Forest Practices Board

File: 97250-20 East Kootenay Crown Range

Complaint 060724 Recommendation Follow-up

In its July 2008 report, *Wildlife and Cattle Grazing in the East Kootenay*, the Board recommended that:

> **With appropriate consultation and expert advice, the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Environment direct reductions of forage use in the East Kootenay to levels sufficient to achieve a positive and continuing trend in grassland ecosystem condition.**

The Board asked the two ministries to report jointly, in writing, to the Board by December 31, 2008, about the steps they have taken to give effect to the Board's recommendation. In December 2008, the forests ministry asked the Board for an extension to the deadline because of the complexity of the issue. The Board considered that there was no immediate urgency for a response and granted a three month extension - to March 31, 2009.

In March 2009, the forests ministry told the Board that the ministries were working on a strategy to address and implement the Board's recommendation but that more time was needed to finalize the strategy and obtain executive-level approvals. The Board again considered that there was no imminent environmental or range management concern that required an immediate response. The Board granted a further extension to July 31, 2009, giving the ministry a year to respond.

BRITISH COLUMBIA
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File: 15380-03

July 22, 2009

Dr. Bruce Fraser
Forest Practices Board
3rd Floor, 1675 Douglas Street
PO Box 9905 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 9R1

Dear Dr. Fraser:

On behalf of the Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE), I would like to take this opportunity to provide an interim response to the Forest Practices Board's recommendation in its investigation report, *Wildlife and Cattle Grazing in the East Kootenay* (July 2008).

Board's recommendation

With appropriate consultation and expert advice, the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Environment direct reductions of forage use in the East Kootenay to levels sufficient to achieve a positive and continuing trend in grassland ecosystem condition.

Government's interim response

First, I would like to thank the Forest Practices Board for extending the timeline for the Government to respond to this recommendation. We further appreciate that the intent of the Board's recommendation is to restore and maintain the health and productivity of Crown rangelands in the East Kootenay.

As the Board has acknowledged in its report, implementation of this recommendation will have significant implications for the ranching sector and hunting community in the East Kootenay, and the provincial economy. Accordingly, the MFR and the MoE will be required to move forward in

Ministry of Forests and Range Range Branch
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a measured, informed and consultative manner before making any decisions that alter forage use levels in this region.

Specific options for how to reach these decisions are being developed in a briefing note that will be presented to the Executives of the MFR and the MoE in the near future. We hope to confirm the decision making process early this fall, and commit to providing periodic updates to the Board as we make progress.

We also commit to providing a full report to the Board on the decisions and action plans that emerge from the process, likely by March 31, 2010.

If the Board has any questions or would like further information regarding Government's actions to address the Board's recommendation, please contact the undersigned directly at (250) 371-3836.

Yours truly,

David Borth
Director, Range Branch
Ministry of Forests and Range

Kaaren Lewis
Director, Ecosystems Branch
Ministry of Environment

pc: Phil Zacharatos, A/ADM, Operations, Ministry of Forests and Range
Ralph Archibald, ADM, Environmental Stewardship Division, Ministry of Environment
Diane Medves, Director, Forest Practices Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range
Andy Witt, Manager, Habitat Management, Ecosystems Branch, Ministry of Environment

Forest Practices Board

File: 97250-20/060724 East Kootenay Crown Range

September 8, 2009

Via Email

David Borth, Director
Ministry of Forests and Range
515 Columbia Street
Kamloops, BC V2C 2T7

Kaaren Lewis, Director
Ministry of Environment
Box 9338 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9M1

Dear David Borth and Kaaren Lewis:

Re: Complaint 060724 East Kootenay Crown Range – Recommendation Response

Thank you for your July 22, 2009 letter in response to the Board's recommendation in its July 2008 investigation report, *Wildlife and Cattle Grazing in the East Kootenay*. In that report, the Board expressed concern about government coordination of range and wildlife resource management and the state of grassland ecosystems in the East Kootenay. The Board recommended that government direct reduction of forage use in the East Kootenay to levels sufficient to achieve a positive and continuing trend in grassland ecosystem condition.

