

Attention: Anna McIndoe
Planning Section Head
Northern Region – Peace & Omineca
BC Parks and Conservation Officer Service Division
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

February 20, 2020

Dear Anna:

Anna, I want to begin by thanking you for making the time to prepare and present at our Board Meeting on February 12th in Prince George. Board members found your presentation highly informative and appreciated the conversation with you afterwards.

As a result of that meeting and further to our draft response to you on February 3, 2020 please accept this as the final and official advice from the Board regarding the Northern Rockies Park Management Plan.

Our advice is:

1. VISION STATEMENT FOR THE PARK

ADVICE

Adjust the Vision Statement in the management plan to state the following (bold italics):
“...maintaining the majestic mountain ecosystems... As well as the habitat upon which the diversity and abundance of wildlife depends...”

RATIONALE

The Board believes it is important to align the Park’s Vision more closely with the Preamble to the M-KMA Act and its regulation to demonstrate to the Public the special nature of land management in the area.

2. SECTION 1 OF THE PLAN (RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS)

ADVICE

A Section 1.6 be added as a specific reference to the relationship with the Board to the level of detail specified in the other related existing sections.

RATIONALE

The Board notes that there are currently sections (1.4 and 1.5) referring to relationships with others interested in the management of the M-KMA but overlooks the M-KMA Board. As the Board’s role and responsibilities are clearly articulated in the M-KMA Act and its Regulation it follows that the Board be referenced in the Park’s management plan.

3. SECTION 1.2 OF THE PLAN (PLANNING AREA)

ADVICE

Add the following wording (in bold italics) to the two paragraphs identified below:

Northern Rocky Mountains Park (665,709 hectares) and Northern Rocky Mountains Protected Area (763 hectares) are located within the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (M-KMA) (Figure 1). ***“...The M-KMA, established in 1998 (Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act), is an area of unique wilderness endowed with a globally significant abundance and diversity of wildlife. The long-term maintenance of the wilderness characteristics, wildlife and its habitat within the M-KMA is critical to the social and cultural well-being of First Nations and local communities. The long-term resource management objective for the M-KMA is to return the lands to their natural state as development activities are completed...”*** and

The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area is zoned into a number of different resource management zones, including protected areas, which are intended to ***“...maintain in perpetuity the wilderness quality and the diversity and abundance of wildlife and the ecosystems on which it depends while allowing for resource development and use in parts designated for those purposes. The integration of management activities especially related to road access is central to achieving the intent of the M-KMA. As a result, resource management within the M-KMA must be consistent with the Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan Regulation...”*** Within the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area there are approximately 1.17 million hectares of protected land within twenty-three provincially protected areas of various designations. Northern Rocky Mountains Park is the largest of these protected areas.

RATIONALE

The Board believes it is important that the public understands the management plan and the Preamble and Vision for the M-KMA are inextricably linked. This raises the profile of the M-KMA in the mind of the Public and demonstrates the special nature of land management in the area.

4. SECTION 3 OF THE PLAN (MANAGEMENT DIRECTION)

ADVICE

The plan should be adjusted to reflect that ***“The carrying of firearms for non-hunting purposes (personal safety, survival and euthanizing of domestic animals) be expressly allowed in the Northern Rockies Park (as well as all Parks in the M-KMA).”***

The plan should reflect the principle that ***“The destruction of an animal for personal safety should not be the option of first choice.”***

RATIONALE

The Board believes it is important to maintain the traditional practice of firearms being carried by most if not all travelers in the M-KMA, whether or not they are hunting, both for safety purposes, and for horse users, as a necessary means of dispatching incapacitated livestock should this become necessary. Our advice is that BC Parks recommends and encourages all users, including non-hunting users, to utilize best management practices (clean campsites for example) that include non-lethal wildlife deterrents that help to avoid killing animals for personal safety reasons as the option of first choice.

If carrying firearms were not to be allowed in this wilderness area, human safety may be at risk, and the potential for animal cruelty would be greatly increased.

To support its position the Board references Section 7.1.2 of the Fort Nelson LRMP where it is stated that: “...*Traditional backcountry use has provided for the use of firearms outside of lawful hunting seasons for personal protection...*”

5. SECTION 3.1.7 OF THE PLAN (ACCESS MANAGEMENT)

ADVICE

The management plan should allow for all park use permits issued for ORV's be specific as to where and when they can be used.

RATIONALE

The Board's advice reflects its concerns that damage to other values (cultural, heritage, habitat, etc.) from the use of ORV's can be significant therefore specific permitting regarding location and timing of their use is critical.

6. GENERAL (FIREWOOD)

ADVICE

The cutting of standing dead timber be allowed for fire and camp use (eg. for safety purposes, for winter activities) and should avoid impacting visual quality.

If the use of live timber is required users, should be required to remove timber from prescribed burn areas (if known) and primarily deciduous timber. Relocation of firewood, the movement of firewood from one site to another, should be an acceptable alternative.

The importation of dead or live wood should not be permitted into the Park.

For heavily used sites, Parks should also consider requiring a proactive site-specific management plan by permitted user groups, and where non-tenured by BC Parks.

BC Parks should encourage the use of alternative fuels to avoid the use of wood and/or cutting of wood.

RATIONALE

The Board recommends that BC Parks encourage the use of alternative fuels (propane for example) to relieve the pressure of utilizing woody material for burning. The Board recognizes that not all users are amenable to packing alternative fuels so further recommends maintaining the traditional practice of utilizing both dead and standing timber for firewood and repairing existing structure in the M-KMA. In many cases in wilderness areas fallen timber is not available as an adequate fuel, while standing timber is both more readily available, and of adequate quality.

Anna, please feel free to contact me at your convenience if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours Truly

Stephanie Killam

Stephanie Killam, Chair,
Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board.