

## **COUNCIL REPORT**

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Administration

**Date:** June 17, 2024

**Subject:** Land Referral - Application for a Section 56/57 Mackenzie Rocky Mountain Riders

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council directs Administration on how to respond to the referral request.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The applicant has applied for a Section 57 Recreation Site & Trail under the Forests & Range Practices Act to permit the use of the Virgin Valley Shelter for recreational snowmobile use (see attached maps). Rec Sites and Trails BC may recommend the site for a Section 56 establishment pending consultation outcomes.

**Section 56** enables the Minister or an authorized delegate to establish interpretive forest sites, recreation sites and recreation trails. Recreation trails established under this section must receive consideration in resource planning and so have some protection from resource extraction activities. Trails are usually only designated under section 56 when a partnership agreement is in place with the organization that is maintaining the trail.

**Section 57** allows the Minister or a delegate to authorize the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of trails and other recreational facilities. This section is used to grant 3rd parties permission to build trails but does not grant any protection for the trails.

### **DETAILS:**

Proponent: Mackenzie Rocky Mountain Riders

Tenure Type: Recreation Site

Intended Land Use/background context: Recreation Sites/Trails

Location: Virgin Valley

Legal Description: UNSURVEYED CROWN LAND IN THE VICINITY OF VIRGIN VALLEY, EAST OF MOUNT MORFEE, PEACE RIVER DISTRICT. (see attached maps).

Area (ha): 0.25 ha

**EXCERPT FROM MANAGEMENT PLAN:**

This year, a small, but passionate board of directors has taken over the Mackenzie Rocky Mountain Rider's Snowmobile Club (RMR) and is intent on bringing the club in good standing with the provincial government by filing proper paperwork and agreements.

They have already spent several months of volunteer time discussing and organizing with the new administrative coordinator for the South Peace Region on how best to serve the snowmobile community in Mackenzie. The Mackenzie RMR are diligently working with the District of Mackenzie, Mackenzie Outdoor Route & Trail Association (MORATA), and the Provincial Government in the form of relationship building. The club is applying for grants to secure funds for the continued management and maintenance of the emergency shelter and a long-term plan of being in a partnership agreement with the Province to maintain the facilities. The RMR are backed by the BC Snowmobile Federation (BCSF). The BCSF holds funds for the RMR to use in any way the club determines is necessary.

The RMR have a positive bank balance of \$12,000 earmarked for maintaining their shelter, the Morfee Cabin. They plan to seek grants from various organizations, including the South Peace Mackenzie Trust, the District of Mackenzie, and the Trail Grant Fund, to support ongoing maintenance.

Virgin Valley shelter, formally owned by BC Forest Service, is also in trespass order with Natural Resources Compliance. The club wishes to continue using this shelter and so it has plans to submit a Section 57 application to manage and maintain it. The shelter is in need of repairs, including fixing of the roofline, and the door. The wood stove will be inspected and replaced if needed. Access to the Virgin Valley cabin is winter access only. Repairs would be done by hauling supplies into site at the tail end of winter to perform the work needed, or left at site and then have workers hike into the cabin site to perform work over the summer. Please see attached management plan for complete details.

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

As the application does not occur within the District of Mackenzie border, there are no zoning or official community plan concerns.

This emergency shelter facility currently provides residents and tourists with a basecamp, and area of refuge within local snowmobiling territory. Snowmobiling is a popular local pastime and is supported in our Tourism Plan as well as Recreational Trails Master Plan. Permitting this cabin would help a local club as well as other local and non-local recreators.

**COUNCILS RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the information presented, Council is being asked by the Province to provide comment. Council has the following options for response:

1. The District of Mackenzie's interests are unaffected by the application.
2. The District of Mackenzie has no objection to approval of the application.
3. The District of Mackenzie has no objection to approval of application subject to specified conditions.
4. The District of Mackenzie recommends refusal of this application due to specified reasons.

**COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

**Strong Governance and Finances**

- As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Luke Thorne, Land and Environmental Coordinator

**Reviewed By:** Corporate and Financial Services

**Approved By:** Chief Administrative Officer