# Final Draft Minutes

Skeena Hunter’s Advisory Committee

March 12, 2016

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## Guests Linda Dykens (LD) Skeena Regional Elk Committee lindadykens@explornet.com

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The meeting was called to order at 1100 AM.

Motioned by DB, seconded by MO, that the agenda be adopted as presented. Passed.

Motioned by DL, seconded by JD, that the minutes of the 2015 meeting be accepted as circulated. Passed.

Terms of Reference - DB.

Terms of Reference (ToR) are necessary with a committee of this size. In 2006, Mike O’Neill, Ken Franzen, and Denys Bell worked with the Ministry to develop and finalize the existing ToR. This was finalized and accepted at the May 8th, 2015 SHAC Meeting. It is very important that all SHAC members and the Ministry (note; comment added by the ministry: **FLNRO are not named members of SHAC. As guests providing information and responding to questions, we are not bound to the TOR. However, we endeavor to provide info on a timely basis and ensure adequate consultation occurs with this stakeholder group),** adhere to the ToR, otherwise we cannot function properly. Proposals need to be submitted within the proper time frames so our representatives can take them back to their Clubs and constituents for review and position. If we don’t follow the ToR things will be chaotic.

MO. In the beginning hunting regulations were the only thing we were going to discuss. Allocation was to be left for another process. He was very disappointed that the Ministry did not follow the ToR with the recent proposals that were sent to Victoria. They should have all come back to this committee with the Ministriy’s recommendations prior to being sent to Victoria. The Jade/Boulder antler restriction is a very good example of how things should never be done. As a committee we can only hope that the Ministry can commit completely to the ToR so that we can operate the way we should be for 2017 and onwards

DB. This committee was established some 21 years ago by Jackie Pement, MLA and it’s a good process that works.

Elk - LD.

As Cattlemen we realized several years ago that the elk were becoming a problem so we decided to take matters into our own hands and be pro-active and do the Ministry’s work for them. The elk are eating our hay which costs farmers $200.00/ton on average. Personally, we have gone through 20 tons of hay and only have problems with 10 elk on a daily basis. A committee was formed to come up with a plan. An elk count was done on January 23, 2016 (the foggiest day of the year) and came up with a total of 195 elk in the Quick and Round Lake area alone. This was done totally by volunteers. MFLNRO committed to $500.00 to cover some expenses. All the data were submitted to the Ministry. At first some of the Cattlemen were not in support of hunting the elk but now have taken a different position. They now realize that hunting can be used as a management tool and don’t feel that only hunting the bulls will make a large enough impact. We would like to see a hunt for any-sex of elk on farm land.

MO. Several years ago the Ministry was not in support of any hunt for elk. Now at least they are starting to listen. Unfortunately the wildlife staff can’t seem to get their position together as we keep getting told “no” to having a hunt by one Ministry Rep. (because there are not enough) and then another Ministry Rep. states that hunting will not have an impact on the population (because there are too many). We can have two different types of hunts, one for on private land (any elk) and one for on crown lands (six point GOS).

SS. If you counted 195 that means there are probably 600 in that area alone.

IS. Every year the Ministry has been making excuses as to why we can’t hunt elk and now look at the situation the farmers are in.

NM. Every year we hear the differing reasons as to why we can’t do anything. We are getting very frustrated as you can see.

RL. So how long do you think it will be until we can see an elk hunt. Hunting elk would take pressure off the deer and moose.

CT. I think we are making positive progress on the issue. We have a full complement in the office now and we have requested money so we can do another more thorough count combined with a moose count next year. You probably won’t see a hunt until 2018 so we can stick to the regulation year.

ML. This two-year regulation cycle could cause problems because if the Ministry does not get everything in order in time this whole process could turn into another four years of delays.

LD. Our elk committee was [(*told by Bill Jex that a possible LEH hunt could be developed for 2016 and that locals would get most of the permits as they can be issued by postal codes*.) Please note that the ministry added the following comment. (***BJ did not commit to a season for 2016 and provided LD information that we cannot currently issue LEH permits based on postal code.)***.]

