

# **Eco/Adventure Tourism In the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area**

## **Challenges and Constraints**



**March, 2013**

**Eco/Adventure Tourism  
In the  
Muskwa-Kechika  
Management  
Area**

**Challenges and Constraints**

**Final Report**

Prepared for  
The Muskwa-Kechika  
Advisory Board

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## Table of Contents

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Executive Summary .....	ii
I Introduction.....	1
II Defining Adventure and Eco-Tourism .....	2
III Adventure Tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika: A Snapshot.....	4
IV Challenges for Adventure Tourism Operators .....	6
V Adventure Tourism Tenure and Park Use Permits .....	9
VI Tenure Approval: First Nation and Government Consultation .....	12
VII First Nations and Adventure Tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika .....	15
VIII Conclusion:.....	17
XI Steps for Consideration .....	18
Appendix 1: Park Use Permits in the Muskwa-Kechika.....	20
Appendix 2: Comments by Interviewees .....	21
Resources .....	22

(Cover Photo: Rafting the Gataga  
Photo Credit – Maureen Garrity)



## Executive Summary

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To define eco/adventure tourism, report out on current status of eco/adventure tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (Muskwa-Kechika) and identify some of the challenges and constraints that may be impeding the growth and success of the eco/adventure tourism industry in the Muskwa-Kechika, including the acquisition of commercial recreation tenure: permitting, approval and First Nations consultation. Following are key points described in the report.

### **Challenges and Constraints to Adventure Tourism**

1. Impact of the global economy
2. Changing demographics and trends
3. Lack of marketing and branding of the Muskwa-Kechika
4. Poor access
5. Cost of doing business in the North
6. Lack of a Recreation Management Plan
7. Perception that Northern BC is oil and gas country – not a tourism destination

### **Current Number of Commercial Recreation Tenure Holders in the Muskwa-Kechika**

- Park Use Permits = 30
- Adventure Tourism Permits = 32

### **Challenges re: Permits and Procedures**

- Length of time for approval (1-2 years)
- Lack of security and certainty for tenure holders
- Cumbersome and complex (2 agencies to apply and report to)

### **Process for First Nation Consultation re: Tenure Applications**

- Process is identified in a First Nation's Agreement with the Province
- In absence of an agreement Province sends referrals directly to the Band

### **Challenges re: Process for First Nation Consultation of Tenure Applications**

- Volume of referrals to be reviewed by multiple First Nations with varying consultation processes and agreed upon timelines
- Lack of capacity and funding for those First Nations who do not have an agreement and formal process for review of permits.

### **First Nations and Adventure Tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika - Challenges**

- Lack of capacity
- Tenure process is complex



- Tenures are being given out in spite of on-going Treaty negotiations
- Concerns that carrying capacity will be met before First Nations are able to get tenure, particularly in areas of high interest (cultural/traditional use areas).

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this report indicate that in spite of the magnitude of tourism values in the Muskwa-Kechika and the opportunities for economic growth for the adventure tourism industry, there are challenges and constraints that are impeding the growth of the adventure tourism industry in the Muskwa-Kechika at this time.

While some of the challenges, such as the state of the economy and travel indicators/trends are a sign of the times and impact the tourism industry as a whole, there are certain challenges that interviewees have identified that be can managed and/or mitigated, including promoting the Muskwa-Kechika as a tourism destination, improvements to access and security/certainty with respect to adventure tourism tenure, including First Nations, and finalizing a Recreation Management Plan.

Oil and Gas development is a priority for the province; however this activity is not taking place within the Muskwa-Kechika. Tourism BC has released its 2012-16 report: ***Gaining the Edge: a Five Year Strategy for Developing Tourism in British Columbia-2016*** which cites removing barriers and developing eco/adventure tourism and First Nations Cultural Tourism as two of its key focus areas. The development of eco/adventure tourism and promotion of the Muskwa-Kechika as a tourism destination can assist Tourism BC in meeting its target of 5% annual growth increase over the next five years and a targeted \$18 billion dollar industry by 2016.

### **Steps to Consider:**

1. Tourism representation on the Muskwa Kechika Advisory Board (Advisory Board);
2. Improved access to information re: adventure tourism activity in the Muskwa-Kechika;
3. Steps to update, finalize and implement the Recreation Management Plan;
4. Negotiations with Tourism BC with respect to inclusion of the Muskwa-Kechika in their tourism development and marketing strategies;
5. Tourism development plan and marketing strategy for the Muskwa-Kechika, including implementation funding;
6. Detailed analysis of the issues and recommendations with respect to the commercial recreation tenure system to address the issues for operators, provincial government agencies and First Nations;
7. In consultation with First Nations, develop recommendations regarding First Nation access to tenure to address the challenges that have been identified in this report.



