Tenure issued in 2013 bringing the total placer tenures to 18.

### 3.4 Land Tenures

- 124 Land Tenures are within the M-KMA; and
- 28 Land Tenure Applications are in process with the province.

### 3.5 Wind Energy Permits and Licenses

- 4 Investigative Use Permits
- 2 Licences of Occupation



## 4. Initiatives and Accomplishments of the Advisory Board

Although its fiscal resources are significantly constrained compared to previous years the Board is committed and earnest in fulfilling its mandate and meeting Government’s expectations. The Board as a whole and through its various working groups and partnerships has worked effectively, efficiently and diligently to deliver its Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan.

The following highlights the Boards initiatives and accomplishments.

### 4.1 Advice

The legislated mandate for the Advisory Board is to:

- Advise government on natural resource management in the M-KMA to ensure that activities within the area are consistent with the objectives of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan;

<sup>3</sup> Guide Outfitter territories are legally established by the Province of British Columbia. Non-resident hunters are required by law to use a Guide Outfitter in the Province.

<sup>4</sup> Transporters provide a service to take public into the backcountry for a variety of activities. They cannot provide guided hunting services.

<sup>5</sup> An ore of metal, or a natural substance that can be mined, that is in the place or position in which it was originally formed or deposited or is in talus rock.

<sup>6</sup> An ore of metal and every natural substance that can be mined and that is either loose, or found in fragmentary or broken rock that is not talus rock and occurs in loose earth, gravel and sand, and includes rock or other materials from placer mine tailings, dumps and previously mined deposits of placer minerals.

- Provide advice on corporate priorities for and coordination of local strategic planning in the M-KMA; and
- Conduct reviews of the issuance of tenures and approval of operational activities to examine the achievement of management plan objectives through local strategic planning and operational activities.

The Board continues its commitment to developing a mechanism<sup>7</sup> that will assist with creating clear, integrated, meaningful, and measureable advice and guidance to Government and proponents for activities within the M-KMA that ensures decisions and their attending activities are in keeping with the vision and management goal for the area.

The Board acknowledges this as a critical role and expectation of Government and is committed to achieving this deliverable. The commitment to fulfilling this important expectation can be found in several of the following sections and will guide the update to the Board's Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan.

For clarity, the Board offers the following definitions as one of the "tests" against which it will evaluate the quality of its advice:

- **CLEAR:** Means the advice we create is easy to understand, perceive and interpret. Other descriptors are: intelligible, plain, uncomplicated, explicit, lucid, coherent, straightforward and unambiguous.
- **INTEGRATED:** Means the advice we create is considered as parts of a whole (an overarching "Natural Resource Management Framework" for the M-KMA). This is accomplished by ensuring new advice is evaluated against existing advice to ensure compatibility and consistency.
- **MEANINGFUL:** Means the advice we create has a serious, important or useful purpose or quality to those considering the advice. Other descriptors are: significant, relevant, important, consequential, valid and worthwhile.
- **MEASUREABLE:** Means the advice we create leads to outcomes on the landscape that can be measured spatially and temporally (for example, size or area of impact and the amount or degree of the impact (low, medium, and high)).

## 4.2 University of Northern BC (UNBC) Partnership Working Group

Since 1999 there has been a partnership between UNBC and the Board to undertake research and studies within the M-KMA. In May of 2012 the Board and representatives from the UNBC developed and signed a renewed three year partnership agreement entitled "*Collaborative Partnership Agreement*".\* This renewed partnership is focused on establishing new research priorities for the Management Area with funding potentially arising from the UNBC Muskwa-Kechika Endowment Fund<sup>8</sup>.

As a result of this partnership a project was undertaken to integrate all of the plans and studies within the M-KMA into a single framework (please refer to Footnote "6"). Discussions with the

<sup>7</sup> In partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia the Board is investigating the potential of adapting Nobi Suzuki's "*Analysis of Conflict between Potential Resource Use and Wildlife Conservation*" to assist with creating advice.

<sup>8</sup> Established in 1999 using M-KMA Trust Funds.

university and agency staff are underway to evaluate this work and to determine if it is the appropriate basis from which a framework or mechanism as noted in the previous section can be developed.

