



# Resort Master Plan

## Community Alpine Ski Resorts – Type I

November 2014

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

The production of the Purden Ski Village Master Plan (2014) has been a collaborative endeavor amongst Purden Ski Village owners/management personnel and staff of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Mountain Resorts Branch (MRB). As there is no new development proposed as part of the plan, it focuses on existing features. Purden Ski Village has proposed expansion in past plans, but currently, those plans are indefinitely suspended. In the interim, operation will continue to focus on maintaining the current mountain experience, which is affordable, relaxed and family-oriented.

Purden Ski Village is also known for its colony of recreational lease lots. Most lots are inclusive of seasonal dwellings, and predictably, seasonal residents are regulars on the slopes. Although these lots have traditionally existed within the Controlled Recreation Area (CRA), the current direction is to separate them from the CRA to define rights and responsibilities of both the resort operator and the recreational lease holders, and minimize liability to respective parties.

### **Project Vision**

The Master Plan update will outline existing improvements at Purden Ski Village, which support the ski area's operational and financial viability, ultimately contributing to social and economic values for the community and surrounding area. This Master Plan and the information contained herein will inform the process associated with establishing a new 30 year Operating Agreement (OA) with the Province of British Columbia, ensuring that the ski area is in compliance with applicable provincial policy.

### **General Overview of Business**

Purden Ski Village has had an Operating Agreement with the Province of British Columbia since 1992. The initial agreement was for a 20 year term, and in 2012 was amended to expire in Nov 30 of 2014. For some 20+ years prior to the OA, the ski hill existed under a license of occupation for Alpine Ski purposes.

The ski village strives to provide an affordable, family-oriented snowsport experience within the Prince George/Fraser-Fort George area, while also catering to the residents that hold recreational leases at the village.

### **Key Areas of Concern**

There are no major outstanding areas of concern at Purden Ski Village. Attention will be directed to the multitude of unnecessary tenures that exist over ski runs and previously proposed runs and improvements. Preliminarily, the following adjustments appear to be necessary:

- Delete License of Occupation (file # 7406934) for ski run purposes, currently over select runs in the eastern portion of the CRA, as the new OA will be inclusive of a blanket license that will render this tenure redundant.

- Delete Right of Way (file # 7407760) over proposed runs in the western portion of the CRA. Aside from the proposal for these runs being suspended, the tenure type is not required for ski run development. In the event the proposed runs are sought to be developed, the blanket license granted with the new OA will enable the operator to develop the new runs, pending submission of a Master Plan update and approval of the plan by the appropriate provincial agency.
- Delete License of Occupation (file # 7406592) for ski run purposes, over runs in the central/south portion of the CRA, as the new OA will be inclusive of a blanket license that will render this tenure redundant.
- Amend the CRA boundary to exclude the recreational lease lots currently within the CRA
- Since the day lodge and other improvements integral to the operation of the resort are on lands held in fee simple, the new OA should be inclusive of wording which provides the Province a first right of refusal to purchase this property should the developer decide to sell.

## **Section 1: Description of Existing Operation**

### **1.0 General Description of Existing Ski Resort**

The ski area is situated on Highway 16, approximately 60 km east of the Prince George, BC, with the exit being a right just past the Purden Lake restaurant (on the left coming from Prince George). See appendices 1 & 2.

Purden Ski Village is not connected to a large-scale power supply infrastructure network, but rather, is “off-grid”. A diesel generator powers the lifts and day lodge. There are currently no plans to connect the ski area to a utility company grid, as power transmission lines terminate a considerable distance west of Purden Lake on hwy 16.

Staff requirements vary seasonally. Although the owners/management are able to adequately address off-season duties, more staff are required during the operational season. An average of 5 liftees are normally on staff in addition to a group of volunteers who are dedicated to ski patrol. Additionally, there are generally 2 restaurant cooks, one maintenance person, and a staff dedicated to book-keeping, finance and ticket sales.

### **1.1 Description of Experience/Activities Being Offered**

Purden Ski Village has a vertical of 335m, with the highest elevation accessed by lift being 1311m asl. The day lodge sits at 975m asl and the top of the Baker Creek chair is at 1280m asl.

Of the total CRA area, 20% of terrain is classified as beginner/novice, 55% of terrain is intermediate, and 25% of terrain is classified advanced/expert. Alpine activities include skiing, snowboarding and telemark skiing. Lessons can be arranged. The hill has no Nordic ski facilities at this time. See Appendix 3.

The ski area receives an average of 400cm of snow annually, which allows the typical season to run mid-December to late March/early April. Average temperatures range from -10°C in December to -1°C in April. Prior to Christmas holidays, the ski area is open on weekends only. Upon arrival of the winter holiday season, the ski area is open daily. After winter holidays, the ski area is open weekends, most Fridays, and holidays.

### **1.2 Base Operation and Improvements**

The base area improvements consist of a day lodge containing a licensed restaurant and rental shop. Additionally, a generator building, maintenance facility, and fuel storage are found on site. There is parking adjacent to the day lodge for approximately 100 vehicles. These improvements are all encapsulated on Crown granted lands now held in fee simple by the resort operator.