We don’t need this dragging on any longer. I have read your committee’s proposal and it’s a good start. We would be willing to go for it.

MO. It would be a show of good faith it we could get a hunt developed for 2016. The LEH books are not out yet so this hunt could be added. We need to continue this form of public science.

CT. The Ministry is working together with the Cattlemen’s and this committee. I don’t think anything will be happening for this season. *(Note: the following added by the ministry: No new LEH season will be created for 2016)*

## Elk Proposal

Motion by DB and seconded by DL.

Whereas: A count has been conducted by the local Cattlemen’s Association of the elk in M.U.s 6-08 and 6-09 (January 2016).

And Whereas: There appear to be sufficient numbers of elk in both 6-08 and 6-09 to have a limited harvest.

Therefore be it resolved that the SHAC recommend that the Ministry implement a “Limited Entry Hunt” for the 2016 hunting season. For authorization of no less than 10 permits in each of 6-08 and 6-09.

Motion passed by consensus.

BL. - As Chair of this committee I am very disappointed that the Ministry is talking to other groups about hunting these elk before even coming to us to discuss it first. Especially when we have been the ones requesting it for many years.

## Hudson Bay Mt. Goat - IS.

Once again we are bringing this proposal to the table as we cannot understand why the Ministry will not support this hunt. As hunters we can hunt every other species on this range with a rifle. I personally know a man that has counted over 100 goat. This is a much larger area that just what is seen by the ski hill. The excuses that have been given to us in the past are based on social management not biological-based decisions. It is not this Ministry’s job to be pushing a social position or bias.

*(Please note that the ministry added the following comment:* ***These minutes should present facts, not opinions****)*

ML. Have there been any studies on the negative impacts that the ski hill is having on the goat population. As we all know Mtn. Goat do not generally travel very far, they tend to use the same range year after year? If there were 70 goat counted and some where kids that must mean that their also many billies present.

TL. Our Ministry doesn’t always have input into proposals for heli-skiing, cat skiing and other industry uses. There is a “best level of practices” that is followed and there are different levels for different industries. We expect proponents to put forward all the information the biologists need to make an informed decision.

JH. We hunt goat on the Babine Mountains, a high use area. Why should Hudson’s Bay be any different?

CT. As we have stated in the past we do not support this hunt and our position hasn’t changed.

Mtn. Goat Proposal

 Motion by ML and seconded by DB.

The SHAC proposes a very conservative LEH goat hunt of two permits for the 2016 season on Hudson Bay Mountain.

Motion passed by consensus.

Ungulate Inventory - CT.

The Ministry conducted several counts on moose and caribou this year but some of our data are not ready to be handed out as of yet.

\*\* Conrad presented preliminary data from the surveys that the Ministry has been compiled and it is attached at the end of the minutes. (attachment to follow once received from the Ministry). \*\*

He also pointed out that an “APP” is being developed to assist the Ministry with understanding population trends of moose. This will allow hunters to send information directly to the Ministry as to the number of moose (bull, cow, calf), when (date) and where (MU) hunters are seeing moose.

Telkwa Caribou - CT.

The Ministry currently has counted 16 animals in the Telkwa Range, 6 cows have GPS collars. One calf was observed during the fall rut count in late winter. There are also 20 GPS collared caribou and 5 wolves in North Tweedsmuir. Three of the collard Tweedsmuir caribou have died during the study. We have had one of our collared caribou killed by a collared wolf. We can monitor the daily activities of the collared caribou.

IS. I sit on the new Telkwa caribou committee and am concerned with the Wildlife Habitat Area that is being implemented. I feel that there is some definite steering going on by the new facilitator. Most of the committee wants to see some sort of predator control.

CT. The Wildlife Habitat Area only applies to Industry. This committee has been formed to decide what kind of access users will have.

Hanna/Tintina Conservancy - ML.

There is no formal or draft plan as of yet. Things seem to be at a stand still with no time frames either. When Mike gets any information he will forward it on to Brad for the SHAC members. So far, hunting and fishing are acceptable activities in a Conservancy Area.

