

2.0 Context

2.1 Plan Area

The Cariboo Regional District is located in the central interior of B.C. It encompasses an area of 80,262 km². The majority of the population is concentrated in a central corridor roughly defined by the Fraser River Basin and Highway 97. Three main urban centers have developed along Highway 97, the southernmost being the District of 100 Mile House. Quesnel is located at the north end of the Regional District and Williams Lake is located halfway between the two. To the east and to the west of this “urban corridor” is a large, sparsely settled area where the economy and way of life are largely dependent on the natural resource potential of the land.

Lac La Hache is a smaller rural community located approximately 25 kilometres north of the District of 100 Mile House along the Cariboo Highway. Lac La Hache is the second largest of a number of unincorporated rural centres along Highway #97 between 100 Mile House and Williams Lake with 108 Mile Ranch being the largest. Highway #97 and BC Rail provide major transportation links through Lac La Hache.

2.2 Demographics and Population Projections

According to the 2011 Canada census, the population of the Lac La Hache OCP area is 860, with three-quarters of the population over the age of 40, and 92% over the age of 15. Data indicates a gap between the younger generation (0-39 years of age) and the older population. This indicates that the population of the area is definitely aging, and there is not a sufficient younger population to maintain stability in the long-term. However there is an influx of older people into the community. This indicates that the Lac La Hache area attracts many retirees.

Five sixths of Lac La Hache households (84%) consist of one or two people. Just over 50% of these households consist of two people or couples. Less than 7% of the households consist of three persons compared to 14% for the Cariboo Regional District as a whole. The 2011 average household size in the plan area is 2 persons per household compared to 2.4 for the Cariboo Regional District and 2.5 for B.C.

The initial 2016 Census results indicates the population of Electoral Area 'G', which includes Lac La Hache OCP area, increased by 4.1% since 2011.

2.3 Housing

A current breakdown of the built area cannot be provided as valid data from the 2011 National Household Survey is not available. However, the built environment consists overwhelmingly of single-family dwellings (87%) with mobile homes accounting for almost all other dwelling types (10%).

Approximately five of every six residential properties are occupied by owners (83%) with renters comprising the remaining 17%. In the Lac La Hache OCP area, there are no multi-family rental properties. This does not exclude the possibility that some of the properties in the area might be leased as opposed to being owner-occupied. There is one existing mobile home park in conjunction with the Kokanee Bay Resort and a second one being developed south-east of the Lac La Hache Townsite.

2.4 Future Housing Requirements & Land Availability

The growth of a rural community such as Lac La Hache depends on a variety of factors such as job opportunities, the cost of living, the quality of life and the desire for lifestyle changes. As determined previously, the Lac La Hache area is a popular place for family vacations and people retiring. The size of the lake, its easy access, its potential for water-related recreational activities, the presence of wildlife and waterfowl, and attractive surroundings, are all factors which contribute to making the lake area a prime choice for a seasonal or permanent residence. Future growth in the Lac La Hache area will largely depend on economic opportunities. The area's ability to preserve the features which attracted residents in the first place and to provide adequate servicing will also be factors.

The estimated population of the Lac La Hache OCP area was calculated according to three different scenarios:

- i Continue the present trend of a modest but sustained population decrease over the next 20 years.
- ii Stable population over the next 20 years – no long term increase or decrease. Due to an aging demographic, more supporting housing will be required. Although single family dwellings will predominate, properties with large acreages will have limited demand. More attached dwellings will be needed which will favour the Lac La Hache Townsite due to the availability of community sewer and water services, some local commercial services and a nearby population; and
- iii Modest but sustained population increase with an average annual growth rate of 1.0% over the next 20 years. This would go beyond population stability and would require economic drivers such as enhanced agricultural viability, tourism or other employment generators.

According to the average trends used to establish the growth projections, a minimum of 95 dwelling units and a maximum of 115 new housing units would be required by the year 2031 within the plan area to meet the anticipated housing demand. Any needed replacement housing stock would be in addition to these estimates.

There are currently 186 vacant lots zoned as residential within the plan area. There are 174 parcels under 10 hectares in the Lac La Hache plan, with 25 of the lots being under 0.8 hectares and within the Townsite. Most of these properties are privately owned, with some Crown Provincial land holdings. This inventory of vacant lots will accommodate each of these population scenarios.

2.5 Economy

The Lac La Hache Area is largely a resource-based economy.

Forestry

According to BC Stats, 83% of jobs in the Cariboo region in 2013 were related to the forest products manufacturing industry. This observation conveys the level of economic dependency that the region has on Forestry. With this in mind, the Cariboo and South Cariboo in particular have experienced substantial impacts as a result of the Mountain Pine Beetle outbreak that swept across the province beginning in 2000. Although the spread of the beetle has subsided, it has left millions of hectares of standing dead pine on the landscape. Changes on the landscape are not only represented by economic changes but other impacts include changes in hydrology, increased fire risk and magnitude, and changes to Annual Allowable Cuts (AAC) throughout pine dominant regions in BC.