The hill has no Nordic ski facilities at this time, and none are currently planned to be developed.

Lifts run from 9:30 am until 3:30 pm on all operational days

### **1.3 Mountain Operation and Improvements**

Mountain oriented improvements include one T-Bar, two chairlifts, a ski patrol/first aid hut, and 24 alpine runs.

- T-bar has 30 Tees, and is covered under a statutory Right-of-Way (file # 0336113)
- Yellow chair is a double with 106 chairs (file # 0336113)
- Baker Creek chair is a double with 150 chairs (file # 7406933)
- 24 Mountain runs are classified as 5 easy/novice, 13 intermediate, 6 advanced/expert

See Appendices 3 & 4

### **1.4 Recreational Lease lots**

There are currently 42 recreational leases within the Controlled Recreation Area (CRA). With the exception of one which is utilized as staff accommodation, these leases are all independently held by individuals not affiliated with the ski area. See Appendix 4.

The lease lots are not serviced with either treated well water nor power generated at the base area.

### **1.5 Access**

Clientele are almost exclusively travelling from Prince George, which is 60 km west of the turnoff to Purden Ski Village. From the turnoff on Hwy 16, it is approximately 3.2 km to the day lodge.

Infrequently, clientele may be arriving from elsewhere south of Purden Lake. McBride is 145 km south of Purden Lake on Hwy 16. In winter conditions, travel time to McBride may approach 2 hours.

### **1.6 Servicing**

#### **Sewer:**

Sewer utility is provided to the base area through a septic tank & field which are pumped annually.

Recreational lot lessees are responsible to maintain their own septic/sewer arrangements.

#### **Water Supply:**

Water is provided to the base area from a surface well. The water is treated by a UV process and is periodically sampled by the Northern Health Authority for potability and to ensure compliance with drinking water standards.

Recreational lot lessees are responsible for their own arrangements to procure potable water.

#### **Electrical:**

Electricity for the base area is produced by a diesel generator and distributed over a small network to various points/outlets in base area buildings.

The diesel generation system does not supply power to any of the recreational lease lots.

### ***1.7 Resort Capacity and Skier Visits***

Annual skier visits can range from 5,000 to 12,000 annually, but likely average close to 10,000/year.

## Section 2: Overlap with Environmental & Cultural Values

### 2.1 Fish Values

There are 4 small streams with reaches within the CRA. The provincial issue “Fish Wizard” fish and sensitive habitat mapping application was queried to determine if any of the reaches were known for fish presence or sensitive habitat. Although the streams are all tributaries to Purden Lake, which is known to support Burbot (*Lota lota*), Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Mountain Whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), Longnose Dace (*Rhinichthys cataractae*), Longnose Sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*), and unidentified sculpin species (*Cottus sp.*), the streams are not specifically known to support fish, and the reaches within the CRA are likely ephemeral in nature as they appear to be first order streams. See Appendix 5.

### 2.2 Wildlife Values

Purden Mountain Ski Village is habitat for an array of terrestrial and aquatic organisms, with species occupying various ecological niches and roles in the food web potentially living or transitioning through the area. Amongst the more common to catch the eye of visitors might be various rodents, coyotes, rabbits/hares, wolves, moose and black bears. The biogeoclimatic subzones within the CRA area are the ICHwk4 (Interior Cedar Hemlock wet cool variant) at lower elevations, with the upper elevations being comprised of ESSFwk1 (Englemann Spruce/Subalpine Fir wet cool variant). The area is moderate value grizzly bear habitat, but densities are relatively low and occurrences within the CRA are rare. According to information retrieved from the BC Conservation Data Center online data, no endangered, threatened, regionally or provincially significant organisms, ecosystems or habitat occurs within the CRA.

Because the operating season at the ski area is confined to winter months, regular candidate wildlife for human-wildlife conflicts are generally absent from the area in seasons of use. The owners/management will continue to follow best management practices for minimizing potential conflict or impacts to area wildlife

### 2.3 Water Values

Although 4 small streams do bisect various portions of the CRA, none are affiliated with points of diversion for domestic water licenses, registered well sites, community watersheds, or water reserves.

The owners/management will continue to abide by best practices for minimizing the introduction of sediments into watercourses within the CRA and/or minimize downstream impacts.

As there is no new construction of runs or other improvements proposed, no sediment control planning has been supplied. This planning will be included with any amendments that would follow this plan should new development be contemplated. See Appendix 5.

## **2.4 First Nations**

The Purden Ski Village CRA falls within the asserted traditional territory of the Lheidli-T'enneh First Nation, and the proponent and the MRB recognize the duty to consult with First Nations which potentially stand to be impacted by resort development.

The owners/management of Purden Ski Village have not preliminarily contacted representatives of the Lheidli-T'enneh First Nation. As consultation was reliant on the completion of an MP, outreach prior to its completion may have been premature, particularly given that the scope of proposed changes is insignificant. As such, new and novel impacts to any First Nations' impacts are expected to be negligible.

## Section 3: Overlap with Existing Uses

### 3.1 Mineral Tenure

The Purden Ski Village CRA is almost entirely overlapped by a mineral, Pacer, and Coal mining reserve (332178). There appears to be a minor discrepancy between the boundary of the reserve and that of the CRA. It is unclear whether this is a mapping issue or whether the shape of the reserve is in fact misaligned. MRB staff have indicated they will investigate the issue and determine whether subsequent rectification is necessary. See Appendix 6.

