

# **MUSKWA-KECHIKA COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT PROJECT**

## **ANNUAL REPORT – APRIL 12, 2005**

### **PROJECT # M-K 2004 – 2005 – 20**

The Conservation Officer Service completed the fifth year of the Muskwa Kechika Compliance and Enforcement Project in 2004/2005. An operational change took place in July of 2004 when Mark Brodhagen, First Nations Conservation Officer with the project accepted a full time position as a Conservation Officer in Watson Lake, Yukon. After three years with the project, Mark was fully trained and was well on his way to becoming a seasoned Conservation Officer, and his presence was missed by Peace staff after his transfer. It is apparent that his role in the project as well as the project itself was a success, as Mark now holds a full time Conservation Officer career position, with year to year funding not being an issue.

As a result of Mark's confirmed departure on July 1, 2004 a new project proposal was submitted to the M-KMA Board for the remainder of the 2004/2005 fiscal year, and was subsequently approved. The amended project provided funding for Mark's position until June 30, 2004, then for existing Peace area Conservation Officers to provide the C & E operational presence in the M-K after July 1, 2004.

With the amended project, reporting of activities also changed. After July 1, 2004 all compliance and enforcement activities performed by Peace area Conservation Officers in the M-K became reportable (prior to July 1 only Mark Brodhagen's activities were reported). In the writer's estimation this was a positive change, as the M-KMA Board then became recipients of a larger base of M-K information provided through the quarterly and annual reports.

Many successful patrols, investigations and other activities took place during the project year and are outlined below.

#### **C.O. Mark Brodhagen activities April 1, 2004 – June 30, 2004:**

- **Attended First Nations hockey tournament in Prince George to liaise with young players regarding careers in the Conservation Officer field.**
- **Bear Aware presentation at Lower Post School.**
- **5 day field patrol in BC/Yukon border/Lower Post area for spring bear hunters.**
- **Halfway/Farrell Creek patrol for spring bear hunters.**
- **Follow up on fall 2003 files and investigations.**
- **Assist Fort St. John COS with over-fishing complaint at Inga Lake.**
- **Assist Wildlife Branch with caribou survey.**
- **Assist Fort St. John COS with one moose and two black bear complaints.**
- **Firearm and physical training re-qualifications.**

- Office time consisted of concluding case files, and finishing outstanding Reports to Crown Counsel in preparation for leaving Fort St. John. Numerous files passed on to Fort St. John COS staff for final investigative stages.

### Peace C.O. Service activities July 1 2004 – March 31, 2005

#### Vehicle Patrols

- Summer angler patrol to upper Graham River area (\*FSJ).
  - Fall hunter/resource user patrols (multiple occasions) to Muncho Lake, Moose Lake, Dunedin, Wokkash, Racing River, Toad River, Liard and Hwy 97 corridor (\*FN).
  - Winter angler patrols to Moose and Muncho Lake. These patrols showed a decline in winter angling pressure between 2003 and 2004 (\*FN).
- \*FSJ – Fort St. John Conservation Officers  
\*FN - Fort Nelson Conservation Officers

#### Boat Patrols

- Nine jet boat patrols (21 days) on Muskwa, Tuchodi, Gatho, Kechika and Turnagain River systems. These patrols checked for compliance of all resource users found on these systems including anglers, hunters and others. These patrols resulted in dozens of contacts, and many investigative files being generated (\*FN).
- Two day joint forces check on the Muskwa River. Both the Conservation Officer Service and the RCMP staff took part in this project, which took the form of a “roadblock” on the river. A high use of both drugs and alcohol by boaters was found to be taking place on the river. Conservation Officer “Investigations Unit” staff from Prince George also assisted with this operation (\*FN).
- On Tuchodi River patrols, the Fort Nelson officers managed to navigate their way to Tuchodi Lake itself, where anglers were very surprised to see a Conservation Officer presence on the lake and numerous non-compliances were encountered (\*FN).

#### Helicopter Use & Patrols

- Fall helicopter patrol for hunters in the Nevis Creek area (\*FSJ). This was done in conjunction with the Wildlife Branch while attending and investigating three grizzly bears (one wearing a radio collar) shot in self defense by sheep hunters. This flight was funded by the Wildlife Branch.
- Fall helicopter patrol of the M-K designated routes (\*FN).
- Fall helicopter flight to a reported unlawful stone sheep kill site (\*FN).
- Winter fuel caching by helicopter took place on major M-K river systems by in preparation for 2005 summer and fall jet boat C & E patrols (\*FN).

