

NORTHEAST ROUNDTABLE VIRTUAL – MEETING NOTES

Date: February 26, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM – 2:15 PM (MST)

Location: Virtual MS Teams

Attendees:

Municipal:

- Kyle Andrews (NRRM)
- Bev Vandersteen (FN Chamber of Commerce)
- Lisa Thompson (NRRM)
- Tiffany Hetenyi (FSJ Chamber of Commerce)
- Stephen McLain (Chetwynd CAO)
- Terry Cavaliere (NRRM)

First Nations:

- Jim Webb (WMFN)
- Katherine Wolfenden (FNFN)
- John Stokmans (Saulteau First Nation)
- Lisa Hardy (Saulteau First Nation)
- Nathan Prince (MLIB)
- Tammy Brown (WMFN)
- Teena Demeulemeester (Saulteau First Nation)

Stakeholders:

- Jim Little (NE Stakeholders)
- Helen Gilbert (School District 60)
- Gerry Paille (BC Wildlife Federation)
- Wayne Sawchuck (Env Cons)
- Korey Green (Enbridge and Wild Sheep Society)
- Alanna Brunet (LP)
- Corey Peterson (LP)
- Ethan Brandt (LP)
- Griffin Slimkowich (BC Parks Foundation)
- Sarah Curtis (LP)
- Johnny Mikes (CPAW/MKAB)
- Derek Brown (Restoration)
- Randy McLean (Toad River)
- Amber Lane (BCSF)
- Byron Gagne
- Jim Fulton (NEBCWF)
- Juergen Puetter (Renewable Energy sector)
- Mark Phinney (West Fraser)
- Robin Routledge (Wild Sheep Society of BC)
- Sonja Leverkus (Shifting Mosaic)
- Tom Fulton (NEBCWF)

Government:

- Jason Lawson (WLRS)
- Shayla Blue (WLRS)
- Kelly Cook (WLRS)
- Tara Forest (IRR)
- Joelle Ward (WLRS)
- Anna Regnier (WLRS)
- Garth Thoroughgood (BCER)
- Naomi Saukila (IRR)
- Uelun Tuvshinjargal (WLRS)
- Karilyn Vince (FOR)
- Andrea Somerville (BC Parks)
- Shane Ford (WLRS)
- Ian Curits (WLRS)
- Marianne Johnson (WLRS)
- Penny Vanderwekken-Dun (WLRS)
- Sheri Connolly (FOR)
- Kai Elmauer (MIRR)
- Aviva Jones (WLRS)
- Michael Klaczek (WLRS)
- Tyler Muhly (WLRS)
- Heather Onsorge (WLRS)
- Laura Peliciari Fajardo (WLRS)
- Scott Schilds (WLRS)
- Alanna Schroeder (MIRR)
- Melissa Stewart (WLRS)

Welcome, Agenda, Minutes

- Jason Lawson welcomed all and performed a territorial acknowledgement and agenda review.
- Meeting minutes from the last meeting have been posted online.
- Q: How much does an in-person round table cost, and does it need to come from government? R: It costs approximately \$4000, historically it's been from the Province.
Action: Follow up on whether it can come from elsewhere outside of government.
- The first Roundtable session was in 2018 – we completed our first Terms of Reference in 2019 and still use that version. Due to many changes (i.e Covid) in the last few years, we should be looking to update and refresh the ToR.
- Looking to explore options on the timing and formats of the meetings going forward. April 23rd is the next meeting and we're looking at making it a shorter virtual meeting with less agenda topics, but more focused. Please send suggestions to Shayla or Jason.
- Shayla Blue conducted on screen introductions.
- Wayne Sawchuk will be giving a presentation on the Muska Kechika on March 5th 7:00 PM for the Northeast Historical Society at the Fort St. John museum.

