

Executive Summary

Project Vision – The Murray Ridge Ski Area (MRSA) was established in 1975 to provide affordable skiing opportunities for the residents of Fort St. James and surrounding area. This vision continues.

General Overview of Business

- The MRSA is located approximately 10 km northeast of Fort St. James.
- Winter: There are 23 ski and snowboard runs, ranging from beginner to expert. The Murray Ridge has a vertical drop of 535m / 1755 ft. There is a small handle tow for the Bunny Hill and the longest T-Bar in North America (over 2 km up) to access the rest of the runs.
- The Main Lodge was built in 1986, and is ~10,000 ft³; it has lockers, a first aid room, a cafeteria, a bar, offices, washrooms, and a large deck looking onto the ski area. Plans exist to establish a skating rink between the main lodge and groomer shop.
- Summer: In 2022 The MRSA expanded into partial summer operations with the building of 3 downhill mountain bike trails. Plans exist to add an Up-track and regrade the lift line for use with Mountain Bikes.
- Summer operations also included facility rentals, and coming back in 2023 will be “Music on the Mountain”, a small folk music festival held over a weekend. This festival will use the “skating rink” as a base for their main stage.
- 7 powered RV sites, Tents sites and Yurt sites are being proposed.
- 10 kms of interpretive hiking trails for all skill levels are also being proposed.
- The MRSA has been in business since 1976, and the Fort St. James Ski Club has existed since 1975. We are a Not-for-Profit society made up of local enthusiasts that frequent the facility that we run. We are here to provide an affordable, accessible, experience for the residents of the communities in our local area.

Key Areas of Concern

- There have been no documented issues received from local First Nations. On this application, initial contact with the Nak’azdli First Nation has confirmed that there are no interests or concerns with the MRSA. We are still receptive to follow up. We are committed to working closely with the Band to resolve and mitigate any concerns that are identified in the future.
- An area on the top of the ridge, to the far east of our area has been used to plant White bark pine by the local MOE. This area, though it is inside our tenure, is not used by our customers summer or winter and is off “the beaten track”. The local MOE is not concerned with our operation or any impacts from it.
- There are no conflicts with other tenures on the MRSA.

Section 1: Description of Existing Operation

1.0 General Description of Existing Ski Resort

- In the Winter months (Dec to April) MRSA offers affordable skiing and snowboarding on a south-facing slope with a panoramic view of Fort St. James and Stuart Lake. The runs range from gentle to extreme and our ski area is viewed by many of our locals and out-of-town guests as being the best ski area in the north. It is generally open for 3-4 months a year, from December/January to the end of March.
- In the Summer months (May to Sept), MRSA has 3 downhill mountain biking runs beginner to Expert, with plans to build and Up-track for better access and room to expand in the future.

1.1 Description of Experience/Activities Being Offered – see Appendix 1 and 2 for Site Plan and Overview maps

- See above for experience offered.
- Site Plan Reference – see sections 1.2 – 1.4.
- Activity/Activities – In the winter (Dec – April) the MRSA offers skiing and snowboarding on all runs. In the summer (May – Sept) there are three downhill mountain bike runs and room for future expansion.
- 10km of interpretive trails access from the base for hiking of all levels (Proposed)
- Camping: Tent sites (Proposed), Yurt sites (Proposed), and RV sites
- A cross-country ski club operates in its own tenured area south of the MRSA.
- Specific References on Map – none

1.2 Base Operation and Improvements

- MRSA is situated on Crown Land under a tenured land use permit
- The existing facilities include:
 - 23 ski/snowboard runs.
 - 3 downhill Mountain bike runs.
 - 10 kms of interpretive Hiking trails (proposed)
 - Skating rink beside main lodge/cement pad prepped for bandstand use (25 x 40 Proposed)
 - Lodge approx. 10,000ft³
 - T-Bar with electrical building at the base and Lookout Shack at the top
 - Handle Tow with Electrical Shack at the base
 - Groomer Shop located 100 meters NE of Lodge
 - Top Shack for Liftees
 - Parking Lots on south, east and West side of the Lodge
 - There is a ~4 km access road from the public road to the MRSA. This road also accesses a rifle range and cross-country ski trails, which are both run by different clubs.

