



Minutes from December 7th 2023
NVCAC 6:30-8 pm

In attendance: John Anderson, Lou Cooke, Sarah Desrosie, Wayne Schindler, Al Mackay-Smith, Kate Anderson, Bruce Beech, Judy Guichon, Alexis Thoo, Diana Grim't ashire, Patrick Farmer

Meeting started at 6:35 with an opening circle.

The subcommittee of Wayne, Bruce and Judy filled us in on their action items from the last meeting (September 16, 2023) around the concerns about the stability viewing platform and the upcoming Stewardship agreement.

Wayne removed the interpretive signage from the platform and stored these at Al Mackay-Smith's. He then boarded up the access to the viewing platform.

Kate sent a letter of explanation to Dennis Lloyd and Mike Dedels at Grasslands Conservation Council (GCC) letting them know of the infrastructure compromise and decision to close it down, until further notice. *Note at the last meeting there were plans submitted by Gerry Sanford for a modified version perhaps from the land, where signage and education could still incorporate the wetland area.

Judy and Bruce met with Tim Bennet whose title with government is:

[District Forest Recreation Officer](#)

[Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy](#)

[BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails Division](#)

I will refer to this entity as BCRT

This meeting was to discuss the removal and deconstruction of the viewing platform and talk about the stewardship agreement.

From a directive of Greg Hodson at BCRT to their contactor, they went ahead and had the viewing platform deconstructed and burnt in place on approximately November 28th 2023.

Clean up after the destruction was done by Gerry, who salvaged the brackets. The nails and spikes were collected by Greg Hodson on December 7th.

Judy and Bruce went back to Gov't on November 29th to discuss our Agreement which is due to be renewed now and explored various scenarios:

1. What if we walked away from the whole site? The Gov't would then own it and do as they pleased, with the possibility the whole LGMGIS would be dismantled.

2. What if we lower our responsibilities, to have the agreement just include the kiosk and trail leading to it and the 3 or 4 acres directly around the kiosk
3. The Harry Sanders Bridge was discussed at length.

Judy had met with Ron Sanders to discuss the bridge and Ron expressed interest in the bridge and wanted to arrange to take it out.

Question: Who owns the bridge? It was donated by his father Harry to the site. We all agreed that the trail, with the bridge is still a lovely trail to the wetlands with many values for education and exploration. The bridge is part of the site.

A/I: Determine if we left the bridge off our stewardship agreement would it be removed?
Who owns the bridge?

More discussion around an idea of a Boundary change on the LGMGIS.

We are no longer able to manage a grasslands, it is mostly knapweed. GCC received funding for a baseline inventory and a weed management plan that included spraying.... When GCC were looking into developing a management plan and using herbicides for an application, proper approval was not granted through the ministry with concerns about cheat grass taking over being one of the main issues. There has been continued research on site with various applications.

Research could continue regardless of who holds the stewardship agreement as it's crown land.

The people at the table felt that we could manage to maintain a relative grasslands (hand pull etc) the area around the kiosk.

A/I: Kate. Talk to GCC... see if they want to take on the larger scale site and find out what their capacity and intensions are at the LGMGIS.

The question posed to the table was: Do you agree that the Boundary change should happen, the Province take over the rest of the site's unfractured of the Bridge, the parking area, the Pit Toilets, Toboggan Hill and the LGMGIS decrease it's footprint to what is directly surrounding the kiosk (approximately 4 acres)

There was vigorous discussion about this, and consensus was not made. The fact that if we "give up" the 102-hectare site.... We can't go back. It's a unique agreement and we should not be hasty to give it up. More time is needed to look at options. We were missing some key people at the table, Gerry, and Jill Sanford, and it was agreed unanimously that no decisions should be made without them.

A/I: JOHN. It's an important agreement and we need more time. Ask for an extension to our existing agreement until our AGM in June 2024. John will contact Greg/Tim to discuss this option.

Moving on to the next thing on our Agenda:
Forums:

Compassionate Communities and Hospice was discussed. Jill had mentioned at the last meeting that Hospice would like a letter of support from this group for Healthy Communities. Is that still the case? Judy is support of writing a letter of support for Hospice but not for Compassionate Community Project.

A/I: Judy/Kate to ask if a letter is still needed and draft one of support.

We discussed our ideas presented for Forums.
Land Use Planning
Water
Drought
WATER & Storage

There are several Groups in the Nicola Valley with plans for Forums in the works:

Nicola Watershed Governance Project (NWGP) has in their works to present a public forum on drought in the near future and create an action plan.

Nicola Stockbreeders Association (NSBA) is looking at hosting a couple of forums, one geared towards Agriculture users (and water licensees) on water and soil and technically geared to Agriculture users. The second Forum would be for the public to discuss concerns and educate the public around the issues with water restrictions this past summer that caused a lot of concern for the citizens of Merritt.

Sarah reported that Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assembly (CNA) is planning a youth-resiliency workshop in the early spring to help with the increased concern that news, anxiety, job futures, climate crisis, the world... is leaving them with out hope. There might be a way the Round Table can support this.

The table decided that with all of these other groups in the process of public forums in the New Year and early spring, with the overlap and shared topics, we would be better to lend our support to them.

A/I Sarah will bring this forward to CNA, how can we support?

Patrick will bring this forward to NWGP, how can we support?

John will contact John Parkes (JP) who is the president of the Nicola Stock Breeders Association, how can we support?

Next topic onto Lou.

Lou applied for and received funding from Investment Agriculture for an engineer study towards creating storage for the Coldwater River. The project is being explored at Gillis Lake. At this point Lou and Marilyn are doing all the paperwork and outreach (which has

been a lot!) It was discussed that the City of Merritt might want to help them as it addresses the aquifer that gets depleted ... also NSBA....

If the projects get the go ahead, Investment Ag would cover $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cost and the rest would have to be found.

Much discussion around building water capacity. It's important to strongly recommend that Government get back to the concept to facilitate and participate in the building of storage and to ensure there is capacity to do that.

Lou has taken his own initiative to move forward with water storage, we all agreed this was to be commended and a very hopeful action. We want to support his initiatives in whatever way we can.

A/I: John: Find out what's going on with projects through NSBA and see if there is some way the NSBA could support them and this project.

Closing Circle ~

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm

Next meeting date scheduled for January 17th 6:30-8pm.

At the Nicola Valley Community Arts Council space, entrance beside Kekuli Café
(across from the Post Office)