1. BC Parks Update

- Andrea Somerville - BC Parks presentation.
 - Andrea spoke about protected spaces and what phase of planning the plans are currently in.
- Discussion:
 - Q: When will there be public meetings?
 - R: Sometime in 2026 – the information will be posted to public, open houses, etc.
 - Q: Initial Public Consultation is complete for this project, when?
 - R: It was in completed in 2020
 - Q: How are you planning for forest health? Beetles, fire salvage etc.
 - R: BC Parks has policies on how to manage those forest concerns.
 - Q. Is supporting the development of conservancies within the Parks mandate?
 - R: It's a class A park; the name conservancies means that it's been developed in collaboration with a First Nation. *Follow up info: Conservancies vs Class A park is that they provide more economic opportunity for First Nations.
 - Q: What does class A mean?
 - R: It's the highest level of protection – all the protected areas in our area are class A – <https://bcparks.ca/about/our-mission-responsibilities/types-parks-protected-areas/>

2. Wildlife Update

- Heather Onsrage - WLRS Director of Resource Management
 - Fisheries – 2 Biologists have been hired, so we have a full team now. We are working on fish assessment in the Liard, Muskwa, Tuchodi, and Prophet River the data here is decades old, looking for new data to information base line data.
 - Prophet River First Nation did a Fish Assessment of Klua Lakes in the fall.
 - Weir repair proposal for \$500,000 and Inga Lake convert back to wetland area.
 - Wildlife- Inventories in 7-21, 7-51, 7-52, wasn't able to do 7-47 but will next year. 7-33 will be bumped to next year (led by Doig) – Goat surveys this summer coming up South Peace. Bison Collaring capture health assessment happening right now. Sheep survey 7-36 and 7-51
 - Species Management Plans at early stages – Wood Bisons, Plains Bison – public engagement to come.
- Discussion:
 - Q: Are there any stocking programs in Northern Rockies Municipality area?
 - R: I don't have the plan for stocking lakes right now, I would need to check in with James Morgan and Fresh Water Fish Societies as well.
 - Q: Any work around Toad River?
 - R: Will look at this
 - *Comment:* Nonda Creek road is washed out, please look at this.
 - **Action:** Heather to look into Nonda Creek road washout and report back.

- *Comment:* Bison keeps getting hit by trucks, what is the plan for the Bison? Chris Lewis needs to address the Bison issue.
- The Bison are also coming down into agriculture lands close to Fort Nelson from the Liard Herd
 - *R:* We are extremely short staffed right now. Every single one of our field biologists are in the field right now and that includes Chris Lewis. We have said previously that we cannot make it to the Northern Rockies roundtable, but we are happy to meet and come to this NE Roundtable. Regarding the bison getting hit in the highway, there several studies being conducted in a joint partnership with the Yukon government. I will see if there is an update and get back to you.
- Q: Can you provide any of the survey results?
 - *R:* After the peer review is done, we can make the survey results available.
- *Comment:* The province needs to pay better attention to the three separate issues on bison. The Plains bison is different from the Wood bison, and they are living close together separated by a fence, this could mean the spread of diseases.

3. Caribou Recovery Program

- Joelle Ward – Director, Caribou Recovery Program-**Caribou Recovery Updates**
 - Caribou Recovery Program Strategy (The North Star of the Program) [Caribou Recovery Program - Province of British Columbia](#) or <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/caribou/recovery-program>
 - Caribou Recovery Program 2023 State of the Program Report (160 pages) dense with information – will be posted in the next few weeks.
- Mike Klaczek– Population Team Lead from Prince George – [Population Status Update Presentation](#)
 - Q: Why was the boundary changed on the Quintette Herd?
 - *R:* New information with some of the collaring work. It is based on movement patterns and distribution of caribou.
- Scott Schilds – Habitat Section Head - North - **Boreal Caribou/Fire and Caribou Habitat- Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan presentation**
 - Proposed Protection Habitat Areas – 2.4M hectares of protection (1.6M being new)
 - Q: How many hectares of new Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHA's) from this order?
 - *R:* All the hectares combined is rounded up to 2.4 million hectares within the entire order area. 1.6M hectares *new* protection that overlap existing protection areas. The overlapped areas will be amended to make one new habitat order.
 - Q: Do the WHA's have the same restriction on oil and gas activities that they do for forestry. If they don't, why not?
 - *R:* BCER and Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions are implementing complementary measures/legislative tools regarding oil and gas surface

activities and sub-surface tenuring. BCER and MECS have been doing their own consultation.

- Q: Have timber supply impact assessment been completed?
 - R: Yes, completed prior to submission of the Recovery plan to Cabinet for endorsement in 2023. Socio-economic factors taken into consideration in Cabinet decision.