1.3 Mountain Operation and Improvements

- Refer to attached Murray Ridge Trail maps (Appendix 3) for a list of the 23 ski/board runs.
 - The Legend lists 22 runs; however the cross-country runs are not part of the MRSA and I've indicated 2 additional runs on the picture.
- T-Bar with electrical building at the base and a Top Shack for liftees at the top
- Handle Tow Bar with Electrical Shack at the base
- 2 small cabins located next to the bunny hill, offer the option for accommodation if needed, or possible short-term rental.
- Terrain Park adjacent to the T-Bar between towers 1 to 4 (near the base)

1.4 Access

- There is a ~4 km access road from the public road to the MRSA. This road also accesses a rifle range and cross-country ski trails, which are both run by different clubs.
- The road supports vehicular traffic.

1.5 Servicing

- Water – Deep well located adjacent to the Lodge on the south side. Provides 15+gal/min of clean fresh water.
- Sewer – open pit lagoon located south of the Groomer Building
- Power – 3 phase power system for lift

1.6 Resort Capacity and Skier Visits

- Over the past 3 years we have averaged ~ 8,000 skier visits per year
- The lift capacity is ~420 skiers/boarders per hour

Section 2: Overview of Proposed Expansion

- The MRSA plans to build a cabin at the top of the T-Bar that can be used by our clients. There will be no timber removal as part of this improvement.
- Not part of application / For information only: The MRSA does have plans to develop the north side of the mountain and purchase a chair lift. This expansion is on a Community Forest tenure; the expansion would require removal of timber and would be done through the Community Forest License. Because this expansion is only at the concept stage and would require significant consultation, it is not included in our application. The MRSA will apply for an amendment to the Master Agreement when we have definitive timelines and designs.

Section 3: Overlap with Environmental & Cultural Values

3.1 Fish Values

- Reviewed with local MOE Ecosystem Specialist, Sandra Sulyma on April 17, 2009. There are no fish values associated with any water courses on the MRSA

3.2 Wildlife Values

- Reviewed with local Sandra Sulyma on April 17. Apart from the blue listed Alpine Cliff Fern, there are no sensitive environmental values associated with MRSA. She indicated that if this plant species does exist on the MRSA, there should be no impact from the current activities on the site. We agreed that if work or improvements are done during snow free conditions, workers will be advised to be aware of the fern; we will get advice from the local MOE office on how to mitigate or avoid.

3.3 Water Values

- There are no water licenses on or near the MRSA.

3.4 First Nations

- The Geomatics Technician at the local Ministry of Forest and Range confirmed that the Nak'azdli First Nation is the only First Nation whose area of interest is on the MRSA.
- The MRSA has no documented contact with the Nak'azdli First Nation, formal or informal, expressing any concerns or activities that are in conflict with the site.
- After several unsuccessful attempts, I spoke to Chief Fred Sam over the phone on April 27, 2009. I explained the purpose of the call. He was well aware of the location of the ski area, and did not have any concerns with the application, but wanted to speak with a Band Member, Beverly Bird, who might have an interest in the south of the MRSA.
- I delivered a letter to the Band Office on April 28 (Appendix 4,5, and 2).
- I have attempted to contact the Chief several times, and was informed on April 30 that he is on medical leave and not expected to be back until May 4.