# I Introduction

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## Background

Located in northern British Columbia, the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (Muskwa Kechika) is 63 million hectares of, arguably, some of one of North America's most outstanding wilderness areas and is BC's premier park. The Muskwa-Kechika holds significant First Nation values, pristine lakes and rivers, abundant wildlife and intact ecosystems all which are highly desirable tourism values, sought after by ardent adventure tourists.

Since 1998 when the Muskwa-Kechika was designated, eco/adventure tourism has seen substantial growth and development in British Columbia and was between 2001-2008 one of the fastest growing segments of tourism in BC. BC is promoted as "Super Natural BC" and it would appear that the Muskwa-Kechika epitomizes the "Super Natural BC" that British Columbia is branded as.

Yet, in spite of eco/adventure tourism being one of the fastest growing sectors of British Columbia's tourism industry and despite the high tourism values inherent in the Muskwa-Kechika, this area has not seen the number of eco/adventure tourism businesses operating here relative to the high values the area holds. This begs the question of why? What challenges and constraints may be limiting the growth of eco/adventure tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika?

## Objectives of this Report

In January, 2013, the Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board (Advisory Board) sought to answer this question by commissioning a report on the status of eco/adventure tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika to determine the quantity of existing operators, jobs clients, and revenue generated, and as well to identify what factors may be constraining or limiting eco/adventure tourism growth in the Muskwa-Kechika.

The primary objectives of this report are to offer:

- 1) a working definition of adventure tourism and eco-tourism;
- 2) a baseline of adventure/eco-tourism operators currently operating in the Muskwa Kechika;
- 3) an understanding of potential constraints faced by eco/adventure tourism operators wanting to operate in the Muskwa Kechika;
- 4) a review of the permitting system and potential challenges this may pose to eco/adventure tourism in the Muskwa Kechika; and
- 5) information regarding First Nations involvement in the review of permits, and interest in the development of eco/adventure tourism businesses in the Muskwa-Kechika.



## Methodology

To meet the objectives of this report both primary and secondary research was conducted. This included a literature search as well as review and analysis of existing reports, plans and First Nation Agreements.

Interviews were conducted with existing and past Muskwa-Kechika commercial recreation operators as well as with adventure/eco tourism operators in other parts of BC, First Nations whose Traditional Territory is within the Muskwa-Kechika, tourism industry representatives, and representatives from BC Parks and Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO).

## II Defining Adventure and Eco-Tourism

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The terms eco and adventure tourism are used interchangeably, sometimes causing confusion as to the difference between the two terms. It is generally accepted that eco-tourism and adventure tourism are two main sub-sectors of nature-based tourism.

The difference between the two sub-sectors is in the operating principles. As there is no certifying body to offer accreditation to those who are operating with the principles of eco-tourism (see page 5), it is no surprise that the two terms have become used interchangeably, often due to a lack of clarity as to the difference between the two.

### Adventure Tourism

Thompson River University describes adventure tourism as:

*"A leisure activity that takes place in an unusual, exotic, remote, or wilderness destination and tends to be associated with high levels of involvement and activity by the participants, most of it outdoors."*

British Columbia's Integrated Land Management Bureau uses this definition:

*"Adventure Tourism refers to tourism operators who provide outdoor recreation activities (including guide services, transportation, lodging, feeding or entertainment) for compensation, reward, received or promised, from residents and non-residents on provincial Crown land (this includes provincial Crown lands covered by saltwater and freshwater)"<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Province of BC, *Land Use Operational Policy, Adventure Tourism*, 2009



## Eco Tourism

While there are many definitions of eco tourism, the following is becoming widely accepted as a working definition of eco tourism:

*"Ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and human rights."<sup>2</sup>*

According to the International Eco Tourism Society (IETS), what distinguishes eco tourism from adventure tourism are the operating principles, and the belief that those who refer to themselves as eco tourism operators, should adhere to eco tourism principles identified by the IETS such as:

- 1. Minimize impact;*
- 2. Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;*
- 3. Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts;*
- 4. Provide direct financial benefits for conservation;*
- 5. Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people; and*
- 6. Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate."<sup>3</sup>*

## Terminology used in this Report

### Adventure Tourism

Except where eco tourism is the appropriate term, the term adventure tourism will be used in this report, in order to be consistent with the definition used by BC's Integrated Land Management Bureau and their Adventure Tourism Policy.

### Muskwa-Kechika

Part of developing the lure and attraction of an area is in its name. Consider the names of other prime tourism areas in the province and their names, such as "Great Bear Rainforest" and "Haida Gwaii". From a tourism perspective "Muskwa-Kechika" is a beautiful and captivating name, whereas the term "Management Area" is a technical term with limited tourism appeal. It is therefore recommended that when speaking of the Management Area in a tourism context, including this report, that Muskwa-Kechika be the name used.

