



*Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board's
Report to the Premier and the
Public of British Columbia*

2024

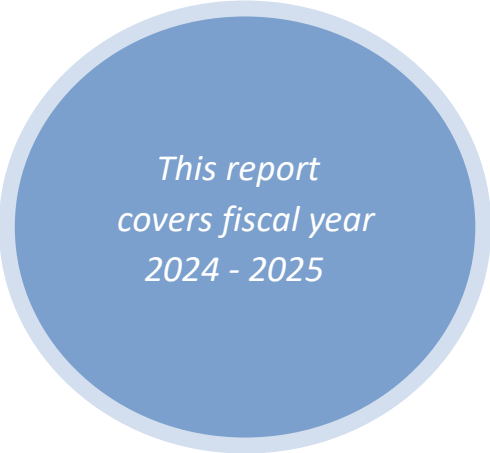
Table of Contents

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR.....	3
1. Muskwa-Kechika Management Area	4
2. Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board	5
1. Advisory Board Mission Statement	6
2. Advisory Board’s Vision for the Management Area.....	6
3. Overview of Activities in the Management Area.....	6
4. Initiatives and Accomplishments of the Advisory Board.....	7
4.1. Advice	7
4.2. Strategic Direction & Operational Business Planning Working Group.....	7
4.3. Indigenous Relations Working Group	8
4.4. Public Outreach & Communications Working Group	8
4.5. Planning Working Group.....	8
4.6. Wildlife Working Group	8
4.7. University of Northern BC (UNBC) Partnership Working Group.....	9
4.8. M-KMA Website	9
5. Conclusion	9

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Premier Eby and the Public of British Columbia:

We are pleased to report out on what has been happening in British Columbia's Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (M-KMA) in north-eastern B.C. Since its creation the M-KMA has been guided by a diverse Advisory Board (Board) that includes First Nations, industry, local government, guide outfitters, environmental and tourism specialists and others. The board maintains a positive and respectful relationship with the government and provides advice and guidance for actions taken within the borders of the M-KMA as well as annually reporting back to the Premier and the public of British Columbia.



*This report
covers fiscal year
2024 - 2025*

This report covers the fiscal year 2024-2025 and briefly highlights a number of goals that have been met or that were worked on as we implemented our Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan.

These accomplishments are a direct result of Board members actively participating on various working groups as well as through collaborative partnerships with staff from the Ministry of Water, Lands and Natural Resources, other ministries, and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), etc. We remain vigilant to adapt and adjust our plans, actions, and advice to reflect an ever-changing world and to ensure that the complex and challenging balance between wilderness and land management activities within the M-KMA perseveres.

Our Board is open to engagement and collaboration, within its limited resources to work with Government, Indigenous communities, and others to ensure activities within the MKMA reflect the balance of values envisioned for this special management area. To that end, we will pay particular attention to developing clear, integrated, meaningful and measurable advice and guidance to Government.

Currently, it is appropriate to acknowledge and thank Juergen Puetter, Shawna Case, Sean Olmstead, John DeGrace and the late Phil Zacharatos (former Executive Director/Secretariat) for their generous investment of time and energy working with the Board over the last several years. For eight years, Phil provided overwhelming support to the M-KAB. I also wish to acknowledge and thank the current members of the Board for their invaluable contribution and commitment to the management of the M-KMA.

Respectfully submitted



Stephanie Killam, Chair
Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Advisory Board

Note: All items marked with a footnote are documents that can be found on the Advisory Board's website: www.muskwa-kechika.com

1. Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area¹, located in north-eastern British Columbia, is an area of land designated for varying levels of protection, conservation and use. The management goal for the M-KMA is to ensure that wilderness characteristics, wildlife and its habitat are maintained over time while allowing resource development and use, including recreation, hunting, timber harvesting, mineral exploration and mining, oil and gas exploration and development. The integration of management activities, especially related to the planning, development and management of road access within the M-KMA, is central to achieving this intent. The long-term objective is to return lands to their natural state, as much as possible, as development activities are completed.

This pattern of management is a unique approach...

Conceived through the Fort St. John, Fort Nelson and Mackenzie Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) process and established by legislation in 1998, the Management Area is a unique model for sustainable land use, resource planning and management. The Management Area is not a park; rather, it is comprised of a variety of zones with differing levels of resource management ranging from provincial parks and ecological reserves (where resource extraction is not permitted), to resource management zone categories where objectives and strategies determine the level of human activity.