### 3.2 Timber Tenure & Forest Use

- Provincial Forest/RTAA

The resort CRA is currently within the Purden Provincial Forest. On a province-wide basis, the MRB has been and is actively deleting Provincial Forest Lands which lie within ski area CRAs, so that those lands may be managed under the *Resort Timber Administration Act (RTAA)*. This act is intended to ensure congruence between ski area objectives and land-use decisions related to forest management. related Deletion of Purden Ski Village CRA lands from the Provincial Forest is pending at this time.

- Range Tenure

No range tenures overlap the CRA.

- Old Growth Management Area (OGMA)

No OGMA exists within the CRA.

- Occupant License to Cut (OLTC)

OLTC #L40192 is active within the CRA, and is, based on the common shape that it shares with proposed runs, presumably issued for the purposes of developing those ski runs. The development of these ski runs was approved under a previous MP and they are being developed (cut) gradually and as the market will allow.

- Wildfire Planning

Over the last two decades there have been 6 historical wildfire incident locations, both in and adjacent to the CRA, originating from a combination of natural and human causes. Given that a “cabin colony” exists at/near the base village facilities, and thus, cabins may be occupied at various times of year (notably during seasons of extreme wildfire risk), there would appear to be inherently more potential for human caused wildfire than at ski areas where use is confined to winter or winter and another season of high use where ski area patrons and staff are routinely present.

The nature of the tenures and their (individual and separate) ownership creates a difficult environment in which to manage activities and approaches as they relate to Wildfire prevention and/or safety, as the ski area cannot impose any responsibilities, costs or liabilities on the recreational lease holders. In this regard, provincial education initiatives/campaigns for wildfire prevention are likely the most effective mechanism for risk mitigation.

In managing its own wildfire safety and prevention, the Purden Ski Village will incorporate “Firesmart” principles where/when determined necessary and/or potentially effective. See Appendix 7.

### **3.3 Land Use Planning, Local or Regional Zoning Requirements**

Purden Ski Village is within the Willow River Valley Land Unit #(27) of the Prince George Land and Resource Management Plan (PGLRMP), which includes several directed management objectives for: Grizzly bears, Marten, Moose, Elk, Deer, Douglas-fir, forestry, Agriculture and Recreation. The CRA falls entirely within the “Enhanced Resource Management” zoning designation. See Appendix 8.

### **3.4 Commercial Recreation Tenure, Trapline & Guide Outfitter Territories**

The Purden Ski Village CRA is within the area issued under trapline TR0707T004. The proponent and the Trapline holder should initiate communication to ensure that trapping activity is either limited to the area external to the CRA, occurs outside of the resort’s operating season, or whatever arrangement will be sufficient to ensure safety of resort patrons and staff. See Appendix 9.

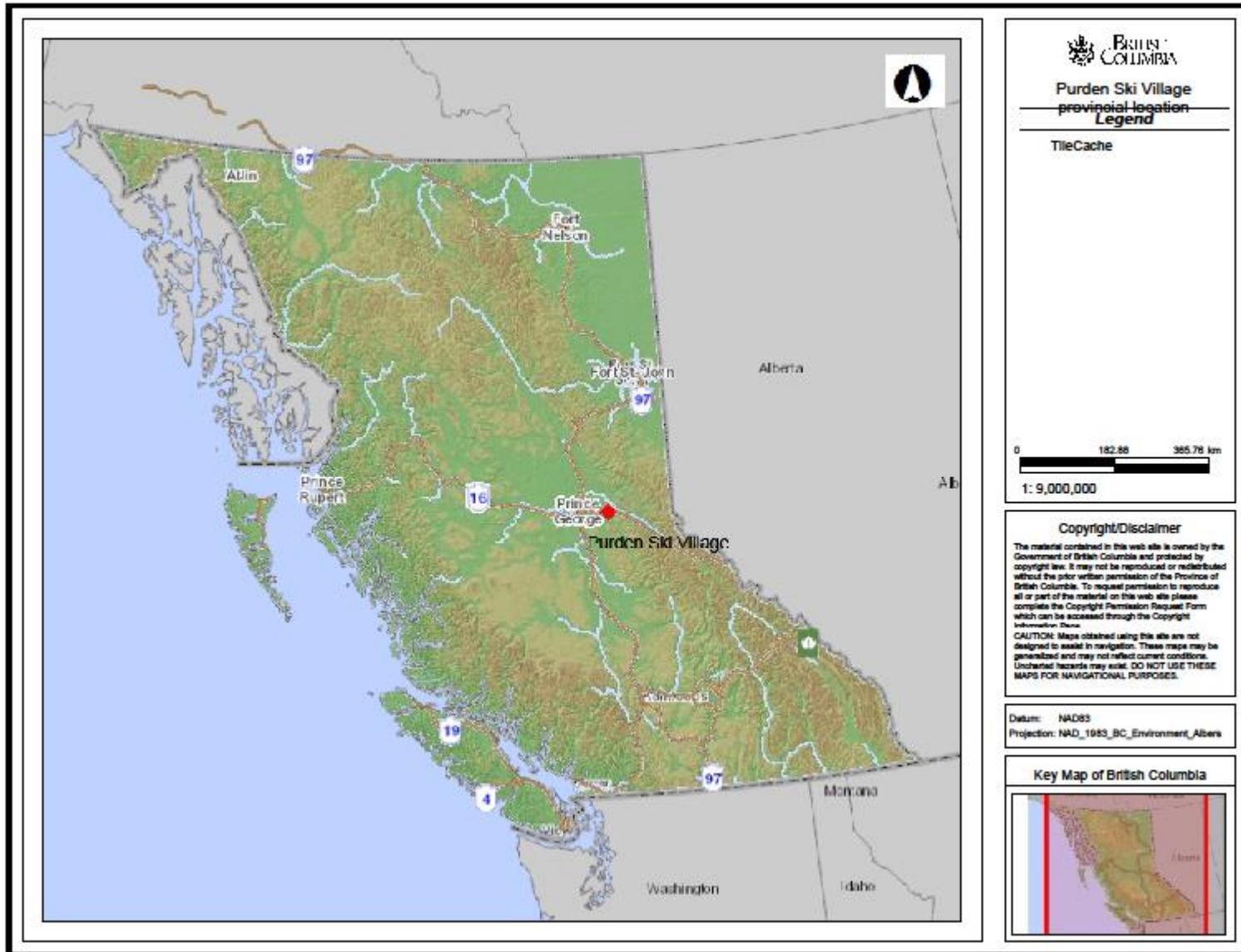
The CRA falls entirely within Guide Outfitter Area #700617, registered to Scott Pichette. Historically, there have not been conflicts with hunting or trapping as the main areas and seasons of use for the activities has not conflicted with the ski area’s operating season.

