
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

LILLOOET, MORICE PLANS TO CREATE JOBS, 15 NEW PARKS

VICTORIA – Detailed proposals for the Lillooet and Morice land use plans have been completed that will open up new jobs and economic opportunities, while adding a total of 15 new parks and protected areas comprising almost 180,000 hectares, Sustainable Resource Management Minister George Abbott announced today.

Talks between the province and First Nations are now the final step towards finalizing land use plans for the regions.

“These recommendations, with their broad community support, will help protect over 180,000 hectares, while opening up new economic opportunities by creating certainty on the land base,” Abbott said. “That gives families who live and work in the area the chance to build a solid, sustainable future for their communities, themselves and their children.”

In the Lillooet area, which includes Lytton and Spences Bridge, the previous government announced a draft plan without any consensus on the part of the land-use table members, and without meaningful community or First Nations support. The province subsequently committed to reviewing this plan, and today’s outcome reflects extensive community and stakeholder input over the last three years.

Consultation with First Nations is the next step. In the case of the St’at’imc First Nation, these talks will be guided by a recently signed government-to-government protocol. In addition, a memorandum with local communities provides for economic cooperation.

The plan will create a new Class A park on 56,500 hectares of the South Chilcotin protected area. The remaining 14,600 hectares will be designated for tourism and mining, but not logging. Eight new parks and protected areas are added, comprising 23,500 hectares. The whole Lillooet planning area makes up 11,000 square km, of which 17 per cent will be park and conservancy.

“This plan strikes a true balance that will provide job opportunities for those families that work and live in the region, while still protecting the natural environment that is such a draw for this area,” Yale-Lillooet MLA Dave Chutter said. “We made a commitment to review the previous government’s plan at the request of people in the communities and we have followed through on that commitment.”

In the Morice area, 15,000 square km lying north and east of Tweedsmuir Park, full consensus was reached at a planning table that started work in October 2002. Its recommendations call for 6.4 per cent of the area to be set aside for parks and conservancy areas, 20.5 per cent mining/tourism, but not logging, and 73.1 per cent open to all uses, with some area-specific restrictions.

“Behind these proposals lies the work of numerous people who have devoted years to reaching agreement on the future use of public land in these areas,” Bulkley Valley-Stikine MLA Dennis MacKay said. “They started from very different positions, and wound up on common ground.”

Land and resource management plans apply to Crown land, which makes up 94 per cent of all land in British Columbia. When these plans are completed, 85 per cent of the province will be covered by land use plans.

In the last week the government has announced detailed land use proposals that will add almost a million hectares of new park and conservancy areas to protect some of the most beautiful wilderness sites in the province, Abbott said.

2 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUND

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CONSENSUS MOVES MORICE LAND USE PLANS TO NEXT STAGE

MORICE AREA

- 15,000 square km lying north of Tweedsmuir Park, including the communities of Houston and Granisle
- Population approximately 5,200
- Heavily dependent on forestry (almost 60 per cent of employment base), followed by mining, tourism and agriculture

Planning Process

- Land and resource management planning began in September 2001.
- Fifteen sectors and two First Nations made up the planning table.
- Planning consensus reached in March 2004.
- Cabinet has approved moving forward with the next stage of the planning process.

First Nations Involvement

- First Nations with an interest in the area include the Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Lake Babine, Carrier Sekani, Cheslatta and Yekooche First Nations.
 - The Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Lake Babine Nation, in combination, claim the entire plan area as traditional territories.
- The Office of the Wet'suwet'en and Lake Babine Nation participated directly at the planning table (Lake Babine withdrew in June 2003 after a change in leadership).
- The other three First Nations decided not to participate.
- The office of the Wet'suwet'en prepared a Territorial Stewardship Plan; many of its key elements are part of the consensus recommendations from the table.
- Government is negotiating a protocol with the Lake Babine First Nation for government to government discussions on the proposals.

Next Steps

- Government to government discussions with the office of the Wet'suwet'en and Lake Babine Nation to develop final draft land use designations and zoning.
- Cabinet reviews plan and makes final land use decisions in Open Cabinet.
- Government designates final protected areas.

