

## NORTHEAST ROUNDTABLE VIRTUAL – MEETING NOTES

**Date:** December 11, 2024

**Time:** 1:15 - 3:30 PM (MST)

**Location:** [Virtual MS Teams](#)

**Attendees:**

**Municipal:**

- Travous Quibell (Mayor Hudson Hope)
- Lisa Thompson (NRRM)
- Bev Vandersteen (Fort Nelson Chamber of Commerce)
- Terry (NRRM)
- Brad Sperling (PRRD)
- Vince van Wieringen (President of FSJ Chamber of Commerce)

**First Nations:**

- Jim Webb (WMFN)
- Katherine Wolfenden (FNFN)

**Stakeholders:**

- Jim Little (NE Stakeholders)
- Helen Gilbert (School District 60)
- Andrew Tyrrell (Canfor)
- Krista Phillips (CAPP)
- Gerry Paille (BC Wildlife Federation)
- Wayne Sawchuck (Env Cons)
- Antonio Pega (LP Dawson Creek) *in-person*
- Darin Hancock (LP) *in-person*
- Tim Burkhart (Y2Y)
- Korey Green (Enbridge and Wild Sheep Society)
- Kari Sawatzky (Todd Energy)
- Alanna Brunet (LP)
- Alexis Jorgensen (Northeast BC Wildlife Fund)
- Carmen Anderson (Canfor)
- Christine Nicholls (TC Energy)
- Corey Peterson (LP)
- David Markham (NRM)
- Ethan Brandt (LP)
- Gabriella Kovacs (Algonquin Power)
- Griffin Slimkovich (BC Parks Foundation)
- Josh Hamilton (NRM)
- Lisa Scott (DTR)
- Lynda Neufeld (Conoco Phillips)
- Sarah Curtis (LP)

- Anna Thompson (Northeast BC Wildlife Fund)
- Johnny Mikes (CPAW/MKAB)
- Derek Brown (Restoration)
- Randy McLean
- Elizabeth Abbs (Summit Lake)
- Josh Hamilton

**Government:**

- Shayla Blue (WLRS)
- Kelly Cook (WLRS)
- Tara Forest (IRR)
- Joelle Ward (WLRS)
- Anna Regnier (WLRS)
- Garth Thoroughgood (BCER)
- Naomi Saukila (IRR)
- Michelle Clyde (WLRS)
- Susan Campbell (IRR)
- Angela White (WLRS)
- Uelun Tuvshinjargal (WLRS)
- Karrylyn Vince (FOR)
- Andrea Somerville (BC Parks)
- Shane Ford (WLRS)
- Al-Nashir Charania (WLRS)
- Sandra Jupp (WLRS)
- Roari Richardson (WLRS)
- Alex Akrofi (ENV)
- Clayton Lloyd (WLRS)
- Dale Morgan (IRR)
- Danielle DeKay (IRR)
- Ian Curits (WLRS)
- James Cuell (WLRS)
- Jennifer Eichelberger (WLRS)
- Leigh-Ann Fenwick (WLRS)
- Marianne Johnson (WLRS)
- Michael Huck (WLRS)
- Rebekah Ingram (WLRS)
- Nick Wingfield (EMCR)
- Penny Vanderwekken-Dun (WLRS)
- Ryan Rolick (BCER)
- Sharon Nickel (FOR)
- Tanya Hoelsing (FOR)
- Van Kingsley (WLRS)
- Yvonne Parkinson (FOR)

## Welcome, Agenda, Minutes

- Shayla Blue as facilitator welcomed, territorial acknowledgement and agenda review. Jason Lawson unable to attend.
- Meeting minutes from the last meeting have been posted online. Feedback and response to minutes is also posted.
- Shayla Blue conducted introductions.

## 1. NE Land Use Planning

- James Cuell, Roari Richardson (WLRS): Update from WLRS Executive Director of Regional Operations – North Area and Executive Director, Stakeholder Relations
  - Summary on the election and interregnum process. New WLRS Minister, Randene Neill, The new ministers are being briefed by deputies and ADMs currently. [Executive Council and Parliamentary Secretaries of B.C. - Province of British Columbia](#)
  - Ministry of Energy and Mines and Low Carbon is no longer and is now broken into two ministries:
    - Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals,
    - Ministry Energy and Climate Solutions
  - In public service we receive Mandate Letters. Anticipate those to come in January.
  - Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects (LUPCE) Division – WLRS (David Muter is Assistant Deputy Minister):
    - Priorities are implementation of Cumulative Impacts Order and commitments to bring in a legislative regime that requires the assessment of Cumulative Effects to support decisions.
    - Completing land use plans required under the BRFN IA and agreements we have with Treaty 8 First Nations. They intend to provide shared understanding of how treaty rights will be managed going forward. Engagement will be done through forums that many here are part of. The approach will vary though as each nation has different perspective on how to engage publicly on the work in their communities. It's important for the province to approach that work in a respectful way so the plans and the benefits that they bring to all Treaty people are seen in a safe manner and don't create backlash on the communities that we've seen in some processes in the past. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/land-water-use/crown-land/land-use-plans-and-objectives/policies-guides/mlup\\_planning\\_principles\\_may2024.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/land-water-use/crown-land/land-use-plans-and-objectives/policies-guides/mlup_planning_principles_may2024.pdf)

