



M-KMA Vision

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

Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

DAY 1: October 19, 2021

Room 6-205, UNBC, Prince George, BC

Present: Stephanie Killam, David Luff, Johnny Mikes, Barry Holland, Wayne Sawchuk, John Degrace (by phone), Peter Baird

Regrets: Sean Olmstead, Juergen Puetter, Shawna Case, Ruby Johnny

Guests: Pamela Wright and Heather Bryan (UNBC)

1. COVID-19 Safety Plan

Phil reviewed the Board's COVID-19 safety plan that was required by UNBC. Everyone was to wear masks during the meeting and to practice physical distancing. Masks were not required when drinking or eating but physical distancing was still required while eating or drinking.

2. Working Groups Scheduled to Review Mandates and Next Steps

The following working groups were scheduled to meet: First Nations Relations, Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan Update, Board Membership and Composition, Government Communications and Engagement, and Wilderness Definition.

Because of low attendance, the attending members decided to forego the agenda for the morning and discuss, instead, other Board business and emerging issues.

Members discussed the importance of our Strategic Directions document considering, to the extent possible, the emerging role of indigenous peoples in decision making in the management of natural resources within their respective traditional territories (including their rights and title) and the management of the M-KMA.

Members discussed including in our strategy a section on improving knowledge of the M-KMA recognizing that there is a balance between improving knowledge of the M-KMA and not having the area over-run with visitors, hunters, etc.

They also discussed the importance of including in our strategy improving relationships with First Nations with traditional territory that overlaps the M-KMA.



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Members reviewed the competencies matrix developed to guide future recommendations for appointment to the Board. They noted that the competencies did not include awareness of climate change and potential mitigative strategies, adaptive management, cumulative effects, and knowledge of, or commitment to, the vision of the M-KMA.

Members reviewed the revised architecture for the natural resource management framework that David Luff and Johnny Mikes developed. They explained the change in the architecture was to categorize “universal” advice/direction more effectively and efficiently for the M-KMA from “area specific” advice/direction for the M-KMA. There remains more work to be done including how does the framework address “one offs” and who will enforce compliance with our advice/direction.

Pamela Wright from UNBC attended the afternoon session. Members presented her with a retirement gift of a photograph taken by Wayne Sawchuk to recognize the many years of her passion and support for the M-KMA including several master’s students research in the area.

Heather Bryan from UNBC also attended the afternoon session. She presented a power point presentation entitled “UNBC/M-KMA Partnership Meeting” (link to be inserted here) of subjects that summarized her research for 2020/21 as well as an overview of the endowment fund:

- The endowment fund is in good standing and has grown to approximately \$1.22 million as of June 30, 2021. According to UNBC policy, Heather may access 3.5% of the fund (approximately \$40,120 for fiscal 2021/22). For various reasons she was unable to expend all her research funds available to her in 2020/21 (approximately \$23,100 remain). This under expenditure can be carried forward into future fiscal years and combined with the 3.5% “harvest” rate of the Endowment Fund.
- Heather presented an over-view of her research into the effects of prescribed burns on Stone sheep health and physiology which covered: How do prescribed burns influence recruitment; physiology, and health in stone sheep and elk (stress and reproductive hormones in pellets and urine, diet (pellets), and recruitment)
- No burn permits were granted this fiscal. 25 new burn permit applications have been submitted for fiscal 2022/23 with the hope that at least one or two burning permits will be approved. Heather plans of further meetings with Parks, other BC government officials to try to facilitate the approval for some of her burn permit applications and hopes to proceed with project next fiscal.



MUSKWA-KECHIKA MANAGEMENT AREA

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- Heather plans to continue to develop a collaborative wildlife project with the Halfway River First Nation and improve relations with other First Nations in general.

New research directions for Heather are: Ian Curtis shared an introductory letter with the Fort St John LRMP Committee in Aug as a first step to participating in the initiative. She has created a committee that includes members and representatives from the Doig River, Prophet River, Blueberry, and Halfway River Nations as well as representatives from municipal and provincial governments.

- The previous has led to discussions with Rosalyn Notseta, HRFN, and consultants Catherine Piedt and Kara Green (Ecora) about possible research collaboration

ACTION: Phil to schedule working group virtual meetings and post Heather's power point presentation.



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Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

DAY 2: October 20, 2021

Room 6-205, UNBC, Prince George, BC

Present: Stephanie Killam, David Luff, Johnny Mikes, Barry Holland, Wayne Sawchuk, Ruby Johnny, Peter Baird

Regrets: Sean Olmstead, Juergen Puetter, Shawna Case, John Degrace

Guests: Andrea Sommerville and Ed Hoffman (Ministry of Environment), Darin Hancock (MFLRORD), Richard Kabzems (videocall), Heather Bryan (UNBC)

1. COVID-19 Safety Plan

Phil again reviewed the Board's COVID-19 safety plan that was required by UNBC. Everyone was to wear masks during the meeting and to practice physical distancing. Masks were not required when drinking or eating but physical distancing was still required while eating or drinking.

2. Update from Working Groups who met October 19th

As the working groups did not meet on Day 1, members discussed emerging issues.

- Prescribed Burning

Do we have a common position (do we need a common position)? Heather Bryan wants to improve relations with indigenous peoples regarding prescribed burning. Does our position align with Heather's? Any advice we provide with respect to prescribed burning within the M-KMA should tie in with Heather's 22 proposed prescribed burn applications.

