

Wilderness Tourism Association



Strategy Session Summary Notes, 2008

1. **Introduction and Progress Report.** **Brian Gunn** gave a brief history of the WTA. Acknowledged guests: Peter Larose - Council of Tourism Associations (COTA), Maxine Mattinson – Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon (WTAY), Chief Bob Chamberlain-MTTC Tribal Council, and Craig Orr - Watershed Watch.

Strategy Session Agenda Change and 'Be Wild': Brian addressed the absence of government who were invited to participate in portions of the Strategy Session; and explained that government representatives felt there had been a breach of faith concerning the contents of the new magazine and the purpose of the magazine as they saw it. The government funding received by WTA for 'Be Wild in BC' was thought to be for the purpose of producing a high end marketing tool and not for creating a vehicle for advocacy. Brian encouraged everyone to understand government's position and we would delay putting 'Be Wild' on the website until making some changes to it. The WTA will be going ahead with a Fall/Winter issue of 'Be Wild' due out at the end of September. The media kit is currently available and was issued to all members present. Members are encouraged to advertise and the WTA is looking for an outside sales rep to bring in advertising from travel related companies such as airlines to help offset the shortfall of government funding.

Board of Directors Election for 2008: Three directors resigned this year (Sylvia Waterer, John Erikson and Dick McMaster). Brian acknowledged their contributions to the WTA. Two new directors were voted in for a two year period: Andrew Jones of Kingfisher Wilderness Adventures and Kevin Smith of Maple Leaf Adventures. WTA officers for 2008 are Brian Gunn (President), Geoff Straight (Vice President) and John Caton (Secretary/Treasurer).

Update of WTA Projects: Brian discussed progress on the list of '800' nature based tourism operators, which was put together with the assistance of Malaspina College U, the 'Be Wild in BC Magazine', Taking and Compensation and Wild Salmon issues (including Eric Hobson's Save Our Salmon Initiative). He also reviewed progress with the Guided Adventure Tourism Policy (GAT) – noting that there were a number of significant improvements (such as tenure language and the process by which new applications are dealt with), but that we are still awaiting progress on the issues of pricing (e.g. the difference in the motorized/non-motor uses), Multi Area Tenures (so that operators can purchase just one permit that covers many areas instead of individual permits for each area thus saving in some cases many thousand of dollars per year), and Educational programming (where operators offering sanctioned education programs can have reduced tenure/permit fees). Most of these latter issues have been stalled due to the need for a wider pricing review by government. Brian was hoping that Dave Buchan would be able to update members on progress but he was unable to attend. A draft of the new pricing policy is expected soon. The Guided Adventure Tourism policy (GAT) is posted on the ILMB website and can be found at the following address: http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/adventure_tourism/docs/pdf/20071017_updated_gat_policy.pdf.

2. **Evan Loveless** discussed WTA progress with such issues as Parks (tenure harmonization and security, and "lodge" developments), Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) pilots, and ORV recommendations.
 - a. **Park Tenure Harmonization and Security:** Park tenure harmonization aspects related to pricing (same as GAT policy) are also held up by the government pricing review. Tenure security issues (PUP length of renewal terms) are still under consideration by a working group of JSC and NGO representatives.
 - b. **Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC):** The ILMB and JSC co-sponsored two LAC pilot projects in the Johnstone Strait and in Golden. The purpose of LAC is to try and address the central question of: "how much impact from tourism and recreation is acceptable and what strategies should be taken to avoid unacceptable impacts?" This refined the earlier tourism/recreation 'carrying capacity' question from "how many users is too many?" to understanding: "what is appropriate or acceptable, and for whom? The pilots were thought to be successful in that they illustrated the steps needing to be taken to identify issues and the process of getting people together and reaching some consensus. Brad mentioned that in the Golden area, the Ministry of Forests is the largest land user and they make initiating any new processes difficult.
 - c. **ORV Legislation:** Government is not convinced that annual licensing should be mandatory and only accepted 3 out of 44 recommendations. This conclusion is due to significant differences between recreation groups about the need, benefit and cost. Thus government agreed only to move forward with registration at time of purchase of all ORVs, as is already done with snowmobiles. Jeremy McCall of the Outdoor Recreation Council (ORC) mentioned that there had been a conference call between co-chairs of the ORV coalition to push government further and that they had sent a letter to Stan Hagen urging for the implementation of all recommendation including better enforcement. Dick McMaster, who had been at the BC Wildlife Federation AGM, stated that government definitely said 'no' to annual licensing. The present direction of government is not satisfactory as it will not help with compliance and enforcement issues if ORV's are hard to identify and it is difficult to trace ownership. The WTA will continue to pressure government to hire a mediator and bring all parties to the table in order to hammer out acceptable legislation.
 - d. **Parks & Lodges:** There have been three successful applications for lodges in parks – the Alpine Club at Mt. Robson, Yurts on the North Coast Trail and a small lodge for a Guide Outfitter.
3. **Gretchen Harlow** from the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Stewardship Centre for BC provided an update on the Stewardship Practices for Outdoor Recreation (SPOR) initiative on behalf of Eileen Fletcher (of TASK). SPOR has 15 partners and now 40 organizations as members. WTA is a leading sponsor represented by Dick McMaster. They have identified 50 activity and habitat pairs. The top three are: snowmobiles and caribou, boating in wetlands, and mountain biking in grasslands. Recommendations (best practices) have been posted on their website.

