



ALBERTA

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

*Office of the Minister  
MLA, Drayton Valley-Devon*

MAR 19 2013

AR 51705

March 13, 2013

Ms. Christyann Olson, Executive Director  
Alberta Wilderness Association  
Box 6398, Station D  
Calgary, AB T2P 2E1

Dear Ms. Olson:

Thank you for your letter dated January 18, 2013, following up after your tour of the Hidden Creek timber operations and your meeting with Environment and Sustainable Resource Development staff. I am pleased to provide you with the following information.

Spray Lake Sawmills submitted its original annual operating plan in 2009 and, at that time new research identified Hidden Creek as a primary spawning tributary for bull trout. Based on that research, our department began the process of reclassifying Hidden Creek to a Class A water body under the *Water Act*.

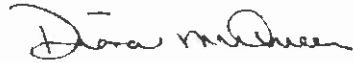
When bull trout were designated a species of special concern, our staff, including fisheries biologists, had reviewed the annual operating plan and requested that the company develop alternate harvesting strategies and road options within the watershed. The company resubmitted an adjusted plan and, as a result, our department did not require a compartment analysis to be completed.

Class A standards in the C5 Forest Management Plan allow for use of existing roads within the watercourse buffer. The road deviation is noted on the map submitted with the forest harvest plan and annual operationing plan. This map constitutes part of the documentation that makes up the file. These portions of the road will be reclaimed to pre-harvest standard or better, and reclamation of new construction has already begun.

Our ground rule watercourse buffer requirements meet the needs of the aquatic values. As well, the classification of tributaries to Hidden Creek follows the Spray Lakes and C5 Operating Ground Rules and, like all water bodies, qualified professionals completed this classification work. Fish and Wildlife staff have assessed the area on many occasions, and their recommendations were incorporated into the final harvest plan.

I appreciate your continued interest in the Hidden Creek area and thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana McQueen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Diana McQueen  
Minister

c: Honourable Alison M. Redford, QC  
Premier

Matthew Machielse  
Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Bruce Mayer  
Environment and Sustainable Resource Development