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March 30, 1987

Mr. T.O. Moore
Regional Director, Northern B.C. Region
#308 - 1011 Fourth Avenue
Prince George, B.C. V2C 3H9

Dear Mr. Moore:

Re: Tweedsmuir Park Master Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tweedsmuir Park Master Plan in Vancouver on March 18. I am writing now with some further comments on the wilderness aspect of the park.

Your Background Document makes a very important point: "As development has progressed elsewhere, the Park has become very significant for its wilderness value since it represents the largest single block of land designated for conservation in the Province." The Master Plan must recognize this value by encouraging use in certain areas of the park while leaving other areas alone (e.g. no trails, no facilities, float planes not allowed, not advertised in brochures). In other words a significant block (or blocks) of the park should be left 'as is' and public use should not be encouraged in that area. Blocks so designated should not simply be the least attractive parts of the park -- some important wildlife habitat should be left alone. This would benefit wildlife and elsewhere in the park, wildlife viewing. In the long run as public pressure on parks increases, this would make an important contribution to the provincial park system as a whole.

In designing for this varied pattern of use, consideration must be given to possible future access points outside the park such as logging roads.

The question was raised at the meeting regarding increasing areas where hunting might be allowed. I think this would not be appropriate since it would be encouraging public travel into the remote areas of the park and I do believe the goal should be to leave some of the park 'remote'.

I would also like to repeat my request that the park boundary be extended about 2 km downriver on the Dean River to include the whole of its spectacular canyon where it is joined by the Takia. This is visually a very splendid site, is good habitat for goat, and should improve your chances for success in managing goat populations.

Good luck with the plan.

Yours truly

Bev Ramey

TWEEDSMUIR PARK PLANNING ISSUES

Tweedsmuir is our largest Provincial Park. It encompasses an area of almost one million hectares with rugged mountains, high plateaus, numerous lakes and abundant wildlife. Wilderness conditions prevail throughout most of Tweedsmuir and, as the years have passed, the Park has become increasingly important due to the erosion of wilderness values in the surrounding lands. The Park represents one of the most significant opportunities for nature conservation in the Province and its future management requires guidance by a Master Plan.

The following notes briefly summarize the key issues which the Parks Division thinks will shape a Master Plan for the Park. They are intended to focus public attention on the more important aspects of management of the Park and should be used in conjunction with the Background Document to enable the reader to gain enough knowledge to constructively participate in the planning process.

It would be appreciated if you could review these notes together with the Background Document and let us know what you think about these issues or any others you feel are important to the park. You can express your thoughts in person at one of the meetings or in writing by sending your comments to:

Tweedsmuir Park Master Plan
B.C. Parks
#308, 1011 Fourth Avenue
Prince George, B.C.
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1. ROLE OF THE PARK

Wilderness is Tweedsmuir's number one resource. Management of the Park has emphasized the importance of protecting the wilderness character and this will continue as a first priority.

Tweedsmuir's size allows the park to provide a wide range of wilderness recreation by controlling the form of access and by emphasizing different types of wilderness recreation.

Presently in the southern part of the park (excluding the Highway 20 corridor) the emphasis is on wilderness hiking, horse-riding, canoeing, fishing and hunting with access by foot, horse and air. The Rainbow Range Nature Conservancy provides wildlife viewing and is closed to motors. The north and central parts provide fly and boat-in wilderness fishing, hiking, hunting and canoeing. The Eutsuk Nature Conservancy is also closed to hunting but motor access has been permitted for safety reasons.

There is no overall strategy to guide wilderness management in Tweedsmuir. The Nature Conservancies provide some direction for wilderness recreation but their present boundaries must be adjusted to fit the park's wilderness management needs.

The Master Plan must address the role of the park in wilderness management and establish zones to guide what and where wilderness recreation will occur. The existing Nature Conservancies must be considered in this process.

2. RECREATION SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The Park has several forms of recreation services including three big game guides, a horse outfitter, a hiking guide, fishing guides, commercial lodges and camps.

The park appears to have potential to provide further recreation opportunities if appropriate services were provided. There may be opportunities to establish additional recreation guiding services; expansion of guided hunting services has been requested, as well as horse outfitting, hiking guiding, ski guiding and fishing camps and there may be some further opportunities which could be developed such as kayaking and climbing.

The Master Plan must address what type, how many and what scale of recreation services are appropriate to Tweedsmuir Park given the mandate to protect its wilderness character.

See Sections 5.2, 6.1 and 6.4 of the Background Document for more information about this topic.

The present level of recreational facility development in the park is minimal. In the backcountry only a few trails and rustic camps have been constructed. In the road accessed areas, services are available which can accommodate most visitors.

The Master Plan must address the adequacy of the present level of facilities and determine whether additional items such as trails, bridges, accommodations and other facilities are desirable, and where they should occur.

See Sections 6.1 and 6.2 of the Background Document for additional information about this topic.

3. FORESTS

The Park has vast forests with a broad range of forest values. The forests are botanically diverse and provide habitat to a large number of plant and animal species.

Forest fire has generally been fought in the park over the years. Recently a natural fire in the Dean River area was permitted to burn itself out since there was an opportunity to enhance wildlife habitat with no threat to recreation features in the park or to resources outside the park.

In recent years the forests of Tweedsmuir Park have suffered severe bark beetle infestations. Since wild fires have been largely eliminated from the park the beetles are now the main force determining forest succession. Old age forests are already dominant in the park and thus the bark beetles are expected to be present more or less continuously in future, due to their tendency to attack older stands.

It may become increasingly necessary in future to control bark beetles within the park in order to protect the surrounding commercial forests. Several minor control programs have already occurred.