- Discussions:
  - Q: The last government attempted to bring in amendments to the Land Act, no consensus among anyone that the approach had gone correctly. If you're going to change the Land Act, hope that you bring in the public and people working in lands before. .
    - R: The process around the land act work was a process we want to see going forward. It hurt indigenous communities as a result of how the province proceeded. An example of how we do not want to do things going forward. Not aware of any immediate term amendments to land act.
  - Q: Asked about the absence of parliamentary secretaries in WLRS, indicator of what governments priorities are. Do you know if they're missing for now or the way it will be.
- R: James has no intel in it. Can speculate. No indications that the Premier aspires to change the structure of the cabinet. It means conversations flow directly to the minister now. Had one for fisheries before. And watershed security.

## 2. Water Management Basin Planning

- Ian Curtis: Introduction to land use planning with BRFN and the Province  
BRFN-BC Implementation Agreement: [Watershed Management Basin and High Value Zone 1 Planning](#)
  - Website under development to support engagement, today's deck will be posted to the [NE Roundtable website](#).
  - New general email inbox: [WLRS.NortheastLUP@gov.bc.ca](mailto:WLRS.NortheastLUP@gov.bc.ca)
  - A compelling video by BRFN on Treaty Rights: Where Happiness Dwells: [Treaty Case - Blueberry River First Nations](#)
- Discussions:
  - Q: Is there a tie in with Nature agreement and 30 by 30 protection? Is the province going to use what is happening through the BRFNs agreement into those?
    - R: Would be a missed opportunity if we didn't at least contemplate ways some of the protections commitments in the agreement could contribute to the accounting of 30x30. At this stage, we do not know yet how to implement the plans/ what legal mechanism tools will be used.

- Q: Wondering if early in the process, the first step could have a robust portal to accept interests and inputs from stakeholders. Not just a comment portal but the ability to engage and bring ideas forward in a meaningful way early on. Once things are too far along in the process, they lose confidence in the process.
  - R: I can bring it back to the table and we can revisit if some of the earlier drafts should be like brainstorming or bringing insight/ideas forward rather than reacting to the drafts. One consideration is that the framework through the Implementation Agreement is quite strict. Where there is space and perhaps explore that as a hybrid workshop in the spring.
  - Q: Noted there are four WMBs. Were you as a group going to tackle them all or one and use the same template to apply to the others?
  - R: Technical analysis is being done by each watershed management basin. Planning table contemplating whether it makes sense to create separate plans for each basin or provide each basin a chapter in an overarching plan. Like resource management zones.

### 3. Wildfire

- Nick Wingfield and Sharon Nickel. Wildfire situation and community impacts
  - Prince George Fire Centre 2024 Season Summary for the Peace Region
  - Down from the 2 million hectares from last year
  - Videos – impacts of drought on danger trees
  - Sharon Nickel (BCWS) provided [PG Fire Centre 2024 Season Summary](#) for the Peace Region.
  - Nick Wingfield (EMCR): 2024 EMCR Northeast – [Peace Region Community-based Impact Summary](#)
  - Discussions:
    - Q: Great job and your crews! . Noted he heard someone’s house was broken into and firearms stolen during evacuation. Do they have any idea how much theft happened?
      - R: Nick doesn’t know the extent and knows of one looting event. He noted the RCMP stayed and had apprehended those people and were charged. The firearms were returned. The COs also helped tracked people using ATVs in the community during the evacuation. Comments stated that the RCMP left Fort Nelson on May 13.

- **Update:** As of 11:00 on May 13, BCWS recommended that all resources were moved out of Fort Nelson due to adverse fire behavior. By May 15<sup>th</sup> though, RCMP had actually mobilized additional resources into Fort Nelson.
- For any BCWS specific questions, reach out to: [INFOPG@gov.bc.ca](mailto:INFOPG@gov.bc.ca)

#### 4. Drought

- Ryan Rolick (BCER) Hydrologist MSC PGeo: [2024 Northeast BC Drought Update](#)
  - BCER is responsible for water use only for oil and gas purposes.
  - Protection for other users; cutoff industry first.
- Discussions:
  - Q: Snowpack comment didn't seem like last year was a good year for snow as indicated in the presentation.
    - R: There was a reasonable snowpack throughout the season, but it was punctuated by large melt events, not allowing it to build to above average conditions. This snowmelt runs off into rivers right away and doesn't sit on the landscape allowing a recharge. Additionally, May and June were warm, which resulted in the snowpack melting earlier than usual.
  - Q: Heard that some organizations in different areas of the province are reintroducing beaver dams to retain water. Any information on this? Where do we find out about this? Some livestock organizations looking into this he heard. If any information, please forward along.
    - R: Restoration Committee are doing phenomenal work - Beaver dam analogues. Mimicking beaver dams on the landscape. More a push for flood control resulting from atmospheric rivers. Could be value in water retention but Ryan is seeing a lot of beavers on the landscape. Five of the six hydrometric stations in NE are all impacted by beavers. Do see the value of beavers doing this work, but not sure if there is any work in the NE in beaver dam analogs. BRFN restoration group has maybe done some work on this or is looking into it. Brad heard that the Bulkley Nechako area and in the Kootenays are working on this. Mike Simpson [mf\\_simpson@outlook.com](mailto:mf_simpson@outlook.com) manages Nicola River Watershed Restoration Committee.
    - BC Wildlife Federation contact: [Neil.fletcher@bcwf.bc.ca](mailto:Neil.fletcher@bcwf.bc.ca)
    - <https://newsociety.org/news/28/15/Beaver-Dam-Analogues>

