



For immediate release
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Board finds non-functioning grassland areas in Coutlee Range

MERRITT, BC – A Forest Practices Board investigation has found that grassland and open forest areas within the Mine pasture of the Coutlee Range Unit near Merritt are not functioning, with long-term overgrazing contributing to accelerated soil loss and reduced area stability.

The investigation was initiated after the board received a complaint from two of six range agreement holders who share grazing rights in the Coutlee Range Unit under a single range-use plan. The complaint related to livestock grazing practices, fence maintenance and compliance with the grazing schedule.

The board found that actions in the range-use plan were written in ways that were not measurable or verifiable. As a result, the board could not determine whether required actions were being followed, making compliance with the plan unenforceable. The board also found that an amended 2023 grazing schedule was not legally valid because it was not signed by all agreement holders, as required.

“When range-use plan requirements are not measurable or verifiable, there is no reliable way to determine compliance or whether intended outcomes are being achieved,” said Gerry Grant, vice-chair, Forest Practices Board. “This is a recurring issue the board continues to identify in its range-related investigations and audits.”

The investigation highlights structural challenges associated with managing a range agreement area where multiple agreement holders operate under a single range-use plan. The level of coordination required to manage a shared tenure can delay corrective actions when range conditions decline, increasing the risk of long-term resource damage.

The board noted that the Ministry of Forests has been aware of poor conditions in the Mine pasture for many years. While actions taken by the ministry and range users in 2024 and 2025 — including a reduction in authorized grazing and limited use of the Mine pasture — represent positive steps, recovery of degraded upland areas will require sustained effort over time.

The range agreement area is within the territories of 21 First Nations. The Forest Practices Board recognizes their deep connection with the land and importance of maintaining healthy, functioning rangelands for present and future generations.

Learn more:

To read the full report, visit: <https://www.bcfpb.ca/release-publications/releases/coutlee-range-practices>

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