There are no commercial recreation tenures overlapping the CRA.

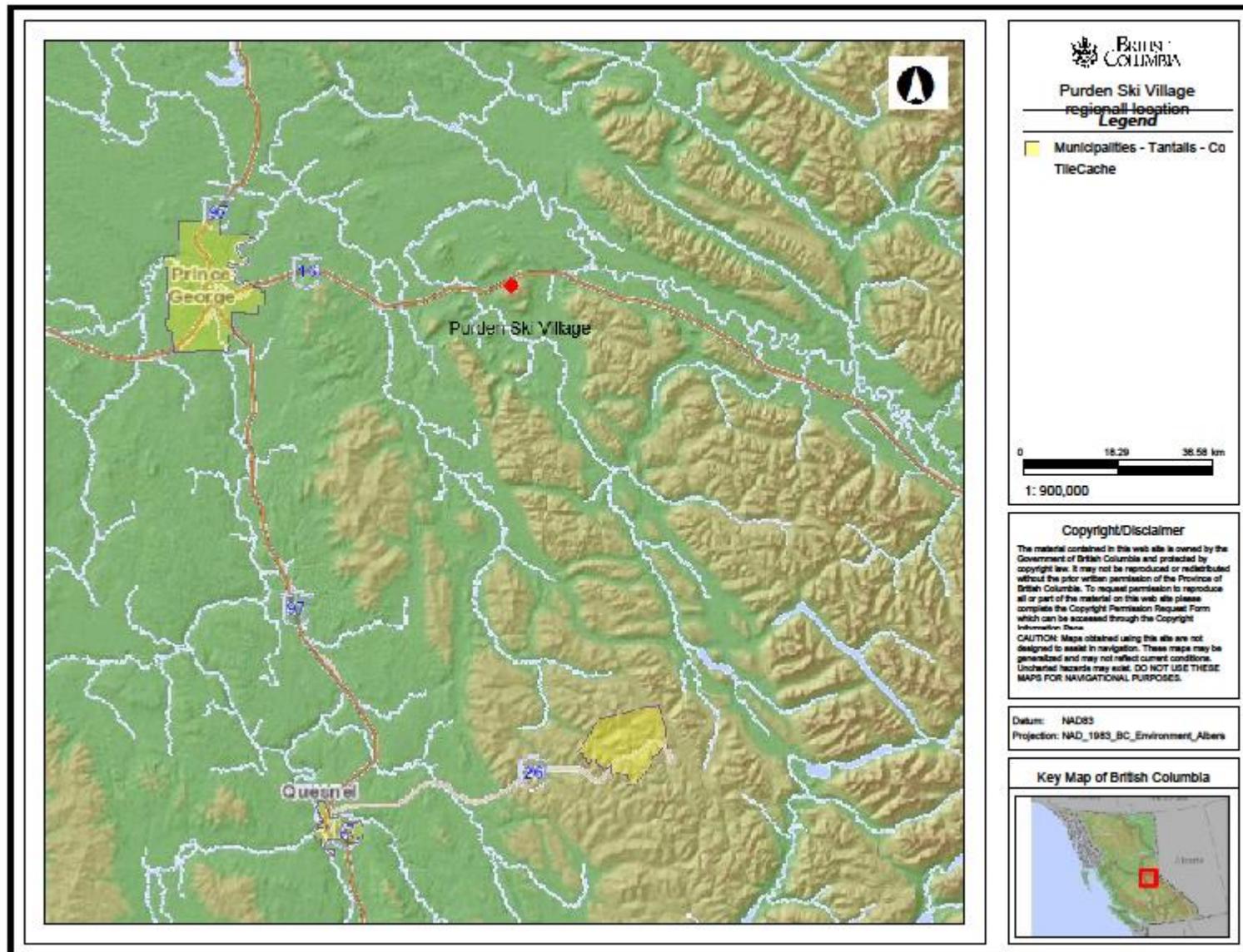
### **3.5 Public Recreational Use**

Public recreation use in the CRA appears to be largely limited to lift-based alpine skiing in winter. Recreational lease lot holders may occasionally hike the ski runs outside of the operational season, but non-winter use of the area appears to be limited.

