

# The Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) Process—A Viewpoint

Raymond A. Demarchi

**Editor's Note:** SRM and the Nat'l Assoc. Conservation Districts are jointly promoting the coordinated resource management planning (CRMP) process. This Viewpoint analytically assesses a huge CRMP program which began in mid 1975 and is on-going. Nowhere has the CRMP process been tested more thoroughly under extreme conditions as in the Kootenay Region of British Columbia.

The use of the coordinated resource management planning (CRMP) process in the Province of British Columbia, Canada, has had significant beneficial effects on wildlife habitats, range and forestry. Examples could be cited from the various regions of the Province, particularly the Kootenay, Okanagan, Thompson-Nicola and Chilcotin-Cariboo regions. However, nowhere in the Province has CRMP produced more pronounced effects to renewable resources and their management than in the Rocky Mountain Trench of the East Kootenay.

CRMP must be examined in the light of the geographical, ecological, social, political and economic conditions in the particular area where it has been applied. British Columbia is a province which consists largely of rugged, mountainous terrain or high plateaus with few low elevation valleys and plateaus suitable for human settlement. Most of this land—fully 92.5 percent—is publicly owned Crown land which is administered by the provincial government. Thus, a single provincial government owns and controls a land area consisting of more than 216 million acres. However, less than five percent of this land base is situated in valley bottoms in the southern half of the province and it is within these limited valleys that the numerous land use interests compete for land, resources and space.

The various provincial government agencies created to administer these public lands have conflicting mandates and the various resource interests often individually seek to maximize returns from their resource-use activities at the expense of others. Several attempts to develop a provincial land use management strategy have produced mixed results as public land ownership and land use planning appeared to be construed as "interference to progress".

The absence of any orderly approach to land use management has bred considerable conflict and controversy amongst user groups. The Rocky Mountain Trench of the East Kootenay region is a microcosm of the land use problem found almost everywhere else in the province with the exception of estuarine ones. Government ministry initiatives to maximize wood fibre, livestock, wildlife and recreation all on

the same acre all at the same time from land of variable capability has given the East Kootenay Region the reputation of being one of the most controversial if not hostile environments in which to practice forestry, operate a cattle ranch or to manage range or wildlife in the province. Other government and private initiatives such as hydro electric reservoir, utility and transportation corridor projects and urban, industrial and commercial recreational developments, mostly unplanned and often unilaterally imposed, have reduced the resource land base and heightened competition for remaining land and resources.

The uses made of the remaining public lands in the Rocky Mountain Trench—some 500,000 acres—are both varied and intensive. The opportunity to use these public lands for forestry, grazing, hunting and general recreation is often taken for granted by some individuals and user groups as no legislation yet exists which formally protects these lands from alienation (sale to the private sector mainly for residential use) or commits them to long-term resource management. The connection between resource availability and the maintenance of a productive, properly managed and legally protected public land base has just not occurred to many people. Others, upon learning of this for the first time, are astounded to learn that the provincial government has never developed a policy which would uphold retention of important resource lands in public ownership or a land use plan or strategy which would provide the basis for an improved system of resource management planning.

Perhaps this problematical situation on public lands in British Columbia is not unique. Certainly the province does not suffer from the same sort of complicated, multiple ownership of lands prevalent in the western United States or the overlapping jurisdictions of federal and state administrations. Superficially at least, the situation in British Columbia could be more readily resolved and the considerable energies spent in conflict and debate could be channelled towards developing commonly shared or non-conflicting goals and in resolving technical problems of public resource management in the province.

Before discussing the benefits from CRMP, it is worthwhile examining the differences between strategic land use planning and operational resource management planning. These terms, strategic and operational and land use and resource management, refer to the two basic levels of planning and are not mere planners' jargon. Strategic land use plans establish which land uses and how much of each use can and ultimately will be produced on a given planning unit. Although the data that are fed into the decision-making process may be edited, collated and analyzed by public em-

The author is regional wildlife biologist, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Ministry of Environment and Parks, Cranbrook, B.C., Canada. He has personally helped develop 25 coordinated plans which cover over 80 percent of the Rocky Mountain Trench—about 500,000 acres—in the Kootenay Region which lies in southeastern B.C. and extends from the U.S. border northward to Windmere Lake north of Radium Hot Springs, B.C.

ployees and private consultants, the ultimate decisions as to where and how much are *political*. Operational planning, such as coordinated resource management planning, must follow from official land use plans and strategies as it is the *operational* CRMP which sets out how and by whom the goals identified in the *strategic* land use plan are to be achieved. Because CRMP is essentially operational planning at the tree falling, cattle grazing, shrub burning, dirt moving level, the implementation of CRMP in the absence of a land use plan or strategy will ultimately lead to conflict and controversy.