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<sup>2</sup> Honey, Margaret, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, Second Edition: *Who Owns Paradise?*

<sup>3</sup> International Eco Tourism Society, [www.ecotourism.org/](http://www.ecotourism.org/)



## III Adventure Tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika: A Snapshot

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### Adventure Tourism Operators in the Muskwa-Kechika

The number of adventure tourism businesses operating currently in the Muskwa-Kechika is best determined by the number of Commercial Recreation permits that have been issued to adventure tourism companies.

#### Commercial Recreation Park Use Permits

Information provided by BC Parks shows that there are 30 operators with commercial recreation tenure in BC Parks in the Muskwa-Kechika. Of this number only 1 operator cites 100% of his trips as eco tourism (trail riding), 1 operates fishing and canoeing tours out of his lodge, and 1 operator offers fishing tours and riverboat tours. Most Guide Outfitters have their Anglers license. (For a full list of commercial recreation operators with Park Use Permits see Appendix 1.)

The distance and cost to access parks in the Muskwa-Kechika makes it challenging for business feasibility. The only access is horseback, boat, plane or helicopter. Heli-skiing or hiking-hiking are not allowed in a BC Park. Two rafting companies had Park Use Permits and did operate in the park; however they have since let their permits lapse due to lack of business.

No new applications have been received for commercial recreation Park Use Permits in the past few years. Only one permit has been denied in the past 10 years (a film company), due to the fact that the intended activities were not permissible in a BC Park.

Commercial Recreation Park Use Permits in the Muskwa Kechika	
Activity	Number
Trail Riding	1
Fishing, and water activities (canoeing, river boat)	2
Guide Outfitter	17
Air Transportation	7
Transporter	3
Total	30

Of the 17 Guide Outfitters, 15 offer adventure tourism activities in addition to their commercial hunting.



### **Adventure Tourism Tenure on Provincial Crown Land**

The province’s Adventure Tourism Policy includes a variety of uses, including eco/adventure tourism, guide outfitting (commercial hunting) and transporters.

Information provided by Ministry of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations indicates there are 32 active Adventure Tourism Policy tenures in the Muskwa-Kechika. While some guide outfitters also offer guided fishing, this activity does not fall under the Adventure Tourism Policy; rather it is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment.

<b>Adventure Tourism Policy Tenures in the Muskwa-Kechika</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b># Sites</b>
Fish Camps	2	3
Guided Rafting	2	10
Nature Viewing	1	7
Recreation Reserve	1	2
Multiple Use	5	18
Trail Riding	3	3
Hunt Camps	18	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>130</b>

Twelve of the sites above are extensive recreational use areas (300ha and above), the rest are intensive sites (generally under 10 ha); 2 are Skeena files, 2 are Omineca files, 28 are Peace files.

Some Guide Outfitters offer adventure tourism activities in addition to their guided hunts, and have tenures for these activities. Of the above tenures, the following are also run by Guide Outfitters:

- 1 of the guided freshwater recreation (rafting)
- 2 of the multiple use
- 2 of the trail rides
- 1 of the fish camps

Two of the above tenures are run by a Transporter:

- 1 other multiple use
- 1 of the hunt camps

### **Economic Contributions to the Province**

Information on fees and rents collected for activities conducted under Park Use Permits and Adventure Tourism tenure, the number of jobs provided, and number of clients was not available.



## IV Challenges for Adventure Tourism Operators

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A number of adventure tourism operators and tourism representatives were interviewed to take the pulse of the industry both in the Muskwa-Kechika and in the rest of British Columbia. Some challenges are specific to those operating in the Muskwa-Kechika, and some challenges relate to adventure tourism operators throughout the province.

Regardless of whether the challenges are specific to the Muskwa-Kechika or are felt on a provincial level, all of the below challenges have an impact, and contribute to a lack of growth of adventure tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika.

### Province-Wide Challenges

#### 1) Global Economy

All interviewees cited the economy as the number one challenge they face. The European economy and, in particular, the US economy has not rebounded, resulting in fewer travelers coming to BC.

- ✚ Between 2001 and 2007 the Adventure Tourism industry in BC was growing in leaps and bounds, however the downturn in the economy in 2008 resulted in negative growth in the industry between 2008 - 2010.
- ✚ Eco/adventure tourism operators, in particular those operating sport fishing, guest ranches and trail rides which rely on the US market, experienced a decline.
- ✚ There has been some growth in some sectors of the industry since 2010, with wildlife viewing, heli-skiing and sea kayaking reporting being back up to 2010 levels.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2) Changes in Demographics & Trip Motivators

Respondents were all unanimous in describing the changes in the type of experience that adventure/eco tourists are looking for. The baby boomers (the main client base for adventure/eco tourism over the past 10 years) are ageing, and as they age they require more amenities, more comfort and in some cases need a larger guide to guest ratio to provide assistance.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication, Evan Loveless, Exec. Director, Wilderness Tourism Association



- ✚ Younger clients were cited as seeking a type of experience today that differs considerably to the longer more adventuresome trips than the baby boomers sought in the early years of adventure/eco tourism.
- ✚ The younger clients are reported to be seeking shorter trips with more amenities, more array of activities, and the ability to remain connected to the internet and social media.