The Stewardship Centre for BC is in its 8th year as an online resource. This group works collaboratively with other non-profit organizations on programs, websites, tools and projects. There is a focus on education rather than rules. This year is the centenary of the birth of Robert Haig Brown. The Stewardship Centre for BC will host a three day symposium in Campbell River, August 15-17th with Terry Glavin and Craig Orr discussing wild salmon conservation.

4. **Steve Regan (COTA)** gave a short presentation on COTA *Foresight* principles. He mentioned that the WTA is important to the fabric of supernatural BC and helps COTA to stay tuned to the issues regarding nature based tourism. He noted how COTA needs to step back and evaluate situation with government and our BWIBC magazine, and how to move forward. He also noted four COTA principles of action (from *Foresight*): leadership by example, unity and respect for diverse perspectives, collaboration and cooperation.
5. **Greening Our Sector/Climate Action Initiatives session.** Evan provided an update and clarification of government's climate change initiatives and legislation. He introduced James Tansey, who discussed how members can become carbon neutral through reduction and offsetting strategies, and Kevin Peg who gave us a great overview on green energy options.
6. **James Tansey** (Offsetters Climate Neutral Society) gave an overview of Canada's place in worldwide carbon emissions with some thought provoking statistics on how much carbon is created per mode of travel – noting that we even emit carbon standing still. With our small population compared to countries like China and India, our emissions are very high. Offsetter's agenda is to offset carbon emissions through ads promoting climate neutral air travel (I lost 2 tonnes in one day!), promoting solar thermal heat, energy efficient upgrades in agriculture, recovery of grey water as examples.
7. **Kevin Pegg** (Energy Alternatives and BC Sustainable Energy Assn) Since 1984 Energy Alternatives have been designing, installing and repairing remote power systems. They have found that conventional designers of lodges are not familiar with clean energy options and it is not a financial priority for most lodges – most relying on generators. Other options include wind energy, solar energy and micro hydro depending on what the site has to offer. Kevin gave an overview of all three types of power and sited micro hydro as the best option if you have a suitable running water supply (creek for example). He directed members to the BC Sustainable Energy Association which has 800 members.
8. **Chris Harris**, award winning photographer and author, gave us a stunning presentation and slide show of his grasslands photography and recent "grasslands" book project during our lunch break.
9. **Update from Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon (WTAY) by Maxine Mattinson** WTAY membership is mostly water based. It was formed initially to help set up guiding standards and address liability/insurance concerns with respect to the Marine Liability Act introduced by the Federal Government. The Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act set up in part to help gather tourism data. However there are problems getting economic data.

The WTAY receives a \$200,000 contribution from the Yukon Ministry of Tourism for a sector marketing contract. They use it for the Yukon Wild website, travel trade promotion and print media.

The Yukon has no completed Land Use Plans and no current land tenure process. There have been no applications for land tenure since devolution of the Yukon Territory. The Yukon also presently does not have a Forest Act at but the WTAY is involved in the development of one. Mining issues are a concern, WTAY trying to work with mining industry to protect or designate tourism resource areas of high value. There is high impact to tourism in certain areas. WTAY developed Tourism Best Management Practices for the Oil and Gas sector. They hope to do the same for the Mining sector.

They worked with CPAWS and MEC on the Three Rivers Book Project and advocate the value of the area to government and the public. WTAY also has a public education campaign for public recreation based on Leave No Trace best practices. Check out WTAY website. www.wtay.com

10. **WTA Issues Forum - Member Input Session.** This was a chance for members to voice concerns and share ideas regarding land and resource issues, relations with other industry sectors, and government policy issues affecting Nature Based Tourism. **Peter Larose (COTA)** started this session with updates on work from COTA and government including COTA Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with industry sectors and the Tourism Industry Strategy for Forestry. COTA also has a Property Assessment and Taxation MOU developed with the province around fairer assessment of lodge/tourism properties. Peter also mentioned that Vera Vukelich (MTSA) wants to conduct stakeholder forums regarding LUP/resource sector issues.

Mining exploration conflict resolution/mitigation is becoming a significant issue for WTA. **Dorothy Baert (Tofino Sea Kayaking)** raised the issue of proposed mining on Catface Mtn. in Clayoquot Sound by Selkirk Mines (in partnership with the Ahousaht FN). There was a suggestion of using both Mining and FN MOUs to help frame discussion and move forward with tourism interests. Peter and Brian said that we have a good relationship with the BC Association for Mining Exploration (Dan Jepson).

