



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

2025

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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
2025 – 2026*

This report covers the fiscal year 2025-2026 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 maintaining in perpetuity the wilderness, wildlife and cultural values of the M-KMA and the ecosystems on which they depend while allowing for resource development and other human activities to take place.

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 M-KMA reflect the balance of values envisioned for this special management area. To that end, we pay particular attention to developing clear, integrated, meaningful and measurable advice and guidance to Government.

At this time, I would like to acknowledge and thank David Luff (Vice-Chair), Peter Baird (Executive member) and Ruby Johnny (Board Director) for their generous investment of time and energy working with the Board over the last nine to ten years. 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. Over the many years that I have been a member of this board there have been many members who made large contributions to the management of the M-KMA, and I wish to send my appreciation to them for their support over my tenure.

This will be my last report out as Chair of the M-KAB as I will be retiring from the board as of March 31, 2026. I would like to welcome Darin Hancock as the incoming chair, and I believe that he will continue to lead the board in the appropriate direction 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
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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.

2.1 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.

2.2 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 two reports⁵ on 2024 activities in the M-KMA. These reports provide an overview and details of activities (tenures, permits, licenses, etc.) within the M-KMA.

⁵ Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Annual Report <https://www.muskwa-kechika.com/resource-library/operational-documents>
 Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Interactive Report <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0e448aefb6cc4f16b0f3899beb8e4ae1>

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.

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: Due to funding and membership appointment delays, the M-KAB Executive decided to update the current 3-year Strategic Direction and Operational Business Planning document⁶ for 2026/2027-2028/2029 for approval by MWLRS in the spring.

The three main priorities will continue to be Indigenous Relations, Management Advice, and Board Governance and Administration. The Plan was reviewed and supported during the 2024/2025 fiscal year by the Minister of Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship in his role as the Trustee for the M-KMA and the Board.

⁶ Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan <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 2026. 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. Also develop an implementation plan to replace existing signs within the M-KMA.



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 a 2025 Annual Report for the Public and Premier. Develop advice for MWLRS on how the M-KAB can better engage in their new land use planning processes. Provided feedback on Land Use Planning initiatives 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. Also establish a joint wildlife project plan with the MWLRS to provide further direction and priorities for the M-KMA wildlife management plan update.

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: Work with UNBC to award the Phil Zacharatos Scholarship 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.



5. Conclusion

The Board continues to focus its highest three priorities on Indigenous Relations, Management Advice, and Board Governance and Administration. Although the Board has finalized their draft Indigenous Relations Engagement Strategy, its implementation has been paused until the MWLRS provides direction on how to move forward. There may be an opportunity to build Indigenous relations through the development and review of new joint Land Use Plans. These new joint Land Use Plans also 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 has recently had a significant membership change with three new members resigning this year and four senior members retiring at the end of March. Re-appointment applications for existing Board members were submitted over a year ago and are still outstanding. Also, appointment applications of four new members were submitted this January that have yet to be appointed. At the end of March, without new appointments, there will only be a total of four Board members. This will make the Board dysfunctional until existing and new Board members are appointed by the Government.



Photographs donated by Wayne Sawchuck