# Appendix 1: Provincial Location Map



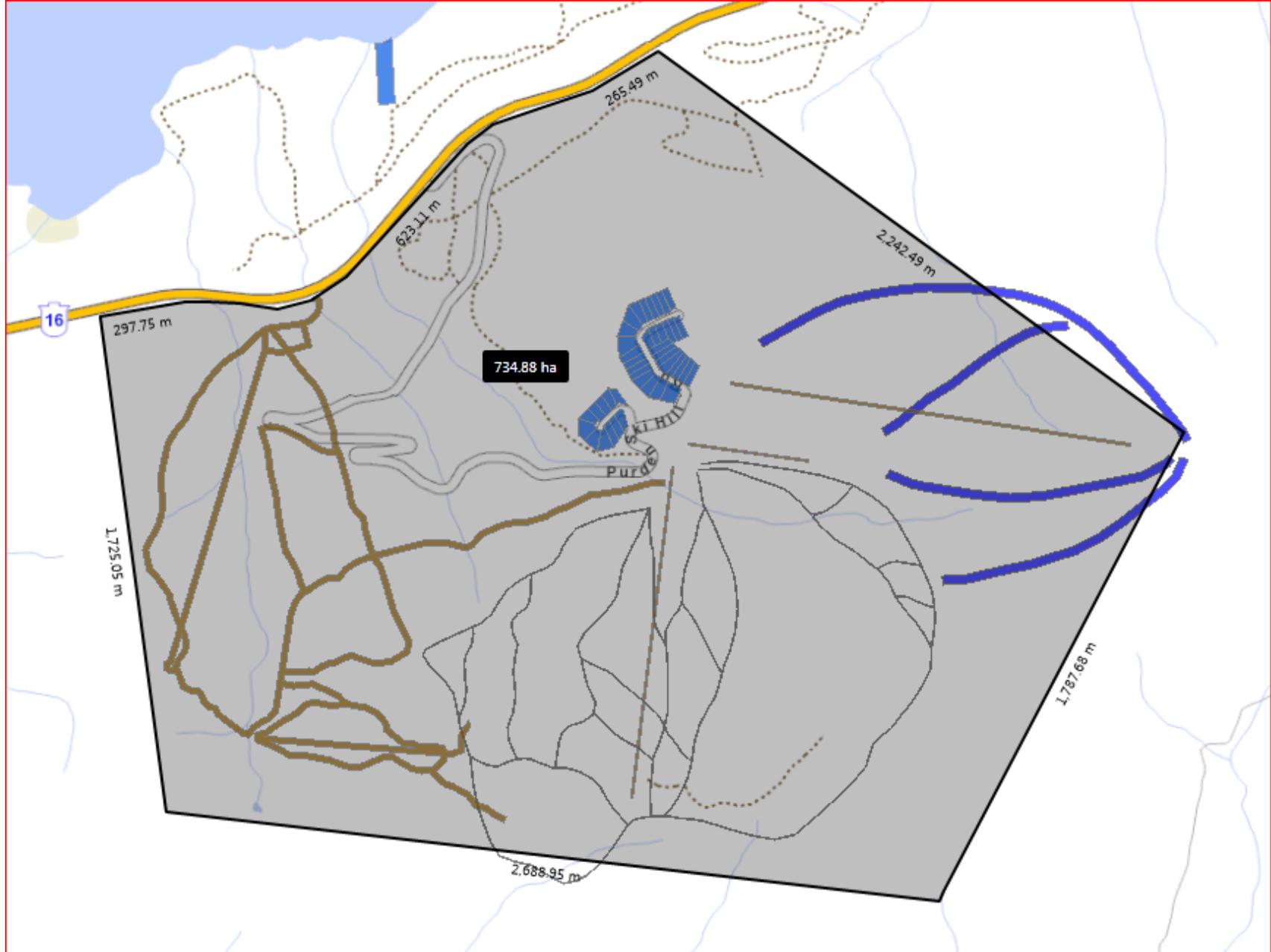
## Appendix 2: Regional Location Map