Land Use Designations Recommended by Planning Table

Table 1. Proposed land use designations for the Morice area

Zones/Areas (see map for detail)	Allowed Uses	Hectares
Current Parks and Protected Areas	Red Bluff, Topley Landing (Babine Lake Marine) Park, Little Andrews Bay Marine Park, Morice River Ecological Reserve	563 .04% of region
Proposed Parks/ Conservancy	No mining or forestry, emphasis on tourism, recreation, conservation, and First Nations traditional activities	96,246 6.4% of region
Proposed Tourism/Mining Permitted: No commercial forestry or hydro	Mining and tourism permitted; no commercial forestry or hydro	306,916 20.5% of region
Proposed All Resource Uses Permitted	All uses - including tourism, forestry, mining, hydro	960,699 64.1% of region
All Resource Uses Permitted – Specific Values Identified	As above, except limitations on some activities (e.g. motorized recreation use, settlement)	135,582 9.0% of region

Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts of Recommendations

- In the long term, harvestable timber supply reduced by 7.4 per cent - no immediate impact on allowable annual cut and forest employment.
- Innovative forest management practices may reduce long-term economic impacts on forestry.
- Significant benefit to guide outfitting, guided angling, other commercial tourism and non-commercial recreation.
- Maintains access for 95 per cent of high-potential mineral exploration and development areas.
- Reduces environmental risk for all key wildlife species, including grizzly bears, caribou and mountain goat.
- Improves protection for rare ecosystems, freshwater shorelines and fish habitat.
- Brings forest age structure and species range closer to natural levels.

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LILLOOET PLAN BRINGS LAND USE CERTAINTY TO REGION

Lillooet Area

- 11,000 square kilometres including the communities of Lytton, Lillooet, Spence's Bridge and Bralorne
- Primary economic activities are forestry, tourism, agriculture and mining
- Population almost 6,500

Planning Process

- Land and resource management planning began in 1995
- Limited engagement by First Nations in planning process
- Interim decision just before the 2001 election established the Spruce Lake Protected Area in the South Chilcotin over the objections of the community and other sectors
- In Fall 2001 the province committed to returning to the community and stakeholder groups to try to resolve issues between the mining, tourism and conservation sectors on key details of the plan
- The ministry also began consultation with some First Nations in the area
- Government-to-government protocol with the St'at'imc First Nation signed in June 2004
- The ministry has also signed LRMP consultation agreements with the Mount Currie and Esketemc First Nations
- Agreement was reached with communities on a Memorandum of Agreement for co-ordinating economic activity
- Government has approved moving forward with the next stage of the planning process – consultations with First Nations on land use designations and zoning

First Nations Involvement

- 28 First Nations bands have traditional territory in the area
- The government to government protocol and letter of agreement with the St'at'imc First Nation will guide discussions with member bands
- Government will consult with other First Nations before approving and implementing a final plan

Next Steps

- Consultation with First Nations to develop final plan details
- Cabinet reviews plan and makes final land use decisions in Open Cabinet
- Government designates final protected areas

Land Use Designations Recommended

Table 1. Proposed land use designations for Lillooet area

Zones/Areas (see map for detail)	Allowed Uses	Hectares
Current Parks	Stein Valley, several small parks	110,673 10% of region
Proposed Parks/Conservancy	No mining, emphasis on tourism infrastructure and First Nations traditional activities. Grazing permitted	82,416 7% of region
Tourism/Mining Permitted:	No commercial forestry or hydroelectric dam development. Emphasis on tourism and mining	14,617 1% of region
Proposed All Resource Uses Permitted	All uses - including tourism, forestry, mining and hydro	917,636 82% of region

Summary of socio-economic and environmental impacts

- Creation of 56,500 hectare South Chilcotin protected area with intent to move it to Class A park status.
- A 14,600 hectare tourism/mining area that will exclude commercial logging (part of previous South Chilcotin protected area).
- Eight other new parks.
- Total parks/protected areas will be 193,098 hectares – 17.25 of total plan area.
- Protection of key grizzly bear habitat; continued ban on grizzly bear hunting to meet plan target of doubling grizzly population to 182 animals.
- Reduced environmental risk to spotted owls, grizzlies and other wildlife.
- Access available to high-potential mineral sites.
- Positive impact for recreation and tourism.
- Current forest harvest rate is below allowable levels; Timber and Economic Recovery Plan will support increased forestry activity and employment.
- Increased First Nations involvement in economic opportunities, based on the plan.

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