

Lac La Hache Area

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

Technical Background Report

Summary of Findings

June 2016



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Terrain Analysis

The Lac La Hache plan area is located in the Central Interior of British Columbia and is mostly comprised of gently rolling terrain that reflects the deposition of glacial till during the most-recent glaciation. In addition to the predominant glacial till, there are pockets of colluvial, glacio-lacustrine, and alluvial deposits in the plan area. Previous analysis of slopes, hydrology, geology and vegetation has demonstrated that there are few topographical constraints on land use. The terrain is gently rolling in most places and only a few strong slopes were identified.

Water Resource

Lac La Hache is the center of the plan area, and comprises 19.1 km and over 38 km of shoreline. The Lac La Hache discharges into the San Jose River and flows northwest to Williams Lake. Tributaries of Lac La Hache include 111 Mile, 117 Mile, Forbes, Helena, Goose, and Neil Creeks. Lac La Hache is considered sensitive due to its relatively shallow basin and slow flushing rate (estimated average about 12 years). Planning considerations to support water resources include measures to preserve water quality and maintain riparian habitat integrity.

ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The Lac La Hache plan area is located within the Cariboo Basin ecosection of the Central Interior. Forests dominated by Douglas-fir, grassland and wetland habitats in the area support a diversity of wildlife, including many rare species found at the northern extent of their ranges in North America. Ungulates rely on the winter range habitat located throughout the plan area. Deer and moose in particular are valued for subsistence and recreational hunting, which is an economic driver for the region. Lac La Hache and local tributaries include sensitive fish habitat, especially for kokanee, rainbow and lake trout that attract sport fishing enthusiasts. Ecological resources in the plan area are affected by forestry activities (e.g. fire control, harvesting), agricultural practices (e.g. domestic grazing, cultivating wetland habitat) and human settlement.

FORESTRY

The forest industry is a major employer in the Cariboo region. The provincial forest covers approximately 60% of the Lac La Hache plan area. The CRD has no jurisdiction over the provincial forest, however the official community plan should include policies which aim at minimizing impact between forest harvesting activities and residential development. Because of the risk of forest fires associated with the increasing number of subdivisions in forested areas, the issue of safety and prevention through appropriate design should be taken into consideration in the plan.

AGRICULTURE

A large proportion of the Lac La Hache plan area is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). According to the 2014 Agricultural Land Use Inventory, 84% of the area (11,528 ha) is ALR. Of this, more than 70% is held by the Crown. Most ALR land (>90%) is in a natural or semi-natural state and is used primarily for

grazing. Grazing is a very important activity in the plan area as many residents earn their livelihood from ranching.

The majority of land in the ALR is rated as Class 5; limited primarily by steep topography and stoniness. Stoniness can be improved by one class through measures like stone picking; however it is not feasible to improve topography. Therefore, overall, Class 5 land is not considered improvable. Class 5 land is capable of producing perennial forage crops only. Soil and/or climate restrictions severely limit capability.

In 2015 the provincial government amended the Agricultural Land Reserve Act to create two zones in the ALR. The plan area is within Zone 2, which means that social, economic, and cultural values and regional and community planning objectives are considered when making decisions, in addition to the primary ALR objectives of preserving agricultural land and encouraging farming. Because of the proximity between agricultural land and residential subdivisions, land within the ALR should continue to be adequately buffered to minimize potential for conflict.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Commercial activities in the plan area are exclusively concentrated along the Highway #97 corridor. Services include gas stations, motels and a few restaurants. Local residents are served by a number of convenience stores which provide day-to-day necessities, however the area has no major local commercial development due to the low population and proximity to shopping centres in Williams Lake and 100 Mile House. Within the plan area, approximately 27 hectares of land is zoned commercial of which 3.7 hectares is vacant. There are a total of 36 commercial properties with a majority zoned for general commercial uses.

A Development Permit Area (DPA) along the Highway #97 corridor is in place to establish design guidelines for the form and character of new commercial buildings, as well as the renovation of older ones. The DPA includes a Gold Rush/Western Theme. Limited implementation has occurred as few development permits have been issued in recent years.

INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

The industrial sector of Lac La Hache is not a significant part of the local economy. Within the Lac La Hache study area, there is approximately 5.7 hectares of land zoned for industrial purposes. This consists of 7 properties, most of which are zoned for general industrial purposes.