*"We are not getting the younger generation. They are more averse to camping. They want to be connected to social media, and be able to come back in the evening and post their photos on Facebook."*

Retaining a viable business model in the face of changing demographics and emerging trends, requires the ability of an eco/adventure tourism operator to be adaptable, innovative and responsive to the emerging trends and motivators.

*"Operators who have remained successful have modified their program. Lodges are offering shorter 2-3 nights stay with more amenities like ensuite bathrooms and kayak operators have gone to base camps and shorter trips."*

## **Regional Challenges (Muskwa-Kechika)**

### **1) Lack of Marketing**

The number one challenge to adventure tourism operators in the Muskwa-Kechika is the lack of marketing that is done to create the lure, reputation and appeal of this area. While operators market their own product, they rely on provincial and regional tourism association marketing to promote and brand the Muskwa-Kechika as a destination.

*"There is no marketing done to promote the M-K. The only people who know about the M-K are the Management Board."*

While there are outstanding tourism values in the Muskwa-Kechika, adventure tourism operators must compete with well known and well marketed adventure tourism destinations such as rafting the Nahanni, whale watching off Vancouver Island, bear viewing at Knight Inlet; destinations and nature based activities that are well promoted and have developed the lure and appeal that capture the interest of eco/adventure tourists.

*"You can't keep the area a secret and then expect to experience tourism growth"*



As a result of the internet, Muskwa-Kechika adventure tourism operators are competing not just with the rest of British Columbia but with an international market. The internet offers a Global smorgasbord of destinations to choose from and tourists are most likely to choose an area that has a reputation and is known.

## **2) Access**

The remoteness and cost of getting to the Muskwa-Kechika are seen to be deterrents. The nearest airports are Fort St John and Fort Nelson. Only one airline services Fort Nelson - with small planes and lack of a consistent schedule. Getting into the Muskwa-Kechika requires an additional cost to the tourist, making the cost of just getting to the point where the trip starts less appealing than vacationing in more economical locations.

*"It costs my customers \$3,000 round trip from Vancouver, before they even begin to do an activity, which is an additional cost. They could fly to Europe for that price and still have money left over."*

## **3) Cost of Doing Business in the North**

The cost of doing business in the north contributes to challenges for entrepreneurs in developing a viable business model for nature based tourism. This has affected not only interest in developing new adventure tourism businesses, but in existing businesses continuing to operate their businesses.

*"At least one operator was reported to have pulled his commercial recreation application, deciding instead to go and work in the oil patch."*

Lodge owners, for example who rely on generators as their only source of electricity, are subjected to carbon tax, increasing their overhead. A number of highway lodges along the Alaska Highway have been unable to remain viable, and fewer services are now available along the highway to support travelers and local businesses.

## **4) Lack of a Recreation Management Plan**

A Recreation Management Plan for the Muskwa-Kechika has been drafted but it has not been approved or implemented. Several concerns were expressed with respect to the lack of a Recreation Management Plan, including:

- Commercial recreation tenures continue to be approved even though there isn't an approved Recreation Management Plan in place to provide direction;
- The recommendations in the Recreation Management Plan including the criteria for approving commercial recreation tenures are therefore disregarded; and
- Lack of an approved plan is an indication that recreation management in the Muskwa-Kechika is not a priority for the Provincial Government.



## 5) Perception of Northern BC

There is a concern among some that public perception of northern BC is “Oil and Gas Country” which is not compatible with an image of “Supernatural BC”.

*"Until tourism marketing is done to change the image of northern BC, the image of oil and gas country will remain the prevailing one."*

# V Adventure Tourism Tenure and Park Use Permits

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## Overview

To operate adventure tourism businesses either on provincial Crown Land or in BC Parks, Adventure Tourism Tenure and/or Park Use Permits are required. Each type of permit requires a separate application with its own application requirements, fee and approval process. As well, FLNO and BC Parks require a separate reporting and rent/fee structure.

### BC Park Use Permits – Commercial Recreation

Applications for a Park Use Permit (PUP) and instructions for application procedure and costs can be acquired on line<sup>5</sup> and are submitted along with appropriate maps and a commercial recreation management plan to BC Parks. Once the appropriate Parks Supervisor has done the necessary internal work and has approved a draft PUP, consultation commences with the appropriate First Nations.

