



August 27, 2018

Honorable Doug Donaldson
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
P.O. Box 9049
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W9E2

SENT VIA EMAIL: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Donaldson,

RE: Notice of Kaska Nation Hunting Closure due to Wildfire Impacts

We write to provide notice to the Province of British Columbia of the Kaska Nation's decision to prohibit hunting within some of the BC portions of the Kaska Territory. This decision has been collectively made by the Kaska communities of Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, and Kwadacha Nation, as well as their representative entity, the Kaska Dena Council. We request your immediate assistance and full support in administering and implementing this closure.

As you are well aware, extensive parts of the Kaska Territory have recently been under a state of emergency due to widespread wildfires, including in the areas surrounding the community of Lower Post. Notably, these latter areas have been under an evacuation order since August 21st due to the Blue River and Lutz Creek wildfires that continue to burn and threaten the Dease and Liard River valleys.

These wildfires have had significant impacts on our Indigenous Title lands, our communities, and our members' abilities to exercise their Indigenous Rights. Concurrently, they are causing great stresses and impacts on the wildlife populations within and surrounding the Kaska Territory. Due to the scale of fire and smoke impacts across our Territory, many animals have been forced to leave their normal ranges, causing further pressures on other wildlife species that live and depend on the forests, lakes, rivers and mountains across and surrounding our Territory.

As wildlife are forced to shift their travel patterns to avoid and/or escape the blazing wildfires and heavy smoke, our members have observed increased wildlife presence on the roadways that cross our Territory – this has led to an increase in traffic accidents, and wildlife mortality from road kill. Concurrently, our members have been pulled away to deal with the wildfire impacts and response requirements. Accordingly, our local governments and Land Guardians, who play a vital role in overseeing hunting activities in our Territory, have been unable to carry out their regular monitoring activities. Such monitoring activities are a vital element to our exercise of jurisdiction and authority over resource uses, including hunting activities, within our Territory.

In light of our current inability to carry out comprehensive monitoring of hunting activities, the increased risks of wildlife on roadways, and the current vulnerability of wildlife across our Territory,

we have decided to issue the hunting closure in particularly impacted areas of the BC portion of our Territory. This closure will remain in effect until such time that we are able to assess the situation and make an informed decision on the impact of these wildfires on the wildlife that live in and depend on the lands, waters and resources within our Territory.

Based on your Government's strong commitment to respect Indigenous Title and Rights, and fully implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, we respectfully request the Province of British Columbia's assistance in prohibiting all hunting activities by way of a temporary hunting closure in the following locations within the Kaska Territory:

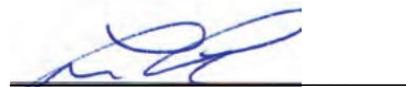
- Wildlife Management Units 6-23, 6-24, 6-25, 7-40, 7-41, 7-51, 7-52, 7-53 and 7-54;
- in and surrounding the areas impacted by the wildfires north of Dease Lake (i.e., around our communities situated in and around the Dease, Liard, Turnagain and Kechika Rivers);
- in and around the Cassiar Highway surrounding the community of Good Hope Lake;
- Alaska Highway from north of Muncho Lake to the community of Lower Post; and
- in and around the community of Kwadacha and associated roadways due to the extreme fire risk and one ground access route out of the community in case of an evacuation.

These areas are depicted in the map enclosed with this letter.

Other areas may also require hunting closures if new wildfires are sparked therein, which areas we would be pleased to work closely with the Province of British Columbia in assessing the need for further hunting closures as required.

We thank you in advance for your assistance and look forward to working closely with you to address the current situation and seek to mitigate the long-term impacts on our Indigenous Title and Rights. In that regard, we request a meeting with you as soon as possible to begin discussions on how we may work together in implementing the temporary hunting closure in a reasonable and respectful manner. Please contact Norm Maclean (nmaclean@lgl.com) at (867) 333-9511 to arrange this meeting.

Sincerely,



Deputy Chief Fred Lutz
Daylu Dena Council



Chief Myles Manygreyhorses
Dease River First Nation



Chief Donny Van Somer
Kwadacha Nation



Chair Danny Case
Kaska Dena Council

cc:

Bruce Low Bruce.Low@gov.bc.ca

Eamon O'Donoghue Eamon.ODonoghue@gov.bc.ca

enclosure: Kaska Territory – Hunting Closure 2018 Map