- **Tyler Muhly** – Habitat Team Lead – **Update of the Partnership Agreement of the South Peace area** (Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge and Mackenzie) [Map of caribou recovery area](#)
 - The Partnership Agreement (between West Moberly First Nations, Saulteau First Nations and Canada) was signed back in 2020, a lot of work has been done as a consequence of this agreement, a lot of positive work for Caribou (i.e expansion of Klinse-za Park and population increases)
 - Ongoing work - Renewal of the Zone A2 Part 13 and ELUA renewals will be reviewed by June 2025 and we are asking for a 4 year renewal- Removing a bit of the A2 zone to allow for the Quintette Mine.
 - Releasing the Strategic Caribou Restoration Implementation Plan (SCRIP)- Identify priority areas for Caribou Habitat
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/caribou/management-activities>
 - Q: How many forestry cutting permits has the Caribou Recovery Committee approved?
 - R: The CRC doesn't formally approve anything that comes across their desk – it's a consensus recommendation that the group does – the recommendation goes to a statutory decisions maker which would be FOR.

4. Skooks Landing (est 2017)

- **Tom Fulton** – NE BC Wildlife Fund – [Skooks Landing presentation](#)
 - Would like people to reach out with donations and grant opportunities that they know of.

5. Treaty Land Entitlement Updates

- **Tara Forest** – Treaty Land Entitlement Update- [NE Land Transfers Presentation](#)
 - Will aim to bring new TLE land selections from West Moberly First Nations unselected portion of their quantum to the Northeast Roundtable in April.
<http://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/land-transfers-in-northeast-bc/>

6. Northern Rockies Roundtable Update

- [Jim Little](#) – Northern Rockies Roundtable Meeting from February 14, 2025
 - Discussion on Skooks Landing – need for additional funding
 - NP Rod and Gun Club put another \$5000 to that project
 - Concerned that there is hunting for Caribou on the west of the Kechika River, but not east.
 - Nonda Creek road damage – Need to secure funds to fix it.
 - Edit: *Heather said they are going to look into it in her update.
 - There needs to be a broader look at Bison – Wood Bison are affecting our area. We need to make a design to keep them from the Alaska Highway. It's easier for them to graze along the highway than their usual sports that are loaded with windfall. 15 Bison have been hit on the highway and 2 are walking around with broken limbs in this past year.
 - Next Meeting will be March

7. Water Management Basin Planning

- [Ian Curtis](#) – [Water Management Basin Planning Presentation](#)
 - Discussion:
 - *Comment:* Need to consider fracking because it can cause some significant issues to existing sources of water like springs and such.
 - Q: Is there any intention to see the watershed plans extend over a greater area like for example North or South where the existing cluster is?
 - R: There is a logical fit to continue planning there. I know Halfway has a strong vision for planning in portions of their settlement agreement that overlap HV1C areas. We've used the Sikanni Chief River as the line separating planning occurring in the North Peace and Liard. We are reflecting on what integrated planning might look like under Consensus Document and BRFN IA. However, the immediate priority for our planning table is to complete HV1 plans and WMB plans.
 - Contact info: Ian Curtis – Director of Strategic Initiatives 778 693-3033
Ian.Curtis@gov.bc.ca

8. Murray River Watershed Update

- [Nathan Prince](#) – [Murray River Watershed Presentation](#) – Assessing the health of the Murray River watershed
 - [Water Quality Objectives for Murray River](#) <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/water-quality-objectives/omineca-northeast-region-water-quality-objectives#murray>
 - Omineca water quality objectives in NE - [Omineca-Northeast Region Water Quality Objectives - Province of British Columbia](#)

- *Comment:* The importance on guaranteeing water quality and habitat quality for fish in the Murray River to ensure that the community can use and consume the fish. We asked can we drink the water; can we eat the fish and can we give the fish to our most vulnerable people (pregnant women and toddlers)?

9. Meeting Closure

- Jason asked for feedback about shorter half day virtual meetings more often or longer full day options.
- Invite Darius Low to the April meeting to talk about wildfire.
- Next NE Roundtable meeting: **April 23, 2025** half day virtual