Recent changes to Park Use Permit policy now caps the number of required Park Use Permits at 3. This means an operator can do business in multiple parks, but only has to pay for three Park Use Permits.

### Provincial Crown Land – Adventure Tourism Tenure

Applications for tenure to provide adventure tourism on provincial Crown Land are subject to the province’s Land Use Operational Policy: Adventure Tourism. Information on this policy and instructions for applying are found on the ILMB website.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/applications/process/park\\_use.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/applications/process/park_use.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/adventure\\_tourism/about.html](http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/adventure_tourism/about.html)



A completed application requires:

1. Application fee;
2. A completed Application for Crown Land that identifies the application area;
3. A Certificate of Incorporation (if applicable);
4. A complete Management Plan;
5. A copy of the State of Title Certificate of the requested property (if applicable);
6. A general location map showing the general location of the proposed operating area; location of access roads, watercourses, district lots and major landmarks;
7. An extensive area map identifying where the activities are occurring on the land;
8. A site plan for each intensive site drawn to scale with a north arrow, identifying the location of all improvements in relation to the boundaries of the tenure area and other legal boundaries as described in the Management Plan template.
9. A set of photos showing the nature of the Crown Land in the area, especially the sites proposed for any development

Once an application is submitted to the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Resource Operators it goes through a number of internal review processes and First Nation consultation.

## Challenges and Constraints

Adventure tourism operators, First Nations, and industry representatives were interviewed to obtain their perspective regarding some of the challenges and constraints of the permitting process, and whether these challenges may be impediments to the growth of the adventure tourism industry. Following is a summary of the points that the interviewees made:

*"You are opening a can of worms –  
permitting is a huge issue."*

### 1) Approval Time

The length of time it takes to get a permit approved is a deterrent. Approval time varies depending on whether it is a new tenure or renewal. It also depends on the length of time for the Government/First Nation consultation to take place.

A Park Use Permit has to be renewed annually, and can take up to two years for approval. A temporary permit is sometimes issued so that an operator can continue to do business while the tenure is being reviewed by Government/First Nations. Adventure Tourism Tenure approval can also take upwards of a year and sometimes longer.



Many businesses depend on multiple tenures to operate in a given area which increases the review period. For some the only option is to operate without a permit which causes stress to the operator as it is in contravention of the provincial government's permitting policies and processes and the duty to consult First Nations.

## **2) Lack of Security and Certainty**

An adventure tourism operator's product is the natural environment. Business success and security is therefore dependent upon guaranteed access to this environment.

*"Adventure Tourism tenure security is weaker than resource extraction tenure security."*

Challenges with accessing and maintaining tenure creates a lack of certainty that creates difficulty to access finances from a lending institution, and devalues the business's worth and sale-ability,<sup>7</sup>

*"Many of us are getting close to retirement age, yet the lack of certainty around tenures makes it tough for me to sell my business."*

In 2005 Aaron Heidt and Dr Peter Williams were commissioned by a collection of adventure tourism organizations to research and write a report about the challenges with commercial recreation tenures. Their report, entitled "*Towards Greater Security for Commercial Recreation Operators*", offers a comprehensive overview of the inadequacies of the permitting system for adventure tourism operators and makes a number of recommendations.

Since receiving the report, the Wilderness Tourism Association have had discussions with the provincial government in an attempt to make changes to improve tenure access and security for commercial recreation operators with little success, other than a decision to put a cap on the number of Park Use Permits (3) that an adventure tourism operator had to acquire.<sup>8</sup>

While capping the number of Park Use Permits was a benefit for the adventure tourism operators, the addition of multiple parks to a PUP application resulted in an increased workload for BC Parks and First Nations in the review of these permits, and has led to further delays in PUP approval. While 4 years ago approximately 10% of the regional manager's time was spent consulting with First Nations regarding Park Use Permits, it has now increased to approximately 85% of the regional manager's time.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Aaron Heidt and Dr. Peter W. Williams, *Towards Greater Security for Commercial Recreation Operators*, November 2005

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication, Evan Loveless, Executive Director Wilderness Tourism Assoc.

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication, BC Parks



### **3) Cumbersome and Complex**

Many commented that it is a cumbersome and complex application process, particularly when requiring tenure for both provincial Crown Land and a BC Park. First Nations commented that their people do not have the skills or experience to deal with the complexity of the tenure process.

*"An operator can operate a trip in and out of a park boundary onto Crown Land and have two different reporting mechanisms and fee structures to deal with. There should be one application and one reporting process."*

## **VI Tenure Approval: First Nation and Government Consultation**

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British Columbia has a legal duty to consult with First Nations with respect to provincial Crown authorized activity (i.e. disposition of Crown Land) that may adversely affect Aboriginal rights and title recognized and affirmed by section 35 (1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

The First Nations the province has a duty to consult with regarding commercial recreation tenure in the Muskwa-Kechika includes: the Tsay Keh Dene, Kaska Dena Council (Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation and Kwadacha First Nation) and Treaty 8 (Blueberry First Nation, Doig River First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, MacLeod Lake First Nation, Prophet River First Nation, Sauleau First Nations, and West Moberly First Nation).

