

Chapter 1: Introduction - COTA SIR Tourism Sector Strategy

The Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) epidemic has negatively impacted regional economies that are dependent on lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine harvesting and processing in three regions of British Columbia (BC): the Cariboo Chilcotin, Omineca and Southern Interior. Tourism offers an opportunity to diversify the MPB impacted economies and as such, strategies were developed for each of these regions. To that end, the Council of Tourism Associations of BC (COTA) supported tourism planning projects with the Southern Interior and Omineca Beetle Action Coalitions (SIBAC¹, OBAC²). A tourism sector strategy was also developed for the Cariboo Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition (CCBAC³) in 2008. At the conclusion of these three strategy development processes, COTA will facilitate the development of a “B.C. Tourism Industry Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy” to help diversify and strengthen B.C. regions and communities impacted by MPB.

SIBAC, comprising representatives from nine (9) Regional Districts and six (6) Tribal Councils in the Southern Interior was established for the short term, to better understand, through studies and community consultation, the impact and mitigation of the MPB infestation on communities in the region.

This report profiles the development of a tourism strategy for the Southern Interior. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the project as a whole in relation to other associated provincial initiatives and outlines the purpose, the study area involved and the methodology followed in reaching the conclusions and recommendations arising from this work. Chapter 2 provides details on the tourism development context for the region, while Chapter 3 assesses tourism opportunities and challenges, and Chapter 4 contains the Tourism Strategy / Recommendations.

Note: readers with a detailed familiarity with the B.C. tourism industry may wish to skip ahead to Chapter 3 (Opportunities and Challenges) and/or Chapter 4 (Strategy/Recommendations) of the report.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is:

To maximize tourism opportunities within the Southern Interior Region in response to the Mountain Pine Beetle.

Certain Timber Supply Areas (TSAs) in the southern interior region were especially hard hit by the MPB, due to the prevalence of pine species within the forested land base.

¹ <http://sibacs.com/>

² <http://www.ominecacoalition.ca/>

³ <http://c-cbac.com/>

Considerable tourism strategy development work has already been undertaken to support the development and expansion of tourism in the region. A number of community level tourism plans were completed through Tourism BC's (TBC) Community Tourism Foundations (CTF) program and earlier Tourism Opportunities Studies (TOS). Marketing initiatives developed by regional and community Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMOs) are also in place.

The focus of this report, therefore is two-fold:

- The development of a regional strategy that will assist communities to attract tourism investment, enhance existing tourism business opportunities, and promote overall development in the tourism sector. The strategy also suggests tools and recommendations that reduce and mitigate impacts of forest management practices in MPB affected forests in order that those impacts minimally affect the land base assets that tourism relies on in order to support the long-term viability of the tourism sector. The Tourism Strategy is intended to look long term, recognizing that global and regional influences will vary and change over time;
- A more detailed look at the four hardest-hit Timber Supply Areas (TSAs) in the Southern Interior as identified through the work of SIBAC.