TL. Nancy White of BC Parks is putting together the plan and it would be a very good idea for this committee to keep informed.

Resident Limited Entry Shortfall - MO

It seems that the Ministry needs to start following due process. They need to look at the resident LEH harvest success. Figure out where our annual harvest is not being met and increase our permits. The Ministry always seems to see where we might be getting to close to an over harvest and is quick to decrease our permits but they fall short when it comes to increasing our permits when possible. Edziza sheep and Telkwa goat are glaring examples of a lack of due process.

ML. The allocation policy was written as such to review underutilized hunts three years into the five-year allocation. In many cases LEH is not allowing resident hunters to achieve their annual allowable harvest.

CT. We are concerned that if we remove species from LEH or increase the permits too much that there could be an over harvest. We use average success rates to calculate the numbers of permits to issue annually.

LEH Proposal

Motion by MO and seconded by ML.

That the Ministry review resident harvest success on all LEH species and zones in the Skeena Region annually to assist in achieving resident harvest targets.

Motion passed by consensus.

Jade/Boulder Moose Regulation Change Proposal - CT.

The addition of a spike/fork/tripalm/10 point antler restriction for the portion of MU 6-19 encompassing the Jade Boulder Road has been submitted to Victoria as a regulation change for 2016. The dates of the proposed season would be altered to more closely match that of MU 7-52 (ie. an any bull season from Aug 20-Aug 31, followed by the SOFTT rule until Oct 31). Compulsory inspection is in effect for portions of Region 6 and a regulation change proposal has been forwarded to Victoria to include compulsory inspection for the portion of MU 7-52 accessible from the Jade Boulder Road.

The Ministry put forward this proposal based on a moose count that was done along the Jade/Boulder road. Survey results showed 38 bulls/100 cows. The bull:cow ratio is close to 30 bulls/ 100 cows so the regulation change proposal is designed to increase bull:cow ratio.

MO. This survey is not a good indication of the amount of moose in the area. As we all know moose travel from one zone to another and you have just counted a very narrow corridor. If a decision was made for conservation reasons then we could support it. Unfortunately we all know its not. I feel very bad for people who are put into a position and are told to make a decision they don’t agree with. I have personally hunted the Jade Road and the unlicensed hunters do not follow the ATV regulations or restrictions that are in place now, they only apply to resident hunters, so basically you are throwing us “under the bus” with this proposal.

ML. Based on what Heidi has said about the moose counts in the surrounding area there doesn’t really seem to be a concern about the whole moose population in that area if you include the whole area and not just this very narrow corridor.

DB. With the manipulation of low bull/cow numbers to justify a proposal to appease unlicensed hunters just isn’t going to work for this committee.

Jade/Boulder Resolution

Motion by ML and seconded by DL.

That the proposed antler restriction for the Jade/Boulder Road is strongly not supported by the SHA. as there is not a conservation concern with moose based on the whole population management unit.

Motion passed by consensus.

\*\* A letter will be sent to Victoria voicing the concerns of the Ministry proposal.

Discussion Items

## Moose 6-09 - CT.

The Ministry inquired as to SHAC interest in maintaining the cap to the number of LEH permits in MU 6-9.

MO. The original cap of 263 permits was put on by the Skeena Allocation Committee after the crash in the moose population when we had the huge snow fall in 2006/2007. Personally I don’t think that there are enough moose there to support that increase.

ML. With a proposed increase from 263 total to 750 total for the three hunts it would probably be a good idea to wait until after the moose survey is done next year.

6-09 Resolution

Motion by MO. and seconded by ML.

To be conservative the SHAC will decline any increase in LEH permits for moose in 6-09 for 2016 pending survey results.

Motion passed by consensus.

Southern Skeena Moose - CT.

There is a trend towards the proportion of moose harvest in southern Skeena being higher in the GOS than LEH, resulting in fewer LEH permits being issued. There is an annual allowable harvest (AAH) target that includes allocation to residents and non-residents. The resident harvest is currently divided between the LEH and GOS. What is the preferred method for SHAC members to achieve their allocation, via GOS, LEH, or combination of LEH and GOS?