One application may require review by multiple First Nations. The process for consultation is set out within the agreements negotiated between the province and First Nations. In the absence of an agreement which identifies the consultation process, the province consults directly with the First Nation Band (see below).

### **Consultation Processes for Review of Permits:**

#### **1) Absence of an Agreement**

In the absence of an agreement, the province consults directly with the First Nation as follows:

- Written notification of a proposed provincial Crown Land authorized activity that may affect any of the First Nation's rights and title affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act* along with relevant information of the proposed activity are sent to the First Nation;



- The province provides a reasonable period of time for the First Nation to prepare its views on the proposed provincial Crown authorized activity;
- The First Nation is provided with an opportunity to present views as to how potential adverse impacts on the exercise of any of its rights and title, can be avoided or mitigated;
- British Columbia undertakes consideration of any views presented by a potentially affected First Nation;
- In the absence of a response from the First Nation in a reasonable period of time, the province undertakes consideration of information available to the Crown; and
- BC provides in writing where appropriate to potentially affected First Nations, notification of the decision taken and how the views of the First Nation were taken into account.<sup>10</sup>

First Nations the province consults with at the Band level regarding adventure tourism tenure and/or commercial recreation Park Use Permits include:

- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Halfway River First Nation
- McLeod Lake Indian Band
- Saulteau First Nations
- Tsay Keh Dene First Nation

Capacity is an issue in reviewing referrals for First Nations, particularly for those who do not have an agreement with the provincial government in place. Tsay Keh Dene, for example, expressed frustration with the system saying that it is flawed, going on to say that they can be overwhelmed with the volume of referrals that are received.

First Nations without a consultation agreement may lack adequate financing to train and hire individuals to take on the task of reviewing the referrals. Without an agreed to process or funding the First Nation can be disadvantaged to adequately respond to the referrals they receive, and can often feel overwhelmed and under consulted.

## **2) Strategic Engagement Agreement - Kaska Dena Council**

In March, 2012, the Kaska Dena Council signed a Strategic Engagement Agreement (SEA), with the Province which includes funding for three years to implement the SEA. The SEA was implemented in June, 2012.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/treaty/key/down/amended\\_economic\\_benefits\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/treaty/key/down/amended_economic_benefits_agreement.pdf)



The SEA has established a Government to Government process with a matrix and timeline for review of referrals as well as a process for dealing with issues that may arise with particular referrals, including a dispute resolution process.

As a result of the SEA, a Kaska Natural Resources Council is now established, with a regional coordinator in place as well as a Lands and Resources Officer in each of the Kaska Dena communities (Lower Post, Good Hope Lake and Fort Ware).

While the Kaska Dena struggled for years to review referrals without a clear process or adequate training and funding, through their SEA they now have a process that supports a manageable process and timeline for review of referrals, and a Government to Government process for collaborative decision making.

### **3) Agreements with Treaty 8 First Nations**

Treaty 8 First Nations have a number of agreements with the Provincial Government which lay out the process for Government to Government consultation and collaborative decision making, including:

- Collaborative Management Agreement for BC Parks (CMA Parks);
- Wildlife Collaborative Management Agreement (CMA Wildlife); and
- Government to Government Protocol Agreement.

The signatory Treaty 8 Nations to these agreements are: Doig River First Nation, Prophet River First Nation and West Moberly First Nations

Blueberry First Nation has a Crown Land Consultation and Collaboration Agreement with the province that was signed August 25, 2008 as well as a Wildlife Collaborative Management Agreement that was signed in September, 2008.

Several Treaty 8 First Nations also have Economic Benefits Agreements:

- Doig River First Nation, Prophet River First Nation and West Moberly First Nations;
- Fort Nelson First Nation; and
- Blueberry First Nation

 A Park Use Permit may require review by two review processes: e.g. CMA Parks & CMA Wildlife.

 With the CMA Parks & CMA Wildlife there is no agreed to timeline for the consultation process within the signed Agreements.



## **VII First Nations and Adventure Tourism in the Muskwa-Kechika**

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Representatives of Kaska Dena, Treaty 8 and Tsay Keh Dene Nations were interviewed with respect to their Nations' interest in developing Adventure Tourism businesses in their Traditional Territories. All indicated a strong interest, and all expressed concerns with respect to a process that is moving forward without them.

### **1) Capacity**

Lack of capacity is an issue for First Nations. While First Nations have an interest in developing adventure tourism businesses in their Traditional Territory, they lack members with the training and experience.