Section 4: Overlap with Existing Uses

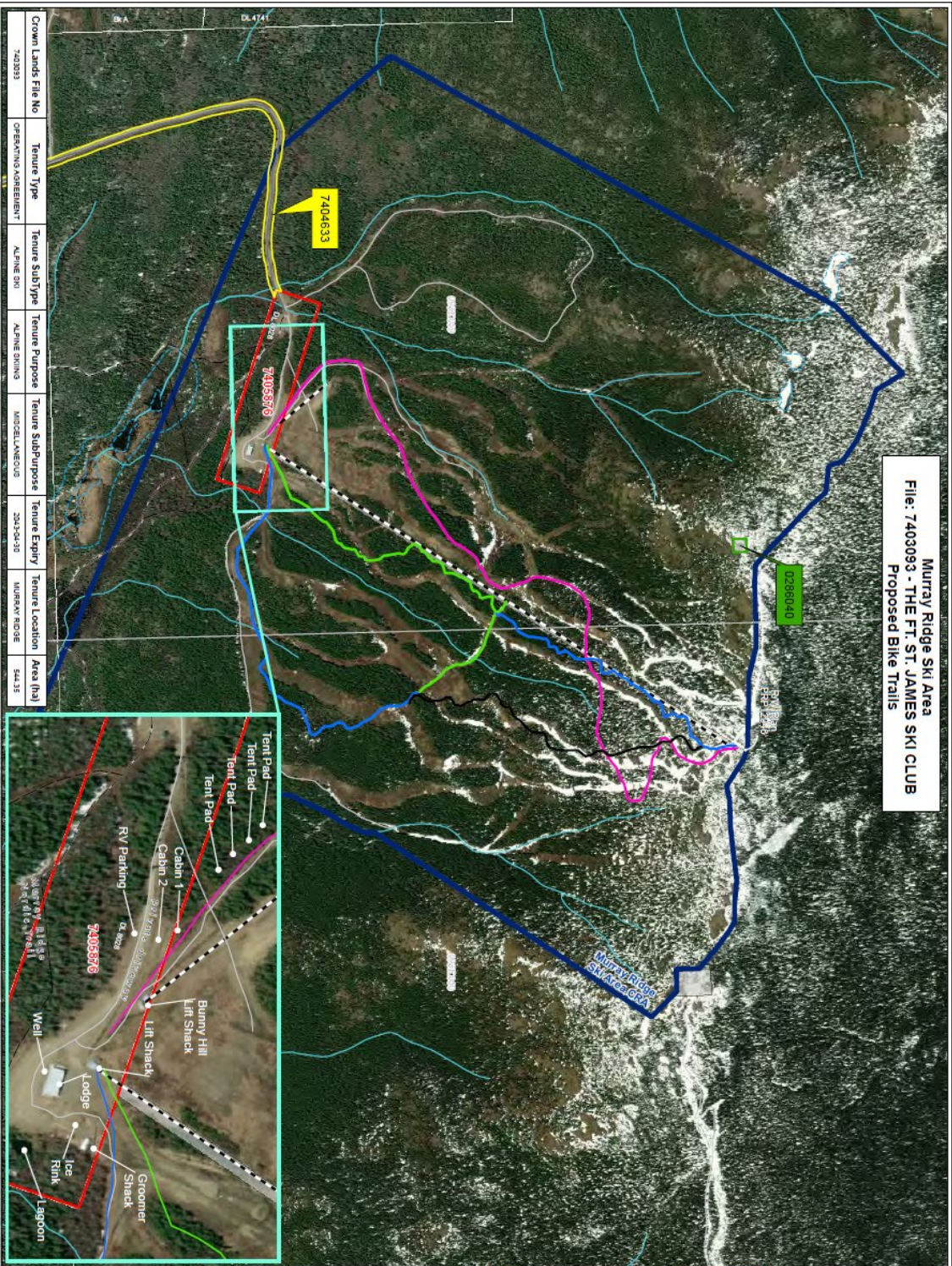
4.1 – 4.4 The Geomatics Technician from the local MOF has performed an Exhibit A process on the MRSA, and confirmed that there are no conflicts. There are two Trapper areas that are shown over the site (TR0725T005 and TR0725T006). There is an active trapline that exists to the SE of the MRSA, but it is well away from our tenured area.

4.5 Same as above. Beyond this, there are no continuous recreational activities on the MRSA. The only road access to the MRSA has a gate, located ~ 1.5 km from the site, that is locked after the operational hours of the MRSA or the cross-country ski club.

Appendix 1 – Hazards and Safety Plan

The MRSA Manager, Jana Gainor, has confirmed that we have a Hazards and Safety Plan which meets or exceeds Workers Compensation Board and approved industry standards and that our operation will meet the requirements of this plan.

**Murray Ridge Ski Area
File: 7403093 - THE FT. ST. JAMES SKI CLUB
Proposed Bike Trails**



Proposed Bike Trails
 Bike Jump Trail
 Black Technical Trail
 Green Trail
 Proposed Upride
 Existing Crown Land
 Tenure
 0286040 - LOD -
 0286040 - COMMUNICATION
 7404633 - LICENCE
 OF OCCUPATION -
 ELECTRIC POWER
 LICENCE -
 STANDARD LEASE -
 DAY SKI FACILITY
 - SKI LIFT
 Road
 TRIM - Gravel Road
 Stream Order
 1
 2
 3
 Marsh or Swamp
 Mapsheet Grid - 20K
 Controlled Recreation
 Area (CRA)
 Surveyed Rights of
 Way
 All Survey Parcels

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