

LOST LAKE REVISITED JAN 2016

At the end of April 2014 a group of public minded citizens replaced a section of fence around Lost Lake in the Gilpin Grasslands to better protect the area from off-road vehicles and range cow damage. The new fence was constructed as fully wildlife friendly fencing.

The Story on the new fencing was originally reported Nov 2014 at:

www.boundaryalliance.org/lostlake.pdf

We reproduce part of that report below, (in blue & italics) in view of subsequent events.

In spring 2015 Range Branch and Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resources (MFLNRO) and Ministry of Environment, installed signage and a seating bench at Lost Lake, some six years after their original fence construction. The major message on that signage appears to have been prompted by the concerns raised in our original Nov 2014 article: see section on **"Waterer Not Activated."**

Extract from our Nov 2014 article

***"The original fence:** was installed a few years earlier by Range Branch and the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resources (MFLNRO) following public concerns over the actions of off road vehicles, mud bogging in the lake and range cow damage. That installation included a cattle waterer nearby and other waterers and fences were installed at several locations on the Gilpin. These installations on **Public Lands** are at **public expense**.*

Many complaints, no changes, new damage:

Complaints were subsequently made by the public as to the inadequacy of the Ministry's work, non-wildlife friendly fencing, and poor planning and placement.

MFLNRO made no changes or improvements to these works even after the Forest Practices Board recommended same. In 2013 MFLNRO advised a complainant that "they would look" at the Lost Lake situation in 2014.

In spring 2014 new damage was evident from off-roaders running ATV's and dirt-bikes along the soft edges of Lost Lake which were not adequately protected by the existing fence and new damage could be expected from Range cows which would soon arrive in the area and continue damage evident from the prior years.

***Waterer Not Activated:** On a visit to Lost Lake on June 19th 2014 we saw that the waterer at Lost Lake had never been activated after the cows arrived. As a result, cows were dependant on pushing at the lake fence to access diminishing water levels. A subsequent call to Range Branch informed us:*

(a) that the waterer had not been activated due to concerns about outflow of the waterer affecting Lost Lake and (b) that cows would have been able to access sufficient water if "somebody" had not put in a new fence.

(a) complete nonsense as any extra water flowing to Lost Lake would be beneficial in replacing evapotranspiration losses. If the concern was in any way real, any flow from the waterer could be restricted at the inlet or outlet by a variety of cheap devices including a simple valve or tap.

(b) A limited and shrinking access point to the Lake was closed off by the new fence leaving potential access at both ends of the pond and the untouched length of the original southside fence. The new wildlife-friendly fence prevented new damage along the North length and in no way "created" the damage caused by cows elsewhere around the pond. Without the new fence there would simply have been one more cow damaged area.

On June 20th 2014 Range Branch advised that cows were no longer on the Lost Lake pasture area having been moved out a few days ago for the remainder of the year. That information was inaccurate. Groups of cows remained on the pasture and were seen on visits up to October 1st 2014. This extended and presumably unauthorized grazing period resulted in additional cow damage as they pushed on fences as water levels diminished and trampled a muddy corridor down the length of the older South fence, breaking into the fenced off area in several places. The extended grazing season also resulted in cows challenging the new wildlife friendly fence by "reaching" under the wildlife friendly bottom wire to access otherwise protected riparian vegetation. Thanks to the extended grazing period, forage outside the fence was largely depleted".

Incredibly the major message on the Governments new signage in 2015: see fig. 1.

- a. tried to justify the original placement of the fence as bounding existing riparian vegetation.
- b. introduced a long-winded rationale for why there was no water in the waterer.

Regarding (a) it became apparent over time that the older fence failed to protect existing riparian vegetation which showed up outside that fence and also failed to provide any worthwhile setback from such vegetation. The original fence placement also did not prevent a throughway for off-road vehicles. The new wildlife friendly fence installed by public minded citizens in 2014 fixed those problems.

Regarding (b) the claim on the new signage blaming the City of Grand Forks (see fig. 1.) for not providing water for the waterer, is contrary to what was claimed by MFLNRO in extended conversations June 20 2014. See the full account of those discussions in our Nov 2014 article:

www.boundaryalliance.org/lostlake.pdf

Crucially however, the Government's claim on the sign, (see Fig. 1.) that the City of Grand Forks would not provide water for the waterer, is according to the City of Grand Forks, not true.

In addition to the misleading (or worse) information provided on the sign, (see Pic.1.) the sign is placed looking down the length of the new fence installed in 2014 by volunteers. Viewers of the sign might expect that this new wildlife friendly fence was the work of Government. On the contrary, Range Branch and MFLNRO have resisted such installations despite public concerns and the advice of the Forest Practices Board. MFLNRO was in fact engaged in "investigating who was responsible" for the "unauthorized" new fence while placing this misleading signage that suggests it is their work.



Pic. 1. Government signage looks down the length of the new wildlife friendly fencing installed by volunteers.

In addition to the serial misrepresentations of the signage, it was installed together with a bench and sign celebrating off-road vehicle usage in the area. The scars on the land from such activities will be apparent in upcoming articles. We wonder if those supporting or sponsoring the signage including the Trails signage are fully aware of the damage done to public land by range-cattle and off road activities.

Our Nov 2014 article on installation of the new wildlife friendly fence:

www.boundaryalliance.org/lostlake.pdf

made a number of complaints and suggestions regarding Government oversight of public resources and faulty installations of fences and waterers. The signage installed in 2015 invites much more.

See Youtube video:



If your devices and download speed allow,
Video is available in 1080 HD



Pic. 2. Signage on other side of bench.

Fig. 1. Extract/Transcript from Gov't signage at Lost Lake

"Ministry of Environment, Wildlife & BC Parks to refurbish and replace existing water development and install fencing in an effort to restore LOST LAKE.

Large coarse woody debris and boulders were placed (sic) in the lake bed to discourage vehicular use and a cattle-proof fence was placed around the "estimated" perimeter of the lake. This estimated perimeter was determined by the vegetative composition and was used to plan the installation of the fence. The punctured holes in the pond bottom were sealed using clay Bentonite. Water was obtained from Overton Creek using the City of Grand Forks waterline nearby. The plan was to run a water line to a trough and have the overflow from the trough piped into the pond.

Originally permission was obtained from City Council to use the waterline during the time livestock were in the pasture as a continuous flow into the trough and pond, but later due to the City's concern for liability of overflow into a nearby residential neighborhood the use of the waterline was limited to a one time use to fill the pond. Due to the City's change of heart, the trough became unusable because of no water supply and the cattle had to drink from the water edge outside the fenced perimeter. The pond was originally "overfilled" with the assumption that the clay would not hold. To the surprise of all involved it held water well and has increased in size meeting and exceeding the fence perimeter. Small areas outside the fence had standing water year round and this was used by cattle in the pasture since the trough could not be kept filled."

www.boundaryalliance.org

Tags: Lost Lake Gilpin Grasslands, Range Use, MFLNRO, Range Branch, Wildlife Friendly Fencing

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A short version including youtube video is on
www.dryrotjournal.blogspot.ca