It was suggested that there be an arrangement made between UNBC and the Board to allow UNBC to offer part of their recreation program in the Muskwa-Kechika to bring students and recreation into the Muskwa-Kechika and to facilitate First Nation participation in such programs.

### **2) Access to Tenure**

First Nations expressed frustration that tenure continues to be given out before they have built capacity to be able to operate businesses themselves, and as well tenure continues to be given out while they are negotiating Treaties.

First Nations are concerned that the carrying capacity of an area may be met before they are able to have people trained and in a position to be able to apply for tenure and operate their adventure tourism businesses

### **3) Areas of Traditional Use and Cultural Significance**

First Nations have specific geographic locations in their Traditional Territories that have traditional value and they would like to receive tenure to operate in these specific areas before others receive tenure in these significant areas, or before carrying capacity is met.

### **4) Lack of Ability for First Nations to hold Tenure in Reserve**

First Nations are interested in developing economic opportunities for their members. The current tenure process does not allow for First Nations to access and hold tenure in reserve until they are either ready to work the tenure themselves, or to even lease the tenure out to other operators for a fee. The latter would allow them to rent their permit and realize income from that permit while building capacity.



### **Examples from Other Jurisdictions**

In Ivvavik National Park an arrangement was established whereby the Inuvialuit received a number of permits to operate on the Firth River. They were then able to either use these permits themselves or else lease the permits to other rafting companies who, for example, wanted to do more trips than they had permits for.

A similar arrangement may meet the interests of First Nations in the Muskwa-Kechika by way of ensuring that First Nations are able to acquire permits that they can hold until they are ready to operate themselves, or else lease these permits.

In Ivvavik National Park, non Aboriginal Adventure Travel operators were required to take an Inuvialuit trainee along on their rafting trips to assist in building capacity for the Inuvialuit in river rafting. Such an arrangement could also be discussed with Kaska Dena, Tsay Keh Dene and Treaty 8 to see if this would meet any of their interests with respect to building capacity.



## VIII Conclusion:

The findings of this report indicate that in spite of the magnitude of tourism values in the Muskwa-Kechika and the opportunities for economic growth for the adventure tourism industry, there are challenges and constraints that are impeding the growth of the adventure tourism industry in the Muskwa-Kechika at this time.

While some of the challenges, such as global economies and changing demographics/trends are a sign of the times and impact the tourism industry as a whole, there are certain regional challenges that can be managed and/or mitigated:

1. Lack of awareness of the Muskwa-Kechika as an adventure tourism destination;
2. Cost of doing business in the remote northern part of BC;
3. Lack of a Recreation Management Plan and the direction such a plan would provide;
4. The over-riding perception that northern BC is "Oil and Gas" country and the impact this has on tourists' perceptions of northern BC;
5. Challenges with the permitting system to not only the applicant, but to those reviewing and processing the permits;
6. Impediments to First Nation involvement in the adventure tourism industry and the economic benefits that could be realized.

### Timing is right for addressing these challenges

The Tourism BC five year marketing plan entitled *Gaining the Edge – A Five Year Tourism Strategy for BC 2012-2016* speaks to the province's plan to increase visitor volume, revenue and employment with a target to achieve revenues of \$18 billion by 2016; reflecting a 5% growth per year.

The tourism strategy identifies four key areas of focus, all of which would apply to tourism development in the Muskwa-Kechika:

1. Leadership through partnership and coordination
2. Focused marketing
3. World class visitor experiences
4. Removing barriers to growth.

As well, the plan speaks to focusing on BC's key tourism products, two of which are of relevance to the Muskwa-Kechika:

1. Adventure tourism; and
2. First Nation cultural tourism



Oil and Gas development is a priority for the province; however this activity is not taking place within the Muskwa-Kechika. There is an opportunity for the Muskwa-Kechika to contribute to the provincial and local economy through tapping into and promoting its premier wilderness and tourism values. This will require vision and commitment, an action plan and the funding to implement the plan with clear mechanisms for monitoring success.

## **XI Steps for Consideration**

To achieve results in mitigating challenges to eco/adventure tourism growth in the Muskwa-Kechika, the following actions are suggested for consideration:

- Support the work of the Advisory Board by ensuring tourism representation on the Board;
- Improve access to information re: adventure tourism activity in the Muskwa-Kechika to serve as a mechanism to monitor the health of the adventure tourism industry and economic contributions to the local and provincial economy;
- Update, finalize and implement the Recreation Management Plan;
- Negotiate with Tourism BC with respect to inclusion of the Muskwa-Kechika in their tourism development and marketing strategies;
- Create a tourism development plan and marketing strategy for the Muskwa-Kechika, including implementation funding;
- Provide a detailed analysis of the issues and recommendations regarding the commercial recreation tenure system to address and mitigate the issues for operators, provincial government agencies and First Nations;
- In consultation with First Nations, develop recommendations regarding First Nation access to tenure to address the challenges that have been identified in this report.