The total area of the 100 Mile House Timber Supply Area (TSA) is about 1.24 million hectares. Lac La Hache is one of the smaller communities in the TSA along with Forest Grove, 70 Mile House, Lone Butte and Bridge Lake. The larger communities within the TSA are 100 Mile House, 108 Mile Ranch and Clinton.

Before 2006, the forestry sector provided 1,488 direct, indirect and induced employment (and before the Community Forest Agreement was removed from the TSA). This figure increased to 1,757 people employed from 2007 to 2011 based on the average harvest (employment gains from the increased harvest levels were partially offset by efficiency gains by industry). Employment is expected to drop to 593 by 2022 without a mitigation scenario although it is expected that the community forests will contribute to the employment of 6 additional people.

Of the total forest sector jobs, 31% are involved with harvesting and silviculture, 45% are in timber processing and 24% are indirect plus induced jobs generated by the forest sector.

Agriculture

Cattle ranching and forage production are the primary agricultural activities in the Cariboo. The region produces approximately 20% of the beef cattle in the province. Ranching became established in the Cariboo during the 1860's Gold Rush and spread from Fort Alexandria (south of Quesnel) along the Cariboo Wagon Road to service the early demand for agricultural products. Ranch operations have subsequently been established throughout the Cariboo, mainly in areas that offer grazing opportunities on Crown Land.

A large majority of land within the Lac La Hache OCP area is in the ALR. There are approximately 11,528 ha of land in the ALR within the Lac La Hache plan area. Of this land, 10,467 ha are available for farming or are currently being cultivated. The agriculture capability¹ of this area is rated from Class 3 to Class 7, but is dominated by Class 5 soils (74% or 7,702 ha) that are primarily limited by steep topography and stoniness. Stoniness can be improved by one class through stone picking measures; however, topography is not considered improvable. Therefore, the improved capability is the same as the unimproved capability (Class 5). Of the remaining area, 1,566 ha (15%) is Class 3, 968 ha (9%) is Class 4, 221 ha is Class 6 (2%) and 10 ha (<1%) is Class 7 land.

Based on the 2014 Agricultural Land Use Inventory results, of the 11,528 ha of ALR land in Lac La Hache and the land surveyed in preparing that inventory, approximately 9,395 ha (81% of the ALR) is currently used for natural pasture/rangeland and 420 ha (4%) is cultivated farmland. The remaining areas are comprised of naturally vegetated areas, as well as land that is not farmed or grazed due to an existing land use or unsuitable land cover. Natural pasture and rangeland is a critical component to the beef industry in the South Cariboo. The majority of all natural pasture and rangeland is in "treed closed" land cover (>60% vegetation cover is treed). More than 70% of this land is held by the Crown. Although much of this land could be brought into production, a significant proportion is limited by soil and/or climate conditions.

Some land is currently irrigated and there is some potential for additional farm development through irrigation, as shown in the 2015 Agriculture Water Demand Model.

Tourism

The Cariboo-Chilcotin tourism potential is linked to its outdoor recreation and wilderness setting which features a wide variety of fish and wildlife, extensive mountain ranges, grasslands, forests, and an abundance of lakes and rivers. Because of its close link to the land base, tourism can be successfully

¹ The Canada Land Inventory uses seven classes to map and rate agricultural land capability in rural Canada. Class 1 lands have the highest capability to support agricultural land use activities (but are not present in the Lac La Hache area). Class 7 lands have the lowest agricultural capability. Subclasses such as topography and stoniness are used to identify specific limiting factors for each class.

integrated with other land uses such as agriculture, recreation, forest harvesting, renewal, and settlement.

Tourism has the potential to increase within the South Cariboo area – including Lac La Hache – because of its close proximity to natural, historical and cultural resources. Although the summer months are considered “high time” for tourism, there are a number of tourism opportunities that take place in the fall and winter months within the area. These activities may include cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and guide outfitting.

Commercial Services

The Lac La Hache OCP area is almost entirely serviced by highway-oriented activities such as gas stations, motels, and a few restaurants. However, the area has no major local commercial development due to its low population and its proximity to two a wide range of commercial services in Williams Lake (65 kilometres to the north) and 100 Mile House (25 kilometres to the south). The District of 100 Mile House is well established as the commercial heart of the South Cariboo. The commercial services of Lac La Hache either complement these services or supply a locally-oriented type of servicing.

2.6 Community Direction

Consultation with residents took place through two Open Houses, a booth at the Lac La Hache Garlic Festival, Christmas Fair, and three community surveys, all in 2016. The consultation identified the following priorities:

- Improving and expanding infrastructure services (sewer, water);
- Protecting our lakes and groundwater;
- Preparing for an aging population (e.g., services, housing option);
- Residential development;
- Protecting and enhancing our agricultural resources (e.g. ALR);
- Economic development including enhancing commercial & industrial lands;
- Improving transportation options and connections; and
- Supporting resource development in the region.

Over 80% of all respondents identified the following positive attributes of Lac La Hache:

- the rural lifestyle, and
- access to nature and recreation opportunities.

The four key themes expressed for the Lac La Hache Area OCP Update consisted of the following:

1. concern over economic development opportunities in the area;
2. how to retain/encourage residents to the area;

3. a desire for increased services (e.g. commercial and transportation focused); and
4. the protection of the natural environment.