This is the stage upon which CRMP was introduced to the East Kootenay Region in British Columbia in June 1975 and which led to conflict and controversy between resource agencies and uses after the benefits of CRMP first began to appear. Despite these shortcomings and the controversies which occurred, the benefits of CRMP are significant and would have been even greater if introduced after a land use strategy had been adopted by senior government.

The CRMP process, as well as defining the individual agency goals and objectives of distinct units of land, provided a forum whereby provincial government resource planners and managers could exchange information and resolve issues before they were escalated to senior bureaucratic or even political levels. Licenced or permitted resource users such as loggers and grazing permittees were included in the planning process thus removing a major obstacle towards integrated resource management—that of creating political issues of minor events by making decisions regarding public resources without consulting with the authorized users.

The impetus for CRMP in the East Kootenay was greater particularly when it became obvious that many of the concerns of resource users and managers were shared by either all or the majority of them. Examples of concerns shared between two or more resource interests include: (1) protection of the public land base from alienation or inimical land uses (there is little point in arguing over who gets to bat first when City Hall is planning to convert the ball park into a parking lot); (2) failure to replace periodic natural wildfires in fire-dependent plant communities with prescribed burning or planned forest harvesting (i.e., Smokey Bear syndrome); (3) severe overuse of preferred range sites by livestock as a result of improper livestock distribution and, conversely, underutilized sites; (4) soil erosion and water quality degradation; (5) unregulated off-road vehicle use; and (6) unplanned off-road vehicle use; and (6) unplanned developments and land alienations (i.e., the absence of a land use plan).

The benefits which accrued from the CRMP process were numerous and not always easily measured. While monitoring procedures were established and funded to measure the improved trend in range condition and productivity, no such procedures were introduced for measuring net benefits from increased beef or wildlife production. Specific timber yield monitoring was not pursued although records remain on file which can be used at some future date and the growing forest crop can be evaluated if and when such a monitoring program is established.

Improved livestock grazing systems allowed greater con-

trol and flexibility in designing prescribed logging and burning regimes, particularly when relief from livestock overgrazing was made possible by the acquisition by the government of several private improved pastures. This, in turn, led to even greater improvements in range condition and productivity and, again, in turn, to improved calf crops and beef production. Thinning and burning conifer stands, particularly ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir, increased timber yields and improved both forage and cover for whitetailed deer, mule deer, elk and bighorn sheep which winter in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

As yields of forage, wood fibre and wildlife began to improve along with new grazing, logging and big game hunting opportunities, demands for these resources once again began to increase. The tendency of most resource managers is to try to maximize the yield of the particular resource that they are paid to manage while specific resource user and advocacy groups seek to maximize their share without concern for the impacts that their activities and demands have on others. The "tragedy of the commons" began to repeat itself as the various resource factions began to lobby for an increased share of the improved, expanded resource pie.

British Columbia economy depends in large measure on its renewable resource base. Improving the yield of resources through coordinated resource management planning redistributes wealth and improves regional economies. CRMP suffered during the period 1979 to 1986 as a result of a lack of government policy which led to an erosion of the cooperative spirit necessary to sustain CRMP. However, the underlying principle of CRMP is cooperation and one side benefit of CRMP is information exchange. As the resource managers had learned to work together, to trust one another, to understand better their agencies' separate and collective goals and problems and as there is obviously more to be gained by working together to solve common problems than in expending energy defining conflicting goals and objectives, CRMP survived these troubled years and continues as an important resource management procedure in the East Kootenay Region, albeit at a reduced level.

In summary, the benefits from CRMP are: improved forest, range and wildlife resources, improved livestock grazing systems on restored (or recovering) rangelands, improved wildlife habitats and improved water quality, all leading to increased and stable yields of all renewable resources including fish, wildlife, beef and wood fibre.

North Americans, both in Canada and the U.S., have much to learn about resource management whether it be forestry, range, wildlife or fisheries. Examples of poor land use and resource husbandry are still too common. Integrating management and use of two or more resources on the same land unit is even more complex. A decade or two ago we had the excuse of saying that we simply did not have a better way. That excuse is no longer valid. We do have a better way—CRMP.