## **APPENDIXES**



## Appendix 1: Park Use Permits in the Muskwa-Kechika

PARK USE PERMITS IN THE MUSKWA-KECHIKA						
COMMERCIAL RECREATION						
	Operator	Air Transportation	Transporter	Guide Outfitting	Privately Owned Structure	Eco/Adventure Tourism
<b>#</b>	<b>Air Transport</b>					
1	Alpine Lakes Air Ltd	1				
2	Bailey Helicopters Ltd					
3	Canadian Helicopters Ltd	1				
4	MacKenzie Mountain Aviation	1				
5	Northern Rockies Air Charter Ltd	1				
6	Qwest Helicopters	1				
7	Villers Air Services Ltd	1				
	<b>Guide Outfitters</b>					
8	Claw Mountain Outfitters			1	1	1
9	Dale Drinkall			1	1	
10	Stephan Fiarchuk			1	1	1
11	Gundahoo River Outfitters			1		
12	Mike Hammett			1	1	1
13	Endre Pipics			1	1	1
14	Chris Schippmann			1		
15	Scoop Lake Outfitters Ltd			1	1	1
16	Tuchodi River Outfitters Ltd			1		1
17	Frank Parker					
18	Barry Tompkins			1		1
19	James Olsen			1		1
20	Victoria Olmstead			1	1	1
21	Lance Schneider			1		
22	Ralph Waloszek			1		
23	Wicked River Outfitting			1	1	
24	Richard Solmonson			1	1	
	<b>Adventure/Eco Tourism</b>					
25	Wayne Sawchuk				1	1
26	Northern Rockies Lodge				1	1
27	Rocky Mountain Trench Adventures					1
	<b>Transporter</b>					
28	Steamboat Mountain Outfitters Ltd		1			1
28	Tetsa River Outfitters		1			1
30	Riverjet Adventures Ltd		1			1
<b>30</b>	<b>Total Numbers</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>



## Appendix 2: Comments by Interviewees

<b>1</b>	<p><b>What factors do you feel affect or have affected the growth of your Adventure Tourism business in the Muskwa-Kechika?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost to get to Fort Nelson and then to fly in</li> <li>• No branding or marketing done by any provincial group</li> <li>• Have to compete with southern BC for marketing dollars</li> <li>• Round trip - \$3,000 before they even begin to do an activity</li> <li>• People don't know what true wilderness is – think Whistler is wilderness</li> <li>• Global Economy</li> <li>• Changing interest in doing the type of trips we used to do (from long expedition style)</li> <li>• No one knows about the area</li> <li>• Decline in demand for northern multi day expeditions that involve camping</li> <li>• Low brand awareness, distance from nearest airport</li> <li>• No brand – area is unknown</li> <li>• Remoteness and challenges of air transport</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>How has the permitting process for Commercial Recreation in the Muskwa Kechika affected your business, if at all?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No security with the tenure – affects my operating security</li> <li>• Reports and fees all due at different times – time consuming process</li> <li>• Needs to be harmonized – one permit</li> <li>• We may only have interest every few years for a trip. The accumulated fees and admin are not recoverable for the fees we can charge.</li> <li>• I shouldn't have to consult with First Nations – should be a Government to Government process</li> <li>• Approval process takes too long – I need guarantee that I can operate so I can book in advance</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Have there been changes in terms of the type of experience that your clients are looking for in the outdoors? If so, what are they?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in current clients not wanting to rough it, as clients in the past did.</li> <li>• There is a real switch to people who want base camps, short trips; they want cell phone and internet access. They bring their laptops on kayaking trips now.</li> <li>• Young people don't want to rough it</li> <li>• Trips are too long</li> <li>• Adjusted tours to younger clientele to cater to the new clientele</li> <li>• 4 day version is the most popular (west coast trail)</li> <li>• 3 days longest trip</li> <li>• Need and want cell phone service</li> <li>• 4 and 7 day trips (out of base camps) kayaking</li> <li>• Day trips operating from a comfortable facility with ensuite bathrooms and short samples of highly branded, world class features.</li> <li>• Not attracting the younger generation – mostly attracting late 50's – 80's who are aging and require more amenities.</li> <li>• Not getting younger generation. They are more adverse to camping – they want to be connected to their social media, want to be able to post to Facebook</li> <li>• Ageing boomers are arthritic, have to get up in the night, so need more amenities</li> <li>• Guide/client ratio is now 1:4</li> <li>• Diminished market for multi day rafting trips</li> <li>• Strong migration of clients to other parts of the world where there is high brand like: Africa</li> </ul>



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