This pattern of multi-resource management zones is a unique approach to managing the land base, including maintaining wilderness, wildlife and cultural values while allowing resource development in areas designated for that purpose.



¹ Muskwa-Kechika Management Area <https://www.muskwa-kechika.com/management-area/purpose>



Few places on earth match the significance of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area in terms of beauty, isolation, biodiversity, wildlife, wilderness, natural resources, and spiritual and cultural values.

2. Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board

The Board² is enabled through a specific legislative framework. The *Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act*³ directs the Premier of the Province of British Columbia to appoint an Advisory Board. The *Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan Regulation*⁴ establishes the role and responsibility for an Advisory Board.

The Board advises government on natural resource management, strategic land use planning, research, and monitoring within the M-KMA.

The Board is a volunteer-based model that is appointed by the Premier with a membership that represents a cross section of society as well as a variety of perspectives. The Board:

- Continually strives to ensure that activities within the area are consistent with the objectives of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan.
- Reports, at least annually, to the public and the Premier about the Management Area, any issues related to the management of the area and the work of the Board; and
- Encourages and supports coordination and collaboration both within the Board and with its partners while valuing and nurturing diversity of perspectives and opinions; to ensure balanced decision-making and advice/guidance.

The behaviour of Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board members is guided by the following core values:

- **Respect:** Members are committed to inclusiveness and diversity, and respect the rights, roles, responsibilities, interests and perspectives of others and the history and origins of the M-KMA.
- **Accountability:** Members are responsible for the consequences of their actions, to each other and the Board as a whole. The Board operates on a consensus basis.

² Biographies and photos of members can be viewed at <http://www.muskwa-kechika.com/advisory-board-2/advisory-board>

³ M-KMA Act <https://www.muskwa-kechika.com/management-area/legislation-planning>

⁴ M-KMA Regulation <https://www.muskwa-kechika.com/management-area/legislation-planning>

- Transparency: Members establish open, clear and trusted review processes, since their advice to Government could directly influence Government decision-makers.
- Aboriginal and Treaty Rights: Members recognize Aboriginal and Treaty Rights within the M-KMA.
- Adaptive Management: Members learn from the past and look for new and improved approaches in response to experience, as well as changing external pressures and social values.
- Communication: M-KAB will endeavour to develop and foster meaningful relationships through open and timely communication.

1. **Advisory Board Mission Statement**

Provide respected and trusted advice that ensures the dynamic ecosystems, wilderness, wildlife and cultural diversity of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area are maintained in perpetuity.

2. **Advisory Board s Vision for the Management Area**

The Muskwa- Kechika Management Area is a globally significant area of wilderness, wildlife and cultures, to be maintained in perpetuity, where world class integrated resource management decision-making is practiced ensuring that resource development and other human activities take place in harmony with wilderness quality, wildlife and the dynamic ecosystems on which they depend.



3. **Overview of Activities in the Management Area**

The Province of British Columbia tabled a report⁵ on activities in the M-KMA which covered the years 2021-2023. This report provides an overview of activities (tenures, permits, licenses, etc.) within the M-KMA.

⁵ Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship report (2021-2023) <https://www.muskwa-kechika.com/resource-library/operational-documents>

4. Initiatives and Accomplishments of the Advisory Board

Although its fiscal resources are significantly constrained the Board is committed and earnest in fulfilling its mandate and meeting Government's expectations. The Board as a whole and through its various working groups and partnerships has worked effectively, efficiently and diligently to deliver its Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan. The following sections highlights the Boards initiatives and accomplishments.



4.1. Advice

The legislated mandate for the Advisory Board is to:

- Advise government on natural resource management in the M-KMA to ensure that activities within the area are consistent with the objectives of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan.
- Provide advice on corporate priorities for and coordination of local strategic planning in the MKMA; and
- Conduct reviews of the issuance of tenures and approval of operational activities to examine the achievement of management plan objectives through local strategic planning and operational activities.

The Board continues its commitment to developing a mechanism that will assist with creating clear, integrated, meaningful, and measurable advice and guidance to Government in keeping with the vision and management goal for the area.

The Board acknowledges this as a critical role and expectation of Government and is committed to achieving this deliverable. The commitment to fulfilling this important expectation can be found in several of the following sections and will guide the update to the Board's Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan.

The Board provided two letters of advice to Deputy Minister Halls. On October 10, 2024 advice was provided regarding Prophet River First Nation's Road Permit Upgrade. On October 21, 2024 advice was provided regarding Blueberry River First Nation's Restoration Project. These documents can be found on the M-KMA Website.

