

JUMBO UPDATE AUTUMN 2007

In my recent conversations with Psyche Brown, Manager of Major Projects, I have learned that things are moving along steadily for the Jumbo Glacier Resort (JGR) proposal.

The Ktunaxa Nation (Kootenay) continues to debate how they can 'accommodate' the resort city and real estate development in their traditional territory which is part of their land claims process. In order for them to sign off they will take the offers from Government to a whole Nation vote. The compensation offers includes other Crown Land to be added to their traditional territory when the Jumbo area is removed, and money. No First Nations opposition can ever stop a development on Crown Land.

Lately when I talk with Psyche, I am noticing that her comments feel as if the government assumes the JGR is going ahead. (Of course, to date, no resort proposal has ever been refused.) So I asked her to comment on the fact that the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) has yet to decide if the Jumbo proposal will be zoned to Resort Municipality. Psyche said, "The answer has two parts. One is government has approved the master Development Plan (MDP) and is prepared to sign the Master Development Agreement (MDA) which is the legally binding contract between the developer and the province. However they are still going over requirements and regulations between the province and local governments – whatever that will look like in the end."

"The other part is that there are various options in getting this necessary municipal designation. Only one is that the RDEK will make the decision. The other is that the resort would be attached to either the Municipality of Radium Hot Springs (who favour the resort and want to include the resort in their town) or the Municipality of Invermere (who are on record as being opposed) but would accept it if it comes to that." The Jumbo area is much closer to Invermere. Remember Bill 11.

I've been told several times that the Provincial Treasury Branch (PTB) will soon decide how much money will go to the First Nations for compensation. So I asked Psyche if the PTB is also considering how much money the province will provide to compensate the proponent if and when the resort proposal is refused. "As yet the government and the proponent do not have a legal contract, that will be the MDA," she answered.

As of June 2007 Dr. Michael Proctor, the local Bear Biologist who has been counting Grizzly Bears in the jumbo area for many years, wrote to the M. of Environment, M. of Agriculture & Lands and M. of Tourism, Sports & the Arts, explaining that he had found that the Grizzly Bear population in the Central Purcell Mtns. is only 54% of it's carrying capacity and not the 93% which gov't has been using to base the mitigation plans on. At 50% the population becomes "threatened". The new numbers have been accepted by the MoE but no evaluation has been done as to what this means to the JGR proposal. The proponent is planning another Grizzly Bear study to see how accurate Dr. Proctor's numbers are.

Psyche tells me Grizzly Bear mitigation is "an adaptive management strategy that includes the proponent, MoE, and First Nations." I am noticing in my last several conversations with her, when I bring up the subject of Grizzly Bear mitigation plans, her answers quickly become broad and general like "on going monitoring of the road kills of moose, there are many moose in that area, and squashed frogs and toads."

Creating appropriate Grizzly Bear mitigation measures was THE prominent condition and commitment of the Environmental Assessment Office's 99 Conditions and Commitments that were attached to the Conditional Approval of the Resort Master Plan.

Submitted by Rowena Eloise, Argenta, for the West Kootenay Coalition for Jumbo Wild.