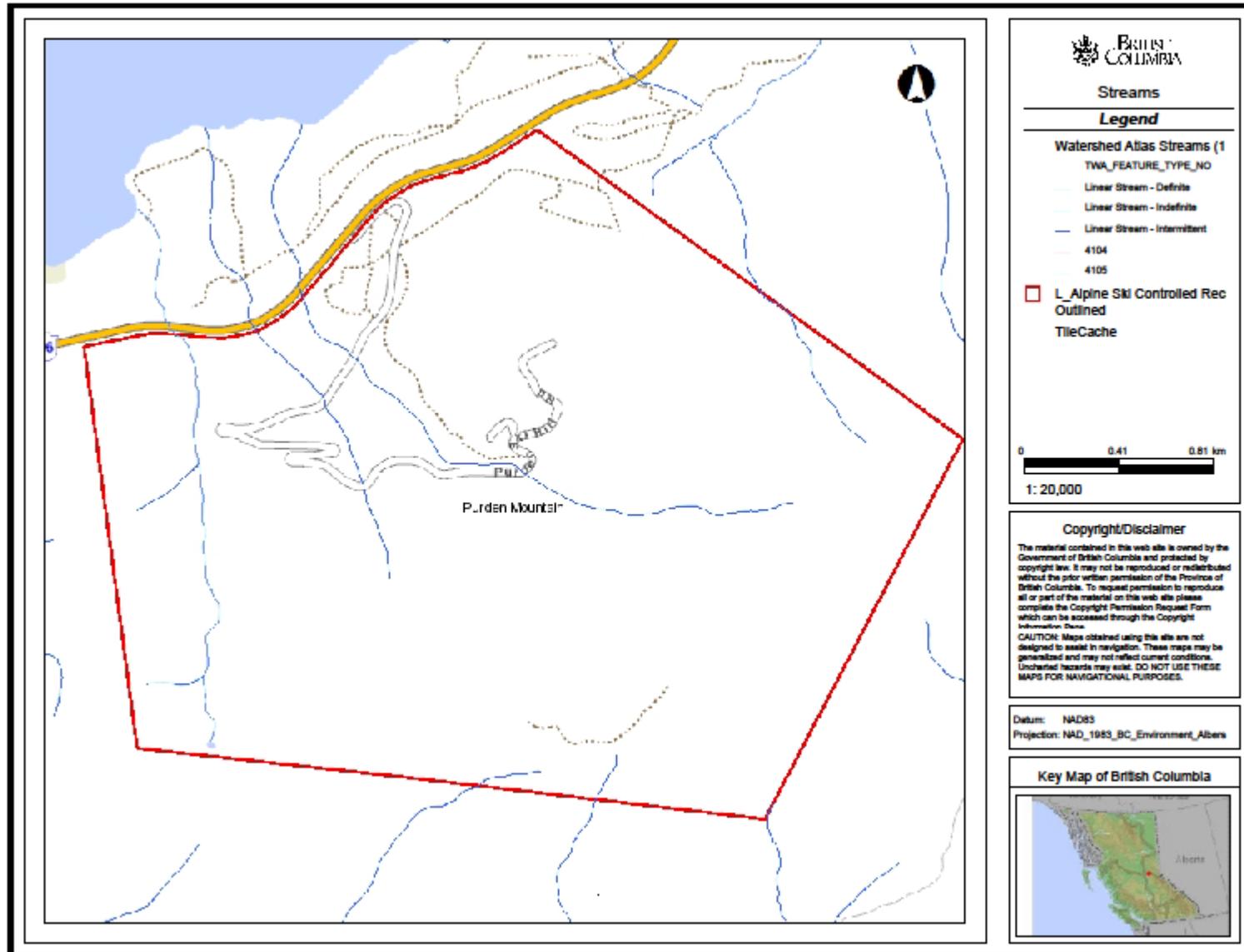
### Appendix 3: Run & Lift Map



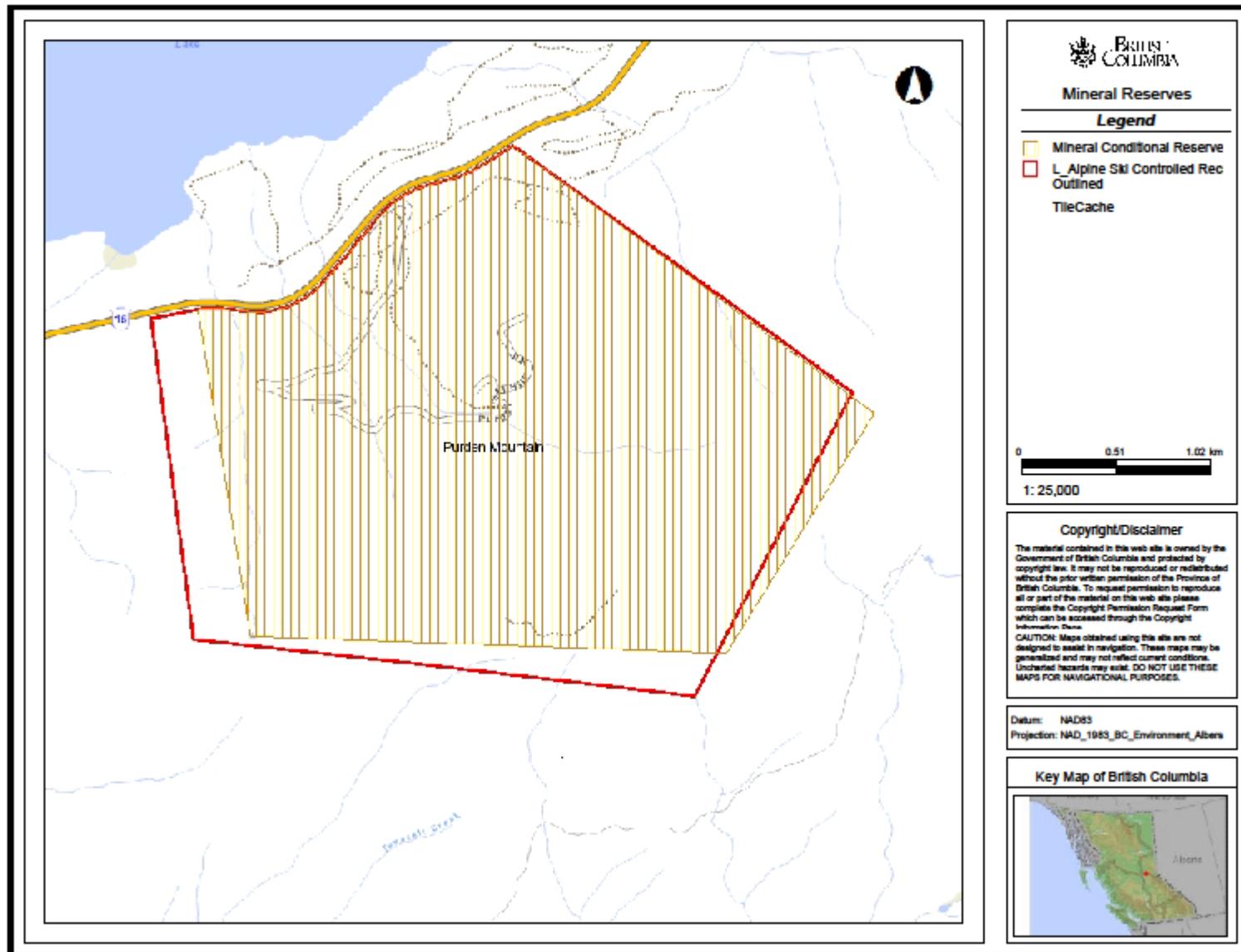
## Appendix 4: Controlled