### 4.3 Wilderness Definition and Vision Working Group

This Working Group was enabled to bring clarity to what the vision for, and the definition of, Wilderness within the M-KMA means in the light of the management goal of balancing social and environmental values with economic development and use. This is fundamental to the advice and guidance mechanism referenced previously.

*... clear,  
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The goal is to achieve a “common and shared understanding” of the definition and vision between Government and the Board. The group has made significant progress with their work and based on feedback from senior managers in the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) it is anticipated that a final draft for agency review comment and eventual approval is likely sometime in 2015/16.

### 4.4 Mineral Claims Working Group

Mineral exploration activity has been low in the Management Area in the past 13 years. However, there has been an increase in the acquisition of mineral claims as witnessed by the fact that as of 2013 there were 895 mineral claims within the M-KMA.

As the UNBC Partnership Working Group explores the creation of an advice and guidance mechanism, in the interim, the Board is motivated to provide clear, integrated, meaningful and measureable advice to Government in light of potential mineral exploration activity resulting from the increased number of mineral claims held in good standing.

The Board is attempting to develop guidance on how mineral claims may be explored and potentially developed in the M-KMA. To this end, the Board commissioned a report which was finalized in March 2013. The Board has discussed the final report with Ministry of Energy and Mines staff. From these discussions, the working group is considering the final recommendations of the report with the goal of providing advice to the Board for its consideration. The outcomes of the Board’s review and acceptance of this advice from the working group will be provided to the Ministry of Energy and Mines in the form of a recommendation.

There is an initiative to create an “expectations document” that will be afforded to all mineral tenure holders within the M-KMA that describes the management intent for the area in order to assist tenure holders consider their potential exploration activities accordingly.

### 4.5 Adventure Eco-Tourism

The Board commissioned a report to investigate the challenges and constraints to adventure tourism opportunities within the M-KMA which was completed March 2013.

The Board is evaluating the recommendations in this report with the intention of:

- Tabling the report and providing advice and guidance to the Province of B.C. on the recommendations in the report; and

- Engaging Ministry of Tourism staff to determine if there is an opportunity to align and/or harmonize their Provincial tourism strategy “Gaining the Edge” with the advice and other tourism work that has been undertaken in the M-KMA.

#### 4.6 BC Parks

Advice was provided to BC Parks to assist it with completing the Northern Rocky Mountains and Redfern Kelly Park Management plans. In return, a commitment was made that BC Parks staff would provide the Board with a final recommended draft for its review and comment prior to Minister sign off.

The Board also provided BC Parks with its recommendations for future park management plans it believes would be of benefit to the M-KMA.

*... focus its work  
and activities  
for the next two  
years ...*

#### 4.7 Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan 2013 – 2015

In August of 2013, the Board completed its Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan\* to focus its work and activities for the following three years. The Plan was reviewed and supported by the Minister of MFLNRO in his role as the Trustee for the M-KMA and the Board.

The Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan will again be updated in early 2015/16.

#### 4.8 M-KMA Website

The Board established a website in 2004 as a key initiative to increase awareness, knowledge and support for the M-KMA. While it has enjoyed a modest number of visitors, over time it became apparent that the site would benefit from an update and redesign. With support from the Province and the M-KMA Trustee, a re-design and update was undertaken and completed by March 2013.

Some highlights of the re-design are:

- Fewer web pages and easier to navigate through the website;
- A resource library that is becoming a useful tool to locate research reports and documents completed over the years and specifically for the M-KMA are now all in one location; and
- A secure area is now available for Board members to post current business materials for each member to reference easily and confidentially.

### 5. Financials

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations once again provided the Board with funding to support its operations for fiscal 2014/15. The outcomes highlighted in this report are a direct result of the financial support of the Ministry.

The Board acknowledges the challenging economic climate that the Ministry and the Province face and is appreciative of the funding and support that the Ministry has provided to the Board. This support

positions the Board to deliver its highest priorities in its 2015/16 Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan that closely align with MFLNRO's priorities for the area.

A full report of these funds and deliverables will be provided in the next Annual Report of the Advisory Board.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Board is proud of its accomplishments and the progress it has made in the nearly twenty years since its creation. It remains steadfast in its commitment to fulfilling its mandate of ensuring a meaningful and credible balance between wilderness and land management in the Muskwa-Kechika Management area that results in a working wilderness unparalleled in the world.