4.2. Strategic Direction & Operational Business Planning Working Group

Purpose: To provide an annually updated strategic direction, priorities, operating goals and associated budget for the M-KAB.

Current Tasks: Update the current 3-year Strategic Direction and Operational Business Planning document⁶ for 2024/2025-2026/2027 for approval by MWLRS.

The Board completed its Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan to focus its work and activities for the following three years. The three main priorities are Indigenous Relations, Management Advice, and Board Governance and Administration. The Plan was reviewed and supported last fiscal by the Minister of Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship in his role as the Trustee for the M-KMA and the Board. The Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan will again be updated in early 2025/26.

⁶ Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan (2023/24 to 2025/26) <https://www.muskwa-kechika.com/resource-library/operational-documents>

4.3.Indigenous Relations Working Group

Purpose: To develop and foster meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities whose territories overlap the M-KMA.

Current Tasks: Develop an Indigenous Relations Engagement Strategy and begin to implement the strategy in the spring/summer of 2025. Explore training options for the Board regarding Indigenous cultural awareness.

4.4.Public Outreach & Communications Working Group

Purpose: To improve public awareness and communications of the M-KMA and M-KAB.

Current Tasks: Develop an Awareness and Communications Strategy, which would include a 5-minute “pitch” video which is a story about the significance of the M-KMA, the Board’s role, and its highest priorities.



4.5.Planning Working Group

Purpose: To provide advice for MWLRS and other BC Ministries regarding Strategic plans and processes that overlap within the M-KMA.

Current Tasks: Draft an Annual Report for the Public and Premier. Develop a Review Process for the M-KMA. Develop advice for MWLRS on how the M-KAB can better engage in their new land use planning processes. Provided feedback on BC Park s Management Strategy within the M-KMA.

4.6.Wildlife Working Group

Purpose: Provide advice on an as-needed basis regarding wildlife-related matters relating to the M-KMA.

Current Tasks: Update the M-KMA wildlife management plan through a gap analysis process and compare it to BC’s new Together for Wildlife Strategy.

4.7. University of Northern BC (UNBC) Partnership Working Group

Purpose: To provide direction for the scientific community interested in conducting research in the M-KMA.

Current Tasks: Developed the Phil Zacharatos Scholarship, to be awarded annually to a wildlife researcher conducting research within the M-KMA. Exploring the concept of a field research station at Mayfield Lake.

4.8. M-KMA Website

The Board established a website in 2004 as a key initiative to increase awareness, knowledge and support for the M-KMA. While it has enjoyed a modest number of visitors, over time it became apparent that the site would benefit from an update and redesign. With support from the Province and the M-KMA Trustee, a re-design and update was undertaken. The website continues to be updated monthly.



Some highlights of the re-design are:

- Fewer web pages and easier to navigate through the website.
- A resource library that is becoming a useful tool to locate research reports and documents completed over the years and specifically for the M-KMA are now all in one location; and
- A secure area is now available for Board members to post current business materials for each member to reference easily and confidentially.

5. Conclusions

The Board continues to focus its highest three priorities on Indigenous Relations, Management Advice, and Board Governance and Administration. The Board has finalized their Indigenous Relations Engagement Strategy, which will assist in reaching out to many of the 16 Indigenous communities, whose territories overlap the M-KMA. The goals of the Engagement Strategy are:

- To build positive relationships with Indigenous communities, who have treaty rights, aboriginal rights or title within the M-KMA.
- To better understand the cultural significance and values of those Indigenous communities whose territories overlap the M-KMA.
- Increase the representation of Indigenous voices on the M-KAB.

The Board has recently had a significant membership change with three senior members retiring last year, two upcoming retirements of senior members this year, and the appointment of seven new members, some of which are from local Indigenous communities. In total there are currently twelve Board members. There will be a learning curve for the new Board members, but they will bring new ideas and inspiration to the Board.

There are several new landscape level plans being developed in northeast BC that have the potential to influence the M-KMA Management plan. In order for the Board to provide timely advice to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, the Board would appreciate being involved early in the review of these plans.

The Board is proud of its accomplishments and the progress it has made in twenty-five years since its creation. It remains steadfast in its commitment to fulfilling its mandate of ensuring a meaningful and credible balance between wilderness and land management in the Muskwa-Kechika Management area that results in a working wilderness unparalleled in the world.

