

Berland Smoky Regional Access Development (RAD) Plan

Background

The Berland Smoky area is recognized as a busy landscape with multiple economic (timber, energy, minerals), social (aesthetic, recreational) and environmental (grizzly bear, caribou, water) values. To address the industries increasing demand for road access into the area while at the same time looking after other values, the Berland Smoky Integrated Industrial Access Plan (IIAP) was developed between 2006 and 2007. Plan development involved timber and energy companies active in the area, the Foothills Research Institute, and advice and local expertise from Alberta Government staff from ASRD and Energy.

An objective of the plan was to reduce the industrial footprint as compared to the past "plan as you go" approach. The plan was endorsed by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) and Alberta Energy in July 2008 through an Information Letter (IL 2008-05). The Information Letter outlines procedures and expectations for primary access development and management, and directs that all future access into the area use the primary access corridors. If primary access not previously identified in the plan were to be required, then companies active in the area would have to reconvene to renegotiate their access into the region.

Several developments in 2007 and 2008 reinforce the approach that industrial development needs to consider more than economic values, and more than primary access (roads).

- The Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (October 2007) identified the need to manage open route densities in core and secondary areas to reduce risk of human caused bear mortality.
- The ILM Program (December 2007) identified operational principles that support engagement of stakeholders in efforts to reduce and better manage footprint.
- The Land-use Framework (December 2008) recognized the need to manage cumulative socio-economic and environment effects.
- The Action Plan for West Central Caribou Recovery (release date to be confirmed) calls for management and planning of the industrial footprint.

The FLMF and the government have recognized the value of integrated planning and now wish to take it to the next level. Over the past 6 months, the FLMF and ASRD have been working on a Terms of Reference to jointly develop a secondary road plan that will include a review of mitigation practices and approval processes, a first of its kind in Alberta.

Deliverables

The primary deliverable of this project is the development of a RAD Plan. The Government of Alberta is taking a lead role in Plan development and will work in a collaborative process with the FLMF. Together, they will co-manage the development of the Plan. The Plan will not consider seasonal roads, those in use for less than 2 years, or in-block roads and access to well-heads.

The Plan will:

- validate the original primary access corridors identified in the 2008 approved IIAP,
- rationalize the need for secondary roads in the future (those coming off of primary corridors),
- identify whether the planned roads are required as permanent or temporary access,
- align pipeline routing.

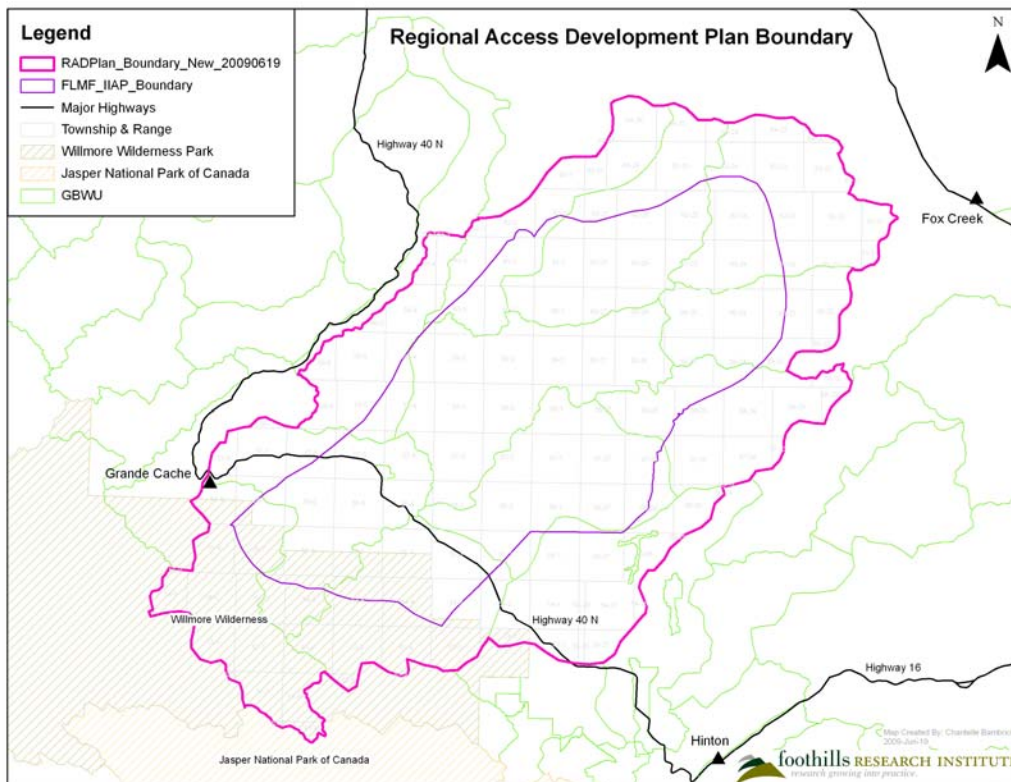
As part of the planning process, the project will identify, evaluate and make recommendations on:

- integrated access management and mitigation strategies (e.g., gates, restoration) that can be used across a variety of planning processes and time horizons (i.e., DFMP, AOA, individual dispositions, etc.),
- risk assessment models,
- parameters required for computer modelling, simulation and scenario testing,
- data needed to support this planning, along with data security, compilation, maintenance, and storage needs,
- information and communication strategies for government, industry and other audiences,

- opportunities to improve/enhance the current ASRD approval system for such plans,
- misalignments, operational conflicts (such as FMA vs IL 2003-23 road standards), and barriers to planning (e.g., other departments),
- monitoring and evaluation processes to assess plan implementation against targets for all new (as built) footprint.

For all of the above, the opportunities and challenges of the approaches selected will be documented to capture key learnings for future RAD planning efforts.

Planning Area



Givens

The following will further direct this work:

- Resource development will continue to occur in the area.
- The Berland-Smoky Integrated Industrial Access Plan will guide industrial access to the area approved through IL2008-05.
- Resource tenure is not within the project scope.
- Most current data available will be used. Data collection is not within the scope of this project and completion of the work will not be delayed from expectations for imminent new information. However, new information will be addressed as it becomes available and plan reviews occur.
- The RAD Plan may require amendment to conform to the Upper Peace and Upper Athabasca Regional Plans.
- The RAD Plan, once approved, does not grant access to the area; current review and approval processes will be used.
- Integrated land management principles will be applied.
- The full scope of adaptive management (i.e., plan-do-check-adjust) is expected.

Timeline

The Berland Smoky RAD Plan is expected to be submitted to the Government of Alberta for approval by the fall of 2010.

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