TOURISM INDUSTRY AND RECREATIONAL LAND USE

Tourism is one of the province's largest industries. The Cariboo-Chilcotin's tourism potential is linked to its outdoor recreation and wilderness setting which features a wide variety of fish and wildlife, grasslands, forest ranges and an abundance of lakes and rivers. Because of its close link to the land base, tourism can be successfully integrated with other land uses such as agriculture and forest harvesting. Tourism has the potential to increase in the Lac La Hache area because of its close proximity to natural, historical and cultural resources.

PROFILE OF THE COMMUNITY

According to the 2011 Canadian census, the population of the Lac La Hache plan area is 860, with 75% of the population over the age of 40, and 92% over the age of 15. There is a sizeable gap between the younger and older populations indicating that population of the area is definitely aging and that there may not be a sufficient number of younger people in the area to maintain stability in the long-term. However there is an influx of older people into the community - indicating that the Lac La Hache area attracts many retirees.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUILT AREA

Residential development within the study area has occurred mainly along the lake, and more predominantly on the north and southeastern shoreline. Single-family dwellings are the main type of dwellings built in the area (87 %) with mobile homes accounting for 10% of all residential dwellings.

LAND AVAILABILITY FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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 a change in lifestyle. The size of the lake and 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 the area's ability to preserve the features which attracted residents in the first place and to provide adequate servicing.

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. In the event of 1% population growth over the next 20 years, it would generate demand for a minimum of 95 dwelling units and a maximum of 115 new housing units within Lac La Hache. Any needed replacement housing stock would be in addition to these estimates.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

Since the late 1970's, the Lac La Hache townsite has been serviced by a community sewage system, which is currently utilized by approximately 350 people. The collection system was designed for a maximum capacity of 2,500 people although the treatment system is only designed for a maximum capacity of 1,000 people. The rest of the study area has on-site sewage disposal systems; Local observations suggest that the lake is being contaminated from malfunctioning on-site sewage disposal systems and that the existing residential density along the lake contributes to the degradation of the lake water quality.

WATER SYSTEM

The townsite of the Lac La Hache community is serviced by a community water system. Approximately 400 people are currently serviced by the system. Outside the community water

boundary, dwellings are serviced by individual, privately-owned wells. There is increasing concern that further development within the plan area may impact on the water quality of Lac La Hache.

TRANSPORTATION

The Lac La Hache study area is bisected along Lac La Hache by Highway #97. The corridor provides service to resource areas and the various communities along the route it follows. In addition to providing access to forests, agricultural land and recreation areas, the Cariboo Highway is the prime conduit for resource industry products destined for provincial and export markets. The highway also serves a secondary function in the minor commuter sheds of 100 Mile House, Williams Lake, Quesnel, and Prince George. Long term plans of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure call for the widening of the Highway #97 to four lanes from Cache Creek to Prince George.

FIRE PROTECTION

The Lac La Hache Fire Protection Specified Area is entirely located within the plan area. The fire protection boundary is established at five road miles (eight kilometres) from the servicing fire station. There are approximately twenty volunteer fire fighters within this fire protection area.

PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

The plan area contains one elementary school: Lac La Hache Elementary School. The total enrolment of the school as of September 30th 2015 was 19 students. The total capacity of the school is 170 students. High School students are bused to Peter Ogden Secondary located in the District of 100 Mile House approximately 25 kilometres south of the Lac La Hache townsite.

HEALTH SERVICES

There are no health services provided to residents within the Lac La Hache study area. The area residents must travel to the District of 100 Mile House or Williams Lake for any health service.

PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS

The Lac La Hache area is well known as a recreational area, primarily because of its water related recreational values: fishing, boating, and swimming. The area attracts many vacationers during the summer months with the various resorts and camping facilities responding to their recreational needs. However, the needs of the permanent population are not met satisfactorily.

The number of public accesses to Lac La Hache is limited. In addition, the visibility of existing public accesses is limited by a lack of directional signage, demarcated pathways and, in some cases, fenced accesses adjacent to private properties precluding public access. Improved accesses to the lake and signage would enhance the local recreational value of the lake.

PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORICAL HERITAGE

Three buildings within the plan area have been evaluated for their heritage significance – they were part of what is locally known as the Felker Ranch – and have been retained to preserve the Cariboo heritage legacy.