

September 5<sup>th</sup> 2008

This letter is in regards to the proposed Wildlife Management Area in the Gilpin Grasslands near Grand Forks, British Columbia.

Launched early this spring, the Grand Forks ATV Club consists of local members dedicated to insuring that the sport of ATVs can be enjoyed by enthusiasts for years to come. The club was established with the help of the Quad Riders ATV Association of British Columbia. In meetings held so far, discussion has been generally focused on the WMA and ensuring that our input is included in the proposal. Other issues include youth riders and their eligibility to ride on Forestry Service Roads, as well as limited ATV access to the Trans Canada Trail. For more information on the club, visit our website, [www.gfatv.ca](http://www.gfatv.ca).

From the Grand Forks ATV Club's standpoint, the proposed Wildlife Management Area will close roads and trails that have been used by locals for many years, not only affecting ATV riders but also mountain bikes, dirt bikes, off-road 4x4's and other motorized vehicles. Part of the proposed plan is to work with First Nations and Naturalist Groups to restore the grasslands area to its original state which the ATV Club fully supports. We can't understand how guided hunting in this sensitive area is going to benefit the grasslands and wildlife.

Yes, the Ministry of Environment has drafted a very elaborate, comprehensive Management Plan for the proposed WMA which has cost tax payers a further +/- \$50,000 based on an estimate of \$500 per page for writing, editing, photos, maps, charts etc. for the 100 page document. The MOE continues to spend government funds on various types of literature and public meetings. These meetings involve salaries, travel and accommodation, meals and a meeting facility in an attempt to persuade those who oppose the plan to accept it. The entire focus is the Gilpin Grasslands with the priority being the "presence of year-round wild sheep habitat" with some consideration to mule deer and other species. Hopefully there will continue to be an abundance of this kind of funding to make improvements, if the WMA goes through.

There are other large grassland slopes in our area such as Pass Creek and McCarren Creek. The cattle that graze the Gilpin slopes are continually under attack, yet there are hundreds of cattle grazing in other areas of our community. Agriculture, including cattle and forestry are two of our major industries. There are also other mud-bogging sites, on the power line up Fisherman Creek for example, as well as numerous slopes such as "Three Trees" and "Suicide" hill climbs now scarred by thoughtless off-highway vehicle operators. Although there are other issues in our community that need attention the MOE invests their time, energy and our tax dollars specifically on the Gilpin Grasslands, driven by a local Guide Outfitter.

The Brandow's petition, asking people to support the WMA has been interesting to follow. The petition, beginning earlier this year was unsuccessful. The procedure was then changed by revising the wording to elaborate on the depressed economy of Grand Forks due to Canpar and Pope & Talbot's mills both going down. Tourism must therefore be enhanced to bolster the failing economy. By having a WMA, tourists would not only be willing to stay longer to view wildlife but would also be spending more money. This revised petition was distributed to many of the local businesses and left for them to gather the signatures. However, no mention was made in the petition about the possibility of future limited access within the WMA, making travel and wildlife viewing difficult.

Nowhere on the revised petition was the name of the group, association or individuals who had written and distributed it. When inspecting the sheets of signatures that were on store counters, it was found that a considerable percentage of people signing were from out of town, making the sheets resemble a guest book rather than a petition. It is unbelievable that people would sign a blank form complete with their address when they have little or no knowledge of the issues at hand or even where the Grasslands are located.

The mission of the MOE is to maintain and restore the natural diversity of provincial ecosystems including fish and wildlife species and their habitat; and to provide park, fish and wildlife recreation services and opportunities to British Columbians and visitors. It appears the MOE wants to establish a +/- 5,000 hectare WMA in the Gilpin Grass Lands to conserve the habitat considering insects, reptiles, flora, fauna and wildlife etc. which will be used as prime hunting territory by a single tenure who will have full allowable access and locals and visitors will have extremely restricted access.

The Grand Forks ATV club opposes the current draft plan for the WMA and suggests the MOE revise the plan to either not include guided hunting or include other recreational activities including off-highway vehicles that have dedicated trails. This would imply that either the land is dedicated 100% to rehabilitation or dedicated to being a place of educational tourism for all recreational activities which the entire community could benefit from.

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