- **Helicopter flight in response to a dual grizzly bear mauling of two elk hunters in the Halfway River area.**

#### **ATV and Snowmobile Patrols**

- **Fall ATV hunter patrols of Moose Lake and Yedhe Creek areas (\*FN)**
- **Four winter trap line snowmobile patrols in Toad River area (\*FN)**
- **Two ATV hunter patrols to Nevis Creek area (\*FSJ).**
- **Two fall ATV patrols in Sikanni River area. One patrol was three days in length (\*FSJ).**
- **Trimble and Redfern Lakes winter snowmobile patrol with Parks staff (\*FSJ).**

#### **Liaison**

- **Numerous meetings with M-K guide-outfitters to discuss issues, trends and investigations.**
- **Attendance at the annual Northern Guide Outfitters Association meeting in Fort St. John.**
- **Combined patrols with Parks, RCMP and the Wildlife Branch.**
- **Numerous informal meetings with members of Fort Nelson and Kaska First Nations.**
- **Liaison with Toad River area trappers.**
- **Meeting with Treaty 8 Wildlife Biologist to discuss oil and gas issues and trends in the Peace.**

#### **Human/Wildlife Occurrences**

- **Sheep hunters destroyed grizzly bears in self defense when charged by sow and twin two year old cubs in Nevis Creek area. The sow wore a radio collar, therefore Wildlife Branch and Fort St. John C.O. Service staff attended site by helicopter to retrieve collar and investigate incident. Hunter checks were performed in area to maximize helicopter time, resulting in a number of investigations.**
- **Non-fatal grizzly bear mauling of two hunters in the Halfway River area investigated by Fort St. John officers. Elk hunters on horseback had killed a bull elk the previous evening, dressed out the carcass, and left it at the kill site for the night. Returning the following morning, the hunters noted that no bears had been at the site, and proceeded to drag the elk carcass down hill to where the horses were tied. After butchering the elk and loading the pack boxes with meat, three grizzly bears charged into the hunters from the direction of the drag mark. The victims shot at the sow during the attack, and the cubs vanished. A helicopter flight into the site confirmed the attack (funded by WLAP), and a large male grizzly was present on the elk carcass, making an approach to the site extremely dangerous. Lone twin cubs present some distance away from the site confirmed the sow's demise, therefore the cubs were destroyed by COS staff.**

Due to the presence of the male grizzly, no site investigation occurred, and the sow was not found. The internal Animal-Human attack investigation and report regarding the mauling is currently being finalized.

- Continual verbal complaints from hunters and guides in regard to the increasing number of grizzly bear encounters and subsequent problem bears. Total of 20 “reported” grizzly bears killed in self defense by guide outfitters, hunters and Conservation Officers in the M-K. Investigated by both FSJ and Fort Nelson officers.
- Significant concern raised over bison being killed on the Highway 97 corridor. Number killed has reached approximately 30 this winter (both in and outside of the M-K). Informational meeting between Environmental Stewardship, C.O. Service, Northern Guides, First Nations and other interested parties to address issue appears to be contemplated.
- Concern raised over incidental catches of ungulates (mainly caribou) in trapper wolf snares. The use of breakaway snares is recommended to trappers. One trapper caught five caribou (one was collared) this winter.

#### Investigations

- Reporting details on specific investigations is difficult due to the sensitive nature of ongoing investigations that often take up to two years to complete. Many files are concluded with warnings or tickets bearing voluntary fines in a shorter time period, however files that are destined for court proceedings are lengthy and time consuming.
- Examples of investigations that were concluded with warnings or tickets include:
  - unlawful use of ATV’s off designated routes
  - 24 hour hunter suspensions (liquor and hunting)
  - loaded firearms in motor vehicles and jet boats
  - bull trout over limits and retention
  - self reported cases of unlawful bull moose (antlers not legal due to point restrictions) or other unlawful wildlife killed by mistake.
- Examples of ongoing investigations that may be destined for court (or other) proceedings include:
  - unlawful guiding
  - grizzly bears hunted over bait
  - moose killed during the closed season
  - numerous unlawful sheep cases (fail to retrieve, closed season)
  - unlawful guiding, hunting and abuse of “Permit to Accompany” system
  - guide administration file
- Examples of investigations that have gone unsolved include:
  - multiple caribou shot and left
  - moose and caribou killed during the closed season
  - bison killed during the closed season
  - elk killed during the closed season

### Resource User Contacts

- A total of 1492 resource users were contacted in the M-KMA by Conservation Officers during the 2004-2005 project year. These would include anglers, hunters, First Nations, recreationalists, boaters, guides, trappers and others (none of the above).

### Budget

- Funds allocated to the project in 2004-2005 totaled \$33,120. The table below depicts how budget funds were expended:

#### **2004-2005 Budget Expenditures**

<b>Salary</b>	<b>12,838</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	<b>2,953</b>
<b>Travel</b>	<b>3,380</b>
<b>Helicopters</b>	<b>8,800</b>
<b>Investigations</b>	<b>540</b>
<b>Vehicle Lease</b>	<b>1,392</b>
<b>Vehicle Fuel</b>	<b>847</b>
<b>Vehicle Repairs</b>	<b>151</b>
<b><u>Misc.</u></b>	<b><u>206</u></b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,107 (2,013 surplus)</b>

Yet another project year has passed, and the Conservation Officer Service would again like to thank the Muskwa-Kechika Trust Fund for its continued support. The 2004-2005 project year was safe and successful, and the Conservation Officer Service takes pride and looks forward to another year of protection and maintenance of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area's natural and unique qualities for future generations.

Yours Truly

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