

Article by Barry Brandow
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The Gilpin file remains very active and is worthy of an update because recent events tell me management change is now inevitable!

Wildlife managers and Ministry of Transportation staff have long recognized the serious problem of wildlife/vehicle collisions between Grand Forks and Christina Lake. October/84 Wayne Rieberger and myself agreed to fence 1 mile of highway in response to a long list of reasons not to proceed with a bighorn sheep transplant submitted by agriculture to then MLA, Jim Hewitt who described all the reasons except one as silly, bighorn sheep on Highway #3 was not going to be acceptable.

We started fencing October, 1985 and have been there since. Contrary to public opinion the vast majority of money needed to construct the 1 1/2 km fence I raised myself.

Because funding is always an issue support from the local business community has always been important. This past year we were again fencing and once again **thank Greg Starchuk at Tool Time Supplies and Mike Tomashewsky at Creston Redi Mix** for their continued support.

Two PhDs in range management, George Scotter and John Stelfox who have toured Gilpin with me describe the grasslands as mostly weeds and non-native grasses. Don Gayton in his review of the Gilpin grasslands March/03 on page 38 under conclusions

states “The Gilpin has a long history of poor management and I do not expect this to change soon”

Doug Fraser, Range Practices office Ministry of Forests described the grasslands as mostly weeds in a conversation with him on Gilpin October/07. Doug spent a week in October examining range management and has submitted his report to the district MOF manager.

The 1470 acre Boothman Ranch was purchased in 1972 for \$190,000.00 public money to secure critical habitat for wintering deer and increase wildlife management options. This past year many logging blocks, all close to water especially both sides of Morrissey Creek were stripped bare of critical winter feed for ungulates. This fact was witnessed by Katrine Conroy, our MLA who ranches with her husband Ed, David Borth the top range bureaucrat MOF and Larry Peische District Manager MOF Castlegar.

The worst of the worst last year was 160 acres owned by Nature Trust which was literally scorched earth. If you check the Nature Trust web site you will see 470 acres were purchased in Grand Forks in 1973 for deer.

I have 300+ pictures of springs made into dugouts which have become septic tanks, destroyed stream beds and riparian areas. Watering holes such as 21/2 and 3+ KM on Gilpin logging road which require a steep descent have resulted in massive damage by cows.

I agreed to try and work with David Borth, MOF Range. This agreement came after a discussion of why cows are allowed to damage the fragile Gilpin ecosystem the way they do. The range specialist's report will certainly have a bearing on my degree of commitment!

It has long been recognized that off road vehicle damage to the Gilpin grasslands is a serious problem. I have recently received a paper that describes the progress and goals by the off-road vehicle coalition of 18 organizations which has signed memorandums of support from 30 other organizations. All of our politicians and stakeholders recognize the problem and with the continued good work of this coalition new legislation will be proclaimed sooner than later.

Access management (there is none) and the petition by the agriculture sector and the ex outfitter and his 50+ year old quad bike crowd demanding status quo management for Gilpin is a letter for another day.

The negotiations for the Pope & Talbot property on Gilpin are ongoing and we will know soon if successful.

The most compelling argument of all is why spend my time, energy and money to try and save a small special ecosystem when even the simplest mind with a little coaching will soon discover that making money or creating some thing special will never happen in my time. That question is hard to answer some times especially living in this town!

Barry Brandow