- Changing technology and application in the M-KMA

Our strategic directions and operational business plan should consider changing technology and its application with the M-KMA. For example, it is illegal to use drone cameras for hunting, yet game cameras saturate many parts of the M-KMA. The cameras are used to identify rams and their range and then that information is sold to highest bid hunters. Trail cameras cannot, however, broadcast data of any type.

- Invasive species (plants)

This is an emerging issue in the M-KMA. Who is tracking invasive plants? Are there management plans to prevent invasive plants entering the M-KMA and/or their removal? Do we



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even know where the priority areas are? Increasing awareness of the issue something the Board should monitor.

- Protected Areas Management Strategy

This item requires a further strategic level discussion. Why wouldn't Government connect the 15 Protected Areas? The Board must pay attention to the management strategy that Parks is putting together. We need further discussion of what we want to say about how the management strategy should include connectivity before the draft management strategy is developed. ELUC corridors should be included in that discussion.

- Maintaining existing access

The Board should ensure this is addressed within the Government's trails initiative. The possibility exists of losing existing access to Redfern-Keilly and the access to Skook Landing. The same problem exists if the bridge to Nonda Creek is removed.

- Access Management Area Regulation

The access management area regulation does not include the Mackenzie portion of the M-KMA. Whenever the regulation is updated, we should ensure that this inclusion of the Mackenzie portion of the M-KMA be a part of the regulation update.

- Promoting the M-KMA

Further to Day 1's discussion, the Board should discuss next steps for creating a communications strategy for the M-KMA.

- Indigenous Relations and Outreach

Further to Day 1's discussion, the Board's working group(s) should discuss next steps.

- Trails and Signage Working Group

Whoever engages Government on this initiative should be guided by the Board's position on signage. Therefore, the Board should have a conversation to confirm a common position on signing in the M-KMA.

- Engagement with the FS John LRMP Update Initiative

The Board should have a plan as to who is going to attend these meetings and what is the Board's position on issues.



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- Blueberry Documents from Darin Hancock

When do we need to provide advice? What do we want to say?

ACTION: Phil to schedule working groups to investigate the preceding list of emerging issue with actions where a Board common position is required or next steps to advance a topic is identified.

3. Blueberry FN recent Court ruling update (Darin Hancock)

Darin provided a brief over-view of the court ruling. The Government has until the end of December 2021 to address the direction of the courts in collaboration with the Blueberry First Nation.

4. History of Prescribed Fire in the Northeast Region of BC (Richard Kabzems)

A review of historical records concluded that fires created by Indigenous Peoples living in boreal forests had specific purposes, were set at specific times, and were of low intensity and small in size.

A study by Ross Peck in 1980 found that "...the area (range of the Muskwa-Liard Elk herd) that has been intentionally burnt in the last twenty years is substantial. A portion of virtually every south facing hillside, along at least four of the major drainages has been burnt at least once, and more often two or three times in the past twenty years..."

John Parminter, fire ecologist of the Ministry of Forests, observed in 1983 that:

- ...In recent times the area burned by man-caused (accidental) and prescribed fires in the Spruce-Willow-Birch zone has been greater than the area burned by lightning-caused fires...
- ...Repeated burning of slopes of the valleys of the Muskwa, Prophet, Tuchodi, and Gatho rivers has promoted a vegetative cover consisting largely of shrubs and herbs.....
- ...Repeated burning has converted mixed trembling aspen-white spruce forests into these shrub and herb dominated communities...and,
- ...If the periodic application of fire to these sites were to cease, it is likely that succession would lead to a forest community again..."

Richard provided several other historical references and summaries of prescribed fire in the NE region which can be found in his power point presentation at (*insert link to document here*).

5. Northern Rockies and Redfern-Keily Parks Management Plans Approved (Andrea Somerville)

Andrea reviewed the history that led to the approval of the Northern Rockies and Redfern-Keily Parks. She also itemized the Board's advice and how staff decided to address the advice.



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The Board recommended that the LSPAG be engaged in the public consultation process. Staff agreed and hosted meetings in Fort Saint John and Fort Nelson to review the initial draft of the Northern Rockies Management Plan.

The Board recommend that the LSPAG be engaged with reviewing the final draft of the plan to which staff again agreed.

In response to the Board's advice regarding edits to the final draft the following actions were taken:

Northern Rockies Parks Management Plan

- Aligned the plan more accurately with M-KMA Act preamble & tie M-KAB role into M-KMA management.
- Clarified use of ORVs
- Carrying of firearms for non-hunting purposes was not agreed to.
- Cutting dead standing timber was not agreed to.

Redfern-Keily Parks Management Plan

- Clarified M-KAB role into M-KMA management
- FSJ LRMP original and update processes
- Access Management Area route use by mountain bikes

Andrea summarized the outcomes of the Board's advice as:

- Advice letters led BC Parks to convene LSPAG and expand engagement meetings for the NRM plan review.
- Led BC Parks to revise both plans for clarification on several items. And
- BC Parks appreciates the clear communication with the Board - advice letters were specific, clear, and attending rationales.

Andrea provided a brief overview of the anticipated project schedule and next steps for the M-K Protected Areas Strategic Management Plan & the Liard River Hot Springs Park Management Plan.

Members wishing to review Andrea's power point presentation can view it at the following link (*insert link to the document here*)

ACTION: Phil to monitor progress of the two plans and ensure the Board's advice is sought early in the review of plan drafts.



MUSKWA-KECHIKA
MANAGEMENT AREA

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- 6.** Meeting adjourned 1:15 PM. To be filled in when I receive the Power Point from Andrea.

DRAFT