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Attention:

Wallace Mah
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Proposal for Park Boundary Adjustment

The District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs are applying to BC Parks to complete a Park Boundary Adjustment to Sasquatch Provincial Park to remove park land to allow for the construction of an emergency evacuation and access route.

This document is the District of Kent's and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs' Stage 1 Proposal for a "Category 2: Adjustments intended to protect and insulate human health and safety concerns" park boundary adjustment.

The District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs are in favour of returning the park boundary to its original status once the evacuation route is established. This is subject to light maintenance being permitted to maintain its accessibility and functionality. The District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs would agree to provide light maintenance on the road once all the infrastructure is completed.

Project Description

Background and Rationale

Establishing an evacuation route from the north end of Rockwell Drive (located in the District of Kent) has been a priority of the District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs for over 20 years. Residents, businesses, and visitors travelling north past the Golf Road intersection of Provincial Highway 9 have only one access / egress route in the event of an emergency. This encompasses a permanent population of approximately 2,000 in the Village of Harrison Hot Springs and a portion of the District of Kent; however, during the busy tourist season that number often swells to more than 10,000.

Additionally, those that live or travel north of Harrison Hot Springs may also be trapped by a road closure on Rockwell Drive. This includes campers and day users of Sasquatch Provincial Park. Recreators and residents along the Harrison East Forest Service Road are also vulnerable if access / egress along Rockwell Drive is hindered. The proposed evacuation route located at the northern portion of the identified area would provide a safe egress during an emergency evacuation whether the event impacted Highway 9 or Rockwell Drive.

The Rockwell Drive area in the District of Kent has been cut off several times in recent years due to a variety of different emergencies. Examples of these events can be seen below in Table 1.

Date	Type of Event	Description
November 2021	Atmospheric River	- Rockwell Drive impassable at 6500 and 6900 block for several days due to landslides. - Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue responded to rescue campers and found themselves trapped due to the road closure. The subjects and members of Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue had to be rescued by boat. The road closure limited the responding abilities of the team as their equipment was on the other side. - The following day, Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue evacuated residents via Harrison Lake. The number of residents issued evacuation orders exceeded the boat's capacity. - Ongoing geotechnical concerns.
January 2021	Windstorm	- Rockwell Drive impassable at 6500 block by fallen trees and downed power lines for several hours. - Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue placed on standby for access via Harrison Lake.
October 2020	Windstorm	- Rockwell Drive impassable at 7100 block by fallen trees and downed power lines for several hours. - Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue placed on standby for access via Harrison Lake.
February 2020	Landslide and Flooding	- Major flooding and landslide event resulted in Rockwell Drive being impassable at the intersection of Hicks Lake Road for several days. - No access to Sasquatch Provincial Park and East Harrison Forest Service Road from February 1 to 12, with one person trapped in the Park during that period. - Other areas on Rockwell Drive impacted as well. Entire road closed for several days due to risk of additional events.
February 2019	Motor Vehicle Incident	- Motor Vehicle Incident involving a hydro pole on Highway 9 between Golf Road and McPherson Road. - Impact to Hydro infrastructure closed the roadway, completely closing all access and egress to Harrison Hot Springs.
August 2013	Interface Fire	- Rockwell Drive closed at intersection of Lillooet Avenue in Harrison Hot Springs for several hours. - Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue placed on standby for access to Rockwell Drive via Harrison Lake.

Table 1. Examples of events that have cut off access to the area.

As a result of the annual freshet in 2022 and 2023, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) placed restriction loads on Rockwell Drive due to the negative impact of the high-water levels in Harrison Lake on the road infrastructure. The MOTI also considered the possibility of closing the entire road if water levels reached 12.3 m (a 1-in-10-year event).

In 2019, through UBCM funding, the District of Kent hired Onsite Engineering Ltd. to analyze three separate routes, which resulted in Rockwell Drive to Loughheed Highway being the preferred route alignment.

Project Location and Footprint

The proposed evacuation route runs from the North end of Rockwell Drive and follows the existing gravel road through Sasquatch Provincial Park to the entrance of the Deer Lake campground. From there, a section of old, deactivated, railway grade would be upgraded to accommodate vehicle traffic. The old railway grade is largely within the boundary of Sasquatch Provincial Park.

A new bridge over Mahood Creek, which is outside the Provincial Park boundary, would be required as part of this upgrade. The old railway grade joins with the Ruby 5200A Forest Service Road, which connects to the Ruby-Loughheed Forest Service Road shortly thereafter. The proposed route then follows the Ruby-Loughheed Forest Service Road for approximately 5.2 km before it meets the Loughheed Highway. Maps of the route can be found in Appendix A.

In total, approximately 1.9 km of old railway grade that is within the park boundary, as well as 300 m that is outside the park, would require upgrades. Additionally, an 850 m section of the Ruby 5200A Forest Service Road will require brushing, grading, and resurfacing. Eventually, some older log culverts in this section will need to be replaced. Approximately 170 m of the railway grade that is within the park boundary would need to be shifted into the cut slope during construction to allow sufficient width for the safe use of the road.