- *Comment:* Wonderful to look at this but at the same time it's so difficult for a cattleman to dig a dug-out due to bureaucratic red tape which provides all those same benefits.

## 5. Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

- Tara Forest (MIRR): [Northeast Land Transfers Update](#)
  - Land selections for Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) and the Site C Lands Agreement land transfers in northeast BC.
  - Our team is hoping to provide a fulsome update in the new year at the February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Discussions:
  - Q: Can BC transfer lands directly to Canada for Addition to Reserve (ATR)?
    - R: MIRR is transferring some TLE parcels directly to Canada for ATR (parcels identified as Shortfall and ATR Additional). The parcels West Moberly has selected at Summit Lake are all transferring in fee simple. .
  - Q: Is my understanding correct that a First Nation can apply to have fee simple lands transferred to Canada, and BC does not have authority to grant ATR?
    - R: Yes, that is correct. First Nations can apply to Canada to have fee simple lands that they own added to reserve through an ATR application. Canada consults with BC when advancing such ATR applications.
  - Q: Are you aware of a letter that MIRR sent confirming all Summit Lake parcels would transfer in fee simple, and that Sauteau has a parcel at Summit Lake that is identified as a parcel proposed for ATR?
    - R: MIRR is aware of the letter. The Province's consultation with First Nations and engagement with stakeholders remains open with further work to do going forward on Sauteau First Nations TLE and TLA parcels. Tara will take Betty's questions away for further follow-up as this work moves forward.
  - Q: What criteria does MIRR have for First Nations determining whether the parcel will transfer as fee simple or as Addition to Reserve?
    - R: The FNs identify the lands they select and identify how they would like to see the parcel transfer, for example as Shortfall Lands or Additional ATR Lands which would transfer to Canada, or as Additional Fee Simple Lands which would transfer in fee simple, within the quantum for each category of transfer. The Province reviews the

parcels, consults with First Nations, and engages with local governments and stakeholders. The Saulteau consultation and engagement is still open, and there is not a more specific update currently. All maps for parcels that the Province has engaged on or is currently in engaging on are posted on the gov together website. New transfers identified will be brought to the NERT.

- All of the maps are posted on the website: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/land-transfers-in-northeast-bc/>

## 6. BC Parks

- Andrea Somerville (BC Parks): BC Parks Management Planning Update
  - Was planning on a Northern Rockies Table and happy to attend a separate meeting if folks want to do that.
  - Region has lots of planning work on the books. Have a temporary planner now so capabilities are improved. Four projects underway:
    1. One project underway is back country protected areas in the Muskwa Kechika (MK), strategic management plan. Different approach - a bundled management plan, 13 parks complexes in one document. Went through public engagement last summer. Rolling in what we heard into a final management plan.
    2. Front country park management plan in MK: Three key parks in that space that need updated management direction – Liard River Hot Springs, Muncho Lake and Stone Mountain. That is a big project, and no dates set yet. Need backcountry further along before this engagement can start. Can keep updating this table though.
    3. Next project is Tsa Nuna conservancy. This is the first conservancy established in the NE 2020. Working with HRFN on developing management direction. In pre planning now. Public engagement won't be until the new year. Small management plan compared to the MK management plans.  
Have a well-developed planning process – see link <https://bcparks.ca/about/management-plans/planning-process/>
    4. Next big project is the klin ze za park and protected area being developed in collaboration with SFN and WMFN. It is a massive expansion, over 200,000 ha, NW of Chetwynd. Park expansion completed in June of 2024. In the preplanning phase with SN and WM. Set up well to be initiating that project in the new year. This



one involves lots of rec use and former industrial use, so it is a complicated space. Public and stakeholder engagement will begin early in the new year. Hoping to have the bulk of the draft management plan completed and implement management direction in 2026. Lots of First Nation consultation and review time.

- Discussions:
  - Q: NRRM submitted a written Letter in September. Are there any plans to respond to them individually?
    - R: Feedback will be incorporated into a What We Heard document but happy to meet with NRRM if necessary.

## 7. Other discussions:

- Any range staff in? – N/A
- *Comment:* Request for the wildlife person to give bison update.
  - R: Winter months are difficult to ask our biologist to come to give a full-on presentation, as the survey/field season is short. They will provide outcomes of the winter surveys in down season.

## Meeting Closure

- The next roundtable meeting is scheduled for **February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025**.
  - All the presentations will be posted on the [NE Roundtable website](#).