At the ministries' request, the Board twice extended its deadline for response to the recommendation, giving the ministries a full year to reply. It appears that the work envisioned by the Ministries is still in progress and that you are now projecting the emergence of an approved action plan by March 31, 2010. You also mention that you will provide periodic updates to the Board during the fall of 2009. I can appreciate that current workloads and budget limitations are taking their toll on staff expected to prepare the range management approach. Could you please provide the Board with an update on progress by November 15, 2009, particularly indicating what options might be under consideration, and any indications that the March date might slip. We would be concerned if another field season of range management opportunity were to be missed.

On that basis I accept your response provisionally and extend the final conclusion on our recommendations to March 31, 2010.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Fraser, PhD
Chair

cc: Grant Griffin

BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Ref: 176036

MAR 17 2011

Al Gorley, RPF
Chair, Forest Practices Board
1675 Douglas St 3rd Fl
PO Box 9905 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9R1

Dear Mr. Gorley:

On behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations (MNRO), please accept this letter as our response to the Forest Practices Board's recommendation in its investigation report, *Wildlife and Cattle Grazing in the East Kootenay* (July 2008).

Board's recommendation

With appropriate consultation and expert advice, the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Environment direct reductions of forage use in the East Kootenay to levels sufficient to achieve a positive and continuing trend in grassland ecosystem condition.

Government's response

First, I would like to thank the Forest Practices Board for its patience in awaiting government's response to this recommendation.

We understand that the intent of the Board's recommendation is to restore and maintain the health and productivity of Crown rangelands in the East Kootenay. To this end, we are pleased to advise the Board that government has taken and will continue to take steps to achieve this objective.

Over the past several years, the following actions have been taken to reduce grazing and restore rangeland ecosystems in the East Kootenay Trench:

1. Rocky Mountain District has made efforts to reduce livestock grazing by not issuing new grazing tenures when Animal Unit Month (AUMs) are surrendered;

2. Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Branch has developed a five-year elk management plan that identifies range health and crop depredation as issues requiring attention and establishes wildlife population objectives (including reductions) for the southern trench population; and,

/2....

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
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3. With guidance from Range Branch and Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Branch, the Rocky Mountain District has been carrying out ecosystem restoration activities in the East Kootenay Trench that are helping restore and enhance forage production; in fact, a substantial portion of the provincial ecosystem restoration budget has been invested in the East Kootenay over the past several years.

These ongoing efforts are helping reduce both livestock and wildlife grazing as well as restore ecosystem integrity in the East Kootenay.

In addition to these ongoing actions, the Ministry plans to conduct an internal review in the near future to determine if any incremental actions, such as reducing AUMs allocated to domestic livestock in some range units or further reduction of wildlife ungulate numbers, is warranted. This internal review will consider the outcomes of ecosystem monitoring projects undertaken in the East Kootenay over the past 10 years and will be strengthened by the fact that range and wildlife management are now under the same ministry.

However, I must also emphasize that government will continue to take a moderate, progressive approach to improving rangeland health in the East Kootenay in a manner that does not adversely impact this region's ranching sector and hunting community.

If the Board has any questions or would like more information regarding government's actions to address the Board's recommendation, please contact David Borth at 250 371-3836.

Sincerely,

Doug Konkin
Deputy Minister

pc: David Borth, Director, Range Branch
Tom Ethier, Director, Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Branch
Ray Morello, District Manager, Rocky Mountain District

Forest Practices Board

File: 97250-20\060724 E Koot Crown Range

March 25, 2011

Doug Konkin, Deputy Minister
Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Box 9352 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9M1

Dear Doug Konkin:

Re: Response to Recommendation, Investigation 060724; *Wildlife and Cattle Grazing in the East Kootenay*

Thank you for your March 17, 2011, letter responding to the Board's 2008 recommendation that:

> With appropriate consultation and expert advice, the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Environment direct reductions of forage use in the East Kootenay to levels sufficient to achieve a positive and continuing trend in grassland ecosystem condition.

You responded with a summary of ongoing actions concerning livestock grazing, elk management, and ecosystem restoration. In addition, your now-combined ministry intends to undertake a review in the near future to determine whether additional actions are warranted. I encourage you to put a high priority on completing that review, to help inform and address continuing public and industry concerns and perceptions about grassland ecosystem management in the area. Having received your response we will close the file on this investigation. However, the Board will continue to observe the East Kootenay situation with interest and with a view toward demonstrated improvement of grassland ecosystem condition.

Yours sincerely,

R. A. (Al) Gorley, RPF
Chair

cc: Grant Griffin, Complainant