In total, the District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs propose removing an area that is 1.9 km in length and 15 m wide from the Park to allow for the construction of the route. This is a total of 2.85 ha. These figures are approximate, and a more detailed analysis will be done in the future.

Alternative Routes

As previously noted, Onsite Engineering Ltd. identified a total of three routes as part of the scope of work for the evacuation route planning project.

Harrison East Forest Service Road to Boston Bar

This route is approximately 127 km from Harrison Hot Springs to Boston Bar via a network of Forest Service Roads and is a popular 4x4 and adventure bike route during the summer. There are several concerns with this route that do not make it acceptable to use as an evacuation route:

1. The overall length from Harrison Hot Springs to Highway 1 in Boston Bar is approximately 127 km. There are no fuel stations along the route and cell service is limited to a short distance at each end of the route.
2. The Kookipi Creek Forest Service Road is prone to rockslides which can close the road at any time of the year.
3. The Shovel Creek and Kookipi Creek Forest Service Roads are not well maintained and can be closed due to both snow accumulations and rockslides for long periods of time.

4. There are several road sections that are recommended as 4x4 only.
5. Should Harrison Hot Springs need to evacuate due to a threat from wildfire, it is likely that this area would also be at risk to a wildfire.
6. The Harrison East Forest Service Road runs along the east bank of Harrison Lake, rendering evacuation due to a tsunami potentially fruitless.

Slollicum Forest Service Road to Loughheed Highway

A route from the Harrison East Forest Service Road via the Slollicum Forest Service Road to Ruby Creek Forest Service Road would follow a combination of existing, recently deactivated roads and proposed new roads above the northern extents of the Sasquatch Provincial Park boundary. There are two different route options with different variations of the road connection (upper and lower), each of which would be very difficult due to high construction costs and potentially inaccessible to many vehicles (likely 4x4 only access). Both options require new road to be constructed to connect between existing unmaintained road sections.

There are several concerns with these route options that do not make it palatable to use as an evacuation route:

1. The lower road option would be difficult to construct and extremely costly. The road crosses an area that is likely classified as Terrain Class IV or V.
2. The upper road option crosses through the alpine area and would be difficult to maintain throughout the year. Snow accumulations would close the road each winter, likely from November to April.
3. The lower road option would have ongoing maintenance items related to the steep terrain.
4. Should Harrison Hot Springs need to evacuate due to a threat from wildfire, it is likely that this area would also be at risk to a wildfire.

First Nations and Local Government Discussions

This is a joint application between the District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs. The two communities have a joint emergency planning committee where this emergency evacuation route has been discussed for well over twenty years.

If this project is completed, the residents and visitors to the Village of Harrison Hot Springs and the north end of the District of Kent will be able to use this evacuation route should there be an extended closure of Highway 9 north of Golf Road.

s. 13, s. 16

The Crown lands are within the Fraser Valley Regional District.

Additional responses were received:

1. In June 2022, Yale First Nation agreed that an emergency route through the area could be of good use s. 13, s. 16
2. A letter received in June 2023 from Skawahlook First Nation offered support s. 13, s. 16 to the proposed emergency route.

Known Interested Community Groups

The District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs are not aware of any community groups with an interest in the protected area. Both communities have been approached by an individual residing in the District of Kent who is opposed to the proposed emergency evacuation route through Sasquatch Park as the proponent has stated that there is no compelling reason that the road would protect human health or alleviate safety concerns.

Known Environmental Issues

Sasquatch Provincial Park is home to several wildlife species including beaver, mountain goat, woodpeckers, warblers, and vireos. Several rare species have been observed in the park, including the bald eagle, tailed frog, and black petaltail dragonfly. The project area is within Wildlife Habitat Area 2-499, and as such has special management restrictions to accommodate spotted owls.

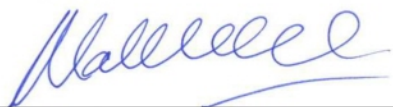
In this project, no new roads will be constructed (with old, deactivated railway grade upgraded) to minimize the disturbance to the environment.

Anticipated Project Schedule

Funding has not yet been secured for this project; therefore, a start date has not been determined. Based on the increasing frequency of natural disasters, as well as the impact of the annual freshet on Highway 9 (Rockwell Drive), our communities are strongly encouraging the Provincial government to be proactive and timely in moving this project forward.

Once approvals and funding are in place, the Onsite Engineering Ltd. report anticipated that the design finalization will take approximately two months, and with construction an additional three months.

Best regards,



Wallace Mah, CAO
District of Kent



Tyson Koch, CAO
Village of Harrison Hot Springs

Appendix A – Maps



Figure 1. General Overview of Rockwell Drive to Lougheed Highway

- Existing Railway Grade —
- Existing Forest Service Road (Unmaintained) —
- Existing Maintained Access Roads —