Peter also reminded members about the upcoming COTA Tourism Day at the BC Legislature May 5th. WTA members were welcome.

Brad Harrison updated members on the issue of Worksafe BC setting controversial policies for working in Avalanche terrain.

11. **The Future of BC's Wild Salmon (Panel Discussion).** The future of BC's wild salmon is one that needs to be managed carefully. Panellists discussed initiatives taking place on the coast and inland BC to enhance habitat for salmon and wild salmon survival.
12. **Paul Ryall (DFO)** gave his presentation the 'State of Pacific Salmon.' DFO's outlook for 2008 shows areas of concern with current salmon stocks. Out of 93 stock groups taken into consideration, they show 40 groups at or above target abundance in 2007 dropping to 34 in 2008, and 18 stock groups of some conservation concern in 2007 rising to 34 stock groups of concern in 2008. The DFO lists global warming and climate change, mountain pine beetle, human population growth, and loss of commitment for conservation as some of the factors negatively impacting wild salmon populations. Paul concluded by saying that the next 10-20 years will be critical.
13. **Paul Kariya (Pacific Salmon Foundation)** discussed the impacts on salmon due to human development and the accumulation of several factors at once affecting their population size. Salmon may not disappear but will become remnant. People need salmon (for example, First Nations depend on salmon for survival) and salmon need people. People are the stewards of salmon habitat restoration. We need to be creative in ways to save salmon.

The Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) is a charity anchored in volunteer projects. They provide funding for 1400 small-scale rehabilitation projects and more recently have been supporting science initiatives. Presently, private foundations in the US fund most of the

science. John Reynolds of SFU (one of the Chairs in Life Sciences) is leading research into salmon (e.g. Skeena River study). PSF is brokering industry partnerships. They are trying to raise 2 to 4 million dollars for rehabilitation, education and science. There is a need to target human behaviour and development around salmon and water issues - both local issues and large-scale issues.

14. **Craig Orr (Watershed Watch Salmon Society)** discussed issues around sustainability. Resilience thinking: the capacity to avoid disturbance and maintain the same function and shape. The key to maintaining salmon and their ecosystems is to maintain their diversity and resilience. Salmon farming is a major threat in coastal areas. Ecosystems are complex and uncertainty has been a key element to positioning in government, industry and in the science community. There is a strong correlation of infectious sea lice larvae in farms and lice on juvenile salmon. Lice are quick and very adaptive. Wild salmon resilience is going down and at the same time lice resilience is going up. Climate change is causing reduced river flows. We need to maintain rivers and should be cautious about Run of River Independent Power Projects (IPPs). Ground water is also very important to salmon as it helps maintain flows and temperatures in rivers. There is no current legislation for extracting ground water. We need to protect biodiversity in stocks.
15. **Ernie Crey (Sto lo First Nations)** Sto lo has been front and centre with the aboriginal fishery. The future of salmon is the future we give them. First Nations groups are concerned about development around salmon habitat. There are ninety-four First Nations communities/bands in the Fraser watershed. Ernie stated that 2008 may be worst year in record for the return in sockeye. It is predicted that there will be so few salmon that there will be a need to ration the First Nations salmon catch. We need to make priorities for catch/use and need to have better government policies. If government gave the same priority to wild salmon as to farmed salmon the future of wild salmon would be a certainty. First Nations are keen to work with other groups that are concerned about wild salmon such as the WTA.
16. **Pierce Clegg (Babine Norlakes Lodge)** gave us a Tourism Operator perspective on wild salmon (anecdotal). Pierce discussed forestry issues and the importance of habitat integrity. Forestry plans don't take into account salmon habitat values on a watershed level. LRMPs are not enforced or monitored. Operators are now fishing a remnant sockeye fishery – and there is a ripple effect on whole ecosystem. Three steelhead lodges on the Babine have been lobbying guests to raise money to protect the watershed. They enacted a surcharge on their tour packages. They are trying to monitor existing Land Use and Forestry plans.

The Skeena fishery is seeing significant impacts (e.g. crash of Pink stocks). Commercial fleets (seines, gillnets etc), salmon farms, sport fishery and habitat issues combine to make a "gauntlet" for salmon. Pierce feels that aquaculture is bad news and Northern BC operators have organized to pressure against allowing fish farms near the Skeena River. The wild harvest should also be reduced at the mouth of the Skeena. The Broughton Archipelago is the front line of the fish farm issue. It is time to get away from "junk science" and to source peer reviewed science; and even look at the option of legal action. Pierce feels that people should be more than owner/operators, and should put resources back into rivers and habitats as well.

17. The session was concluded by Evan thanking presenters and members for their input into the discussion. This session will help WTA to set policy and priority work for the next year. A WTA discussion paper on fish farms and the impacts to tourism will be available shortly and we will plan a strategy to work with government.