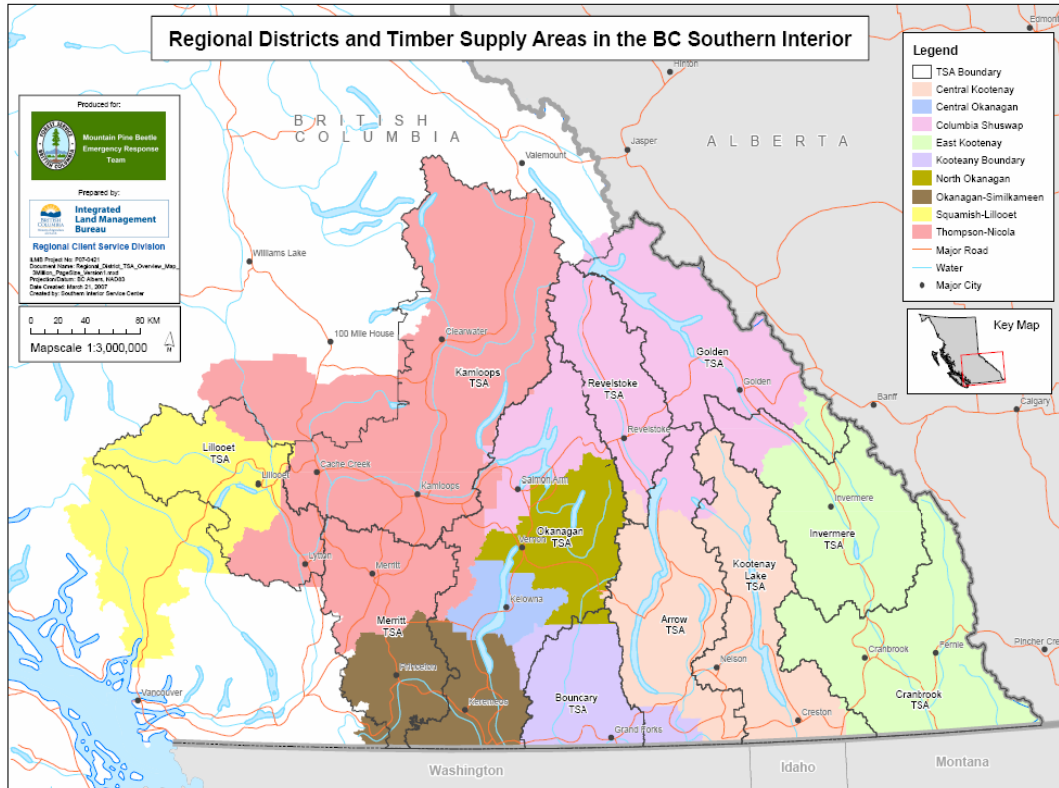
The final strategy report contains recommendations, advice, and positions to influence decisions that support tourism development in the Southern Interior, and contributes to the:

- Final regional SIBAC report; and
- Provincial BC Tourism Industry Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy.

Study Area

The Southern Interior Region has many jurisdictional boundaries. For the purposes of this study, the Southern Interior Region lies within the eleven TSA boundaries as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: TSA Boundaries for the Area, Government of British Columbia



There are 9 Regional Districts (shown in colour in Figure 1), 56 Municipalities (Table 1), 6 Tribal Councils and 50 First Nation Communities (Table 2) in the Southern Interior.

Table 1: Regional and Local Governments

Squamish-Lillooet (within Lillooet TSA)
Lillooet (Squamish, Pemberton, Whistler)
Okanagan-Similkameen
Keremeos, Oliver, Osoyoos, Penticton, Princeton, Summerland
Thompson-Nicola
Ashcroft, Barriere, Cache Creek, Chase, Clearwater, Clinton, Kamloops, Logan Lake, Lytton, Merritt
Central Okanagan
Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, West Kelowna
North Okanagan
Armstrong, Coldstream, Enderby, Lumby, Spallumcheen, Vernon
Columbia-Shuswap
Golden, Revelstoke, Salmon Arm, Sicamous
Central Kootenay
Castlegar, Creston, Kaslo, Nakusp, Nelson, New Denver, Salmo, Siverton, Slocan
East Kootenay
Cranbrook, Elkford, Fernie, Invermere, Kimberley, Radium Hot Springs, Sparwood, Canal Flats
Kootenay Boundary
Fruitvale, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway, Montrose, Rossland, Trail, Warfield

Table 2: First Nations Tribal Councils and Communities

Lillooet Tribal Council
Seton Lake, Bridge River, Cayoosh Creek, T'it'q'et (Lillooet) Ts'Kw'aylaxw (Pavilion), Xaxli'p (Fountain) (Mount Currie lies outside Lillooet TSA)
Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
Adams Lake, Kamloops, Shuswap, Little Shuswap, Neskonlith, Skeetchestn, Splots'in, Bonaparte, Whispering Pines, Simpcw (North Thompson)
Nlaka'pamux Nation (NNTC)
Ashcroft, Boothroyd (Boston Bar), Boston Bar, Oregon Jack Creek (near Ashcroft), Lytton, Spuzzum
Nicola Tribal Association (NTA)
Coldwater, Cook's Ferry, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch; Nicomen; Shackan; Siska
Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
Lower Similkameen, Okanagan, Osoyoos, Penticton, Upper Nicola Band, Upper Similkameen, Westbank
Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC)
Columbia Lake, St. Marys, Tobacco Plains, Lower Kootenay

Methodology

Establishing a Working Group

The Project Team (a group of five Independent Consultants selected through an RFP process) worked with COTA and its main partners (SIBAC, Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC), MPB Epidemic Response Team and TBC) to build the most inclusive and effective working group possible. An invitation to participate was extended to over seventy potential Working Group members with the expectation that more would have an opportunity to participate by survey and discussion group sessions. Due to the relatively short time frame within which the report needed to be completed, the majority of feedback from the Working Group is by email and sessions in the four communities that are located in the four hardest hit TSAs.