Recreation Area & Land Act Tenure Map



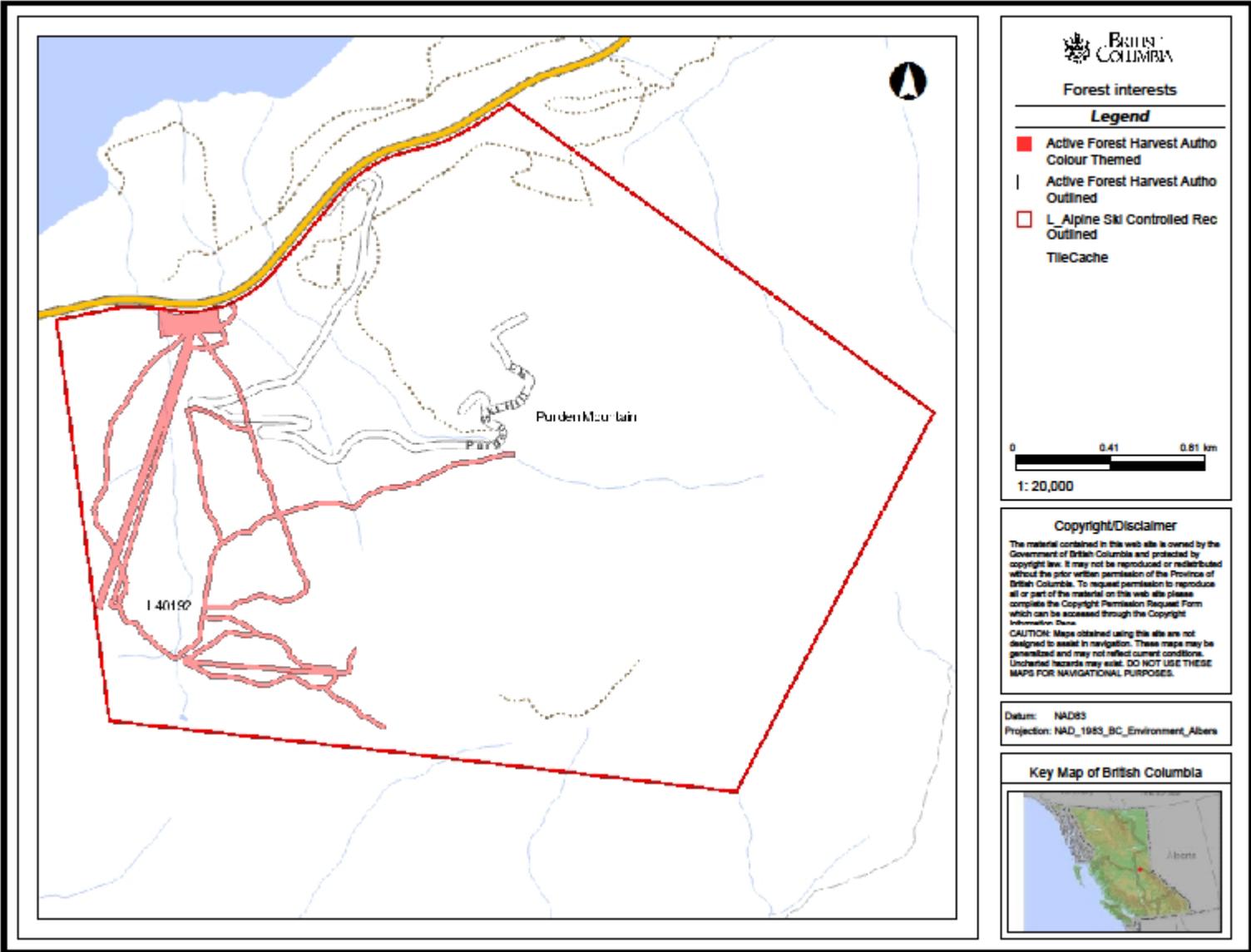
## Appendix 5: Purden Mountain Stream Map