NM. . The people I represent are not willing to lose the open season as many of them are not drawing LEH permits and this allows them to still hunt. It would be better first reducing the number of LEH permits and then if necessary shorten the general open season or split it into two separate hunts to protect our opportunity.

DB. In our area we see a lot of out of area hunters showing up during the open season and putting a lot of pressure on the moose. As opposed to supporting the canceling of the open season I would like to discuss with my Club the option of shortening and/or splitting the hunt which would benefit the locals.

MO. Basically the local hunters are sustenance hunters and we need to protect the season for those who are not able to draw an LEH permit. Open seasons benefit all licensed resident hunters. Moose move freely between the South Skeena MU’s, 6-04 through 6-09 (less 6-07) should be viewed as one population unit.

JS. Splitting the season sounds like a very good idea.

CT. The Ministry understands that this committee wants to maintain the open season above the LEH. If the GOS is favored above LEH, then to ensure the target allocation of resident hunters is not exceeded the GOS season would need to be shortened in some zones.

FN’s and Moose - CT.

2016 is the last year of the most recent five-year allocation period. We will be entering into conversation with the Skeena FN’s regarding the current allocation process and how we account for FN harvest currently and in the upcoming allocation period 2017-21. .

JH. There is lots of hunting done in the Babine area by FN’s. Many are not the local FN people though and they mainly hunt at night taking cows, calves and bulls.

NM. Unfortunately the FN’s no longer use their traditional ways of hunting. They are using quads and whatever to make it easier for them. Cow and night hunting has the most negative impact.

IS. If you are going to sit down with the FN’s I sure hope you plan to sit down with us or at least with the local gun clubs.

ML. We originally took a cut in our LEH permits to encourage the FN to start harvesting bulls. I am very concerned about any discussions because basically we as resident hunters will lose.

MO. What people need to realize is that if the piece of pie gets smaller we all will take a cut not just the resident hunters. The Guides will also take a cut and the piece that the Southern Skeena Guides share will be even smaller than it is now. With no resident hunter representative or guide outfitter sitting at the table I am very concerned.

NM. . There should be some sort of consideration as to how many people are in each community and how many moosemeatthey will reasonably need (lots of wasted meat has been seen).

DB. Is there any place that we can follow this process?

Discussion Items for 2018 - CT

The following are all Ministry-driven items, for discussion only at this point.

The Ministry is looking to discuss moose LEH on the Pitman and Chukachida Rivers. Dialogue with stakeholders is key to this process. Unfortunately there was not adequate time to discuss due to the length of discussion on other items.

LEH for the caribou in the Carcross area. They are currently on an open season.

Atlin – joint proposal from Taku River Tlingit, Teslin Tlingit Council, and Carcross Tagish First Nation to close the Atlin caribou season. .

Meat Utilization - to make our regulations the same as the Yukon, where the ribs and neck meat must also be taken out of the bush. . This has been forwarded to Victoria for consideration for the 2016 season.

MO. Regarding the Pitman/Chukachida discussion item, there has not been a meeting of the Stikine Country Advisory Committee for years. During development of the Cassiar LRMP many years ago it was agreed that this area will not go onto LEH unless there was a proven conservation issue. The adding of these two corridors to the Stikine Corridor during the LRMP was only agreed to based on this assurance. This is not an issue of conservation.

## Ministry Wish List - CT.

Goat Surveys - movement for population estimates

BV and Lakes District - moose and elk surveys

6-25 and 6-29 - sheep survey

Grizzly Bear - Francois Lake

Caribou survey - Carcross and Atlin.

Co- Chair Position - TO.

Terri talked with Denys about taking over as co-chair. Being secretary is a large enough job and Denys being the past chair would be a greater asset to Brad. If this is okay with the committee Denys said he would take the job.

No concerns were brought up and Denys will co-chair with Brad. Terri will still be involved.

Next meeting will be April 29, 2017. This will be a regulation year so both the committee and the Ministry will need to be sure all important information is available to look at in a timely fashion.