Examination/Review of Existing Strategy Work and other Related Literature

This literature review phase entailed summarizing the substantial work already undertaken with respect to gathering public/stakeholder input for various plans throughout the Province and region. This Backgrounder has been compiled from these resources as well as Provincial statistics provided by BC Stats. Appendix A lists the major documents/reports reviewed.

Survey

Additional input was gathered outside formal Working Group sessions on opportunities, barriers, and most requested tools/services that should be further developed. Using an online survey enabled greater participation from tourism stakeholders. The survey was widely distributed by the regional Tourism Associations' partner lists and a number of Chambers of Commerce in the region. Responses were added to the information gleaned from the four discussion sessions. A summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix B.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (S.W.O.T.)

A succinct, up-to-date regional SWOT analysis based on industry trends was completed. The analysis identified barriers and opportunities (internal and external) in development of the tourism sector in the Southern Interior. The SWOT analysis identifies and explains a short list of critical determinants of regional tourism development and future opportunities.

Data for this analysis was compiled from earlier SWOT analyses carried out earlier from other projects as well as from feedback from the Working Group and the broader tourism stakeholder group via an online survey and the discussion sessions. Challenges and opportunities were short-listed for use in the working group (and other) sessions that focus on solution strategies.

Tourism Land Values and Interests Analysis

Identification of four "focus areas" hardest hit by MPB and in most need of strategic action (as identified by SIBAC Socio Economic Assessments (SEA)), and [Provincial MPB Action Plan](#), was completed in cooperation with SIBAC. As stated in previous sections, these focus areas were Cranbrook, Kamloops,

Lillooet and Merritt TSAs. Four one-day work sessions were held in each TSA, and comprised a morning mapping session, followed by an afternoon strategy development session.

The purpose of utilizing spatial data gathering methods for each focus area was to have industry, First Nation and government “experts” identify high value tourism areas on mylars and maps. Research of existing land-based studies in these focus areas was completed prior to the initiation of the mapping sessions. While it was determined that there are data gaps in spatial tourism information, those concerns were beyond the resources of this strategy work.

Generation of base maps and relevant spatial analysis of tourism indicators from the BC Land and Resource Data Warehouse were produced for the TSA mapping sessions. Tourism indicator maps were presented at each session for reference by participants who were identifying high value tourism features on mylar overlays. These maps included:

- MoFR Forest Recreation maps of Recreation sites and trails,
- Resource Feature Inventories (RFI),
- Resource Opportunity Spectrum (ROS),
- Resorts Developments in BC,
- Commercial Backcountry Tenures, and
- Recreation Use maps from applicable Land and Resource Management Plans.

Regional “expert” participants at the mapping session in each focus area ‘manually’ produced a high value tourism map by identifying areas that rated significant in terms of having natural features, existing use, destination attractions and supportive infrastructure. Permanent pen markings on mylar, enhanced by annotated text enabled digitization of the resultant High Value Tourism maps for use in the plan, thus providing background information for focus areas and subsequent strategy/action plan development.

The strategy development sessions consisted of a broader discussion about significant tourism issues and possible regional mitigation options and opportunities and were not restricted to focus areas. The range of participants was diverse. Once several issues were identified by participants, the issues were prioritized, and sub-groups formed to develop subsequent action plans to feed back into the strategy framework.

The aforementioned sessions took place on April 3rd, 14th, 16th, and 20th, 2009 in Kamloops, Merritt, Cranbrook and Lillooet.

Sector/Solution Development Final Report and Action Plan

The final report was developed iteratively, through analysis of the existing tourism literature, input received in community consultations, and feedback from members of the Working Group and Project Steering Committee. It is expected there will be a wide-range of end users for this sector strategy. They could include: politicians, researchers, neighbouring communities and regions, policy makers, First Nations, private sector businesses, industry groups, and others.