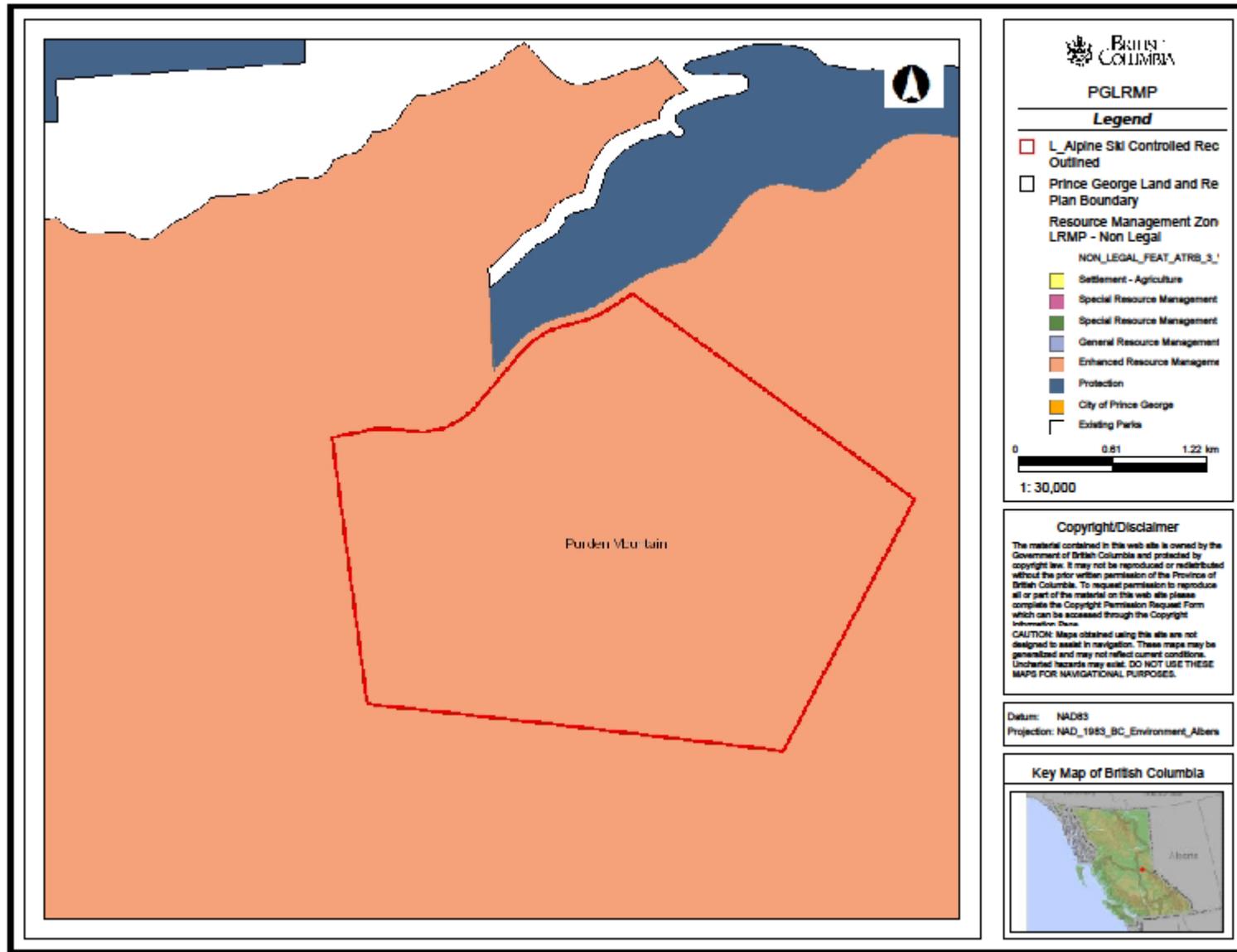
## Appendix 6: Mineral Reserve Map



# Appendix 7: Timber Tenure & Forest Use Map



## Appendix 8: Prince George LRMP Mgmt. Zone Map



## Appendix 10: CRA & Trapline Map