Continued fire suppression is necessary where valued resources are threatened. However, it is bound to further increase the average stand age in the park resulting in gradual reductions of plants and animals which are dependent on new forests caused by fire. Moreover, forest fuels will slowly accumulate increasing the likelihood of major fires.

The Master Plan must address how the Park's forests are to be managed and what they are to be managed for.

There are several possible directions for forest management within the park:

1. Status quo - This means continue to put out most fires and directly control infestations where they threaten surrounding economic forests. With this solution, we must accept increasing stand ages and resulting long term forest management problems such as continuous infestation, species reductions and eventual fuel buildup. This is an option which is expedient in the short term but has long term negative consequences. In theory, it will lead to climax forests throughout most of the park.
2. Natural fires - Natural fires would burn unchecked where there is no threat to valued resources in or out of the park. This management direction was successful in the Dean River fire and will result in renewed vegetative mix and reduced fuel build-up. However, each fire must be assessed at the time and there is always the potential for conditions to change resulting in the fire destroying valued resources.

3. Prescribed burning - Parts of the forest could be deliberately burnt off for wildlife range enhancement, pest management, and fuels management purposes. This would create some new forest successions and thereby increase species diversity; however, prescribed burnings can be expensive and difficult to control, particularly on plateaus. It is direct manipulation of ecosystems.
4. Logging - Forests which are not essential for wilderness might be managed by traditional, practical means. This activity would be considered in Class A park land only where it is necessary to protect the park values and in Recreation Areas, only where there is no detriment to recreation values. Low impact logging can deal with problems of infestation, it has both positive and negative benefits to wildlife and has economic benefits. It is not a viable option for most of the Park because it will conflict with wilderness aesthetics. It is probably practical only in the Recreation Area along Ootsa Lake.

Given the size of the park, it is possible to consider the full range of options.

For more information about forests see Sections 2.3.1, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 of the Background Document.

4. WILDLIFE

The Park is home to a wide variety of wildlife species. Most notable are caribou, grizzly bear, moose, mountain goat and trumpeter swans. The Park provides year round habitat for all species except caribou and swans, although the animals do not necessarily stay within the boundaries. Most of the caribou migrate out of the Park to winter in the Fawnie, Itchas and Ilgachuz areas. Grizzlies are particularly abundant along the Atnarko River during the salmon spawning season. Moose are found throughout the park but are most abundant on the plateau. A large moose herd winters along the Dean River. Wolves can be found throughout the Park but are most abundant on the plateau. Mountain goats can be found in most of the more rugged areas of the Park but are most numerous in the north western mountains.

A large population of trumpeter swans over-winters at Lonesome Lake, fed by the Turners with assistance from the Canadian Wildlife Service. The swans migrate out of the park in summer.

The Master Plan must address the significance, habitat requirements and management objectives of the Park's wildlife populations.

Currently the Nature Conservancy areas are closed to hunting while the rest of the park is open in some form during a lawful hunting season. The present complex of hunting regulations is not guided by cohesive park wildlife management objectives. The Nature Conservancy boundaries need to be reviewed, in particular, since they do not presently relate well to wildlife habitats.

The significance of the various animal populations must be determined and management objectives must be defined for the major species and herds. It will be necessary to determine what role the park must play in the provision of animals for hunting and for viewing. The Master Plan must consider all appropriate uses of wildlife and attempt to reconcile them in a non-conflicting way.

For further information on the wildlife of the Park see Section 2.3.2.1 and 9.3 of the Background Document.

5. FISHERIES

Tweedsmuir Park has very high fisheries values. The Park is exceedingly important to maintenance of commercial fisheries and it has numerous recreational fisheries of exceptional quality in its main lakes and rivers.

The Atnarko and Dean Rivers are major fish producers since the watersheds of the Park provide stable, clean waters for spawning and rearing of young. Steelhead frequent these rivers along with Dolly Varden char and cutthroat trout. Coho, spring salmon, and steelhead provide a major sport fishery, and chum, sockeye, pink and spring salmon are the major commercial species.

Due to declining stocks, and recognizing the importance of the fisheries to park visitation, the Parks Division has accommodated fisheries enhancement projects on the Atnarko River to stabilize steelhead and salmon stocks. The commercial salmon enhancement projects have been considered by some to be an unacceptable use of a Provincial Park. Given the contribution of the Park to the welfare of both the commercial and sport fisheries, the Master Plan must define what the Park's role will be relative to the management of the commercial and sport fishery. The types of projects, methods of management and roles of the various involved agencies should be considered in the plan.

In the interior of the Park, the largest recreational fishery is associated with rainbow trout fishing on Eutsuk Lake. Numerous other lakes in the park have trout fisheries as well and are fished to varying degrees. In recent years the Parks Division has received several applications for fishing camps on the interior lakes of the Park. The Master Plan must define the appropriate number and scale of fishing camps, relative to the resource available.

For more information about the fisheries, refer to Sections 2.3.2.2 and 9.4 through 9.8 of the Background Document.

6. MINING

The former Class B Park status resulted in a long history of mining activity in Tweedsmuir. There are 166 valid mineral claims in the center of the Park which, if developed would conflict with the wilderness character of the core area. In recent years there has been interest expressed by mining companies to re-open the Deer Horn Mine at Lindquist Lake, develop access across the park to the Haven Lake mineral deposits and to explore the Nifty ore body inside the park.

The change to Class A status means that the Park is closed to mineral exploration and development. Recreation Areas established over existing mineral claims and areas of mineral potential will be open to further exploration.

The Master Plan must examine the implications of possible mineral development on Park values and recommend appropriate measures to implement during possible mineral exploration and development in the Recreation Areas.

For further information see Sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 9.10 of the Background Document.
