

# A MINERAL EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO RESOURCE ROADS

LAST UPDATED: MAY 19, 2020

## INTRODUCTION

Mineral explorers rely on accessing British Columbia's network of 700,000 kilometres of resource roads – ranging from access by all-terrain vehicles and light trucks for prospecting through heavy equipment for drilling programs. Certainty of access is important for exploration companies to finance, plan, permit and carry-out exploration activities, and resource roads provide a cost-effective, on-the-ground means of access to remote mineral exploration activities. In most locations in BC, the only alternative to using resource roads is using an expensive, fuel-intensive helicopter, and for many exploration companies and almost all prospectors, helicopters are cost prohibitive. While road deactivation and rehabilitation has benefits such as reducing wildlife habitat fragmentation, it poses challenges in terms of accessing mineral tenure.

This guide is aimed at providing mineral explorers with information on resource roads, particularly in troubleshooting problems related to access. AME continues to advocate toward certainty regarding resource roads – including access to lands with mineral potential, and timely notification to all tenure holders if and when roads are deactivated.

---

## BC'S ROAD NETWORK

There is no comprehensive inventory of roads in BC; it is estimated that more than 800 000 km of highways and roads exist in BC, with the vast majority being resources roads.

The Forest Practices Board estimated the following in 2015<sup>1</sup>:

- 620 000 km of resource roads
  - 480 000 km of these are built for forestry purposes
    - 240 000 km of roads built by the forestry industry on cutblocks
    - 180 000 km of haul roads built by the forestry industry, of which less than one-quarter is used at any given time (the remaining three-quarters are being maintained as wilderness roads, which may not be suitable for traffic)
    - 40 000 km of Forest Service Roads that are managed by the BC Ministry of Forests, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, of which one-third is maintained to provide access to rural residents and recreation sites, and two-thirds as wilderness roads
      - 20 000 km of these Forest Service Roads are managed by BC Timber Sales, a program within FLNRORD that manages much of the timber harvest.

---

<sup>1</sup> Forest Practices Board (2015). Access Management and Resource Roads: 2015 Update. <https://www.bcfpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/SR49-Access-Management-2015-Update.pdf>

- 20 000 km for the oil and gas industry (much of which is built on muskeg and only supports traffic in winter)
- 20 000 km built by, or the responsibility of others, mainly BC Hydro
- 100 000 km of roads with unknown status (approximately 40 per cent of which was likely built by the oil and gas industry, with most of the remainder built for the forestry industry)

In summary, there is a vast, largely informal network of roads that have been constructed under a multi-faceted regulatory framework. The sporadic use of much of this network creates challenges in terms of access, liability and wildlife management.

## NAVIGATING BC'S RESOURCE ROADS

BC's resource road system requires some navigation. There is currently no one-stop shop for all resource road information, but the following may help anticipate challenges related to access.

- 1) Explore road tenures online.
- 2) Obtain up-to-date information from the local Natural Resource District and/or road tenure holders.

---

### ONLINE INFORMATION ON RESOURCE ROADS

Although the Resource Road Safety Information portal contains information related to major roads, local roads are best viewed on the iMapBC platform. Road datasets can also be downloaded for use on Google Earth as well as GIS platforms (see the 1:20 000 scale Digital Road Atlas as an example -

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/geographic-data-services/topographic-data/roads>). Note that iMapBC does not contain current information regarding road conditions (including closures, gates, bridge washouts and deactivation).

#### Current Road Closures – Publicly Maintained Roads

Road closure information varies by natural resource district. Links to closure maps and lists can be accessed through the Resource Road Safety Information portal at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resource-roads/local-road-safety-information>.

Note that closure information is focused on publicly maintained and accessible roads. The Resource Road Safety Information portal also includes useful information related to general road conditions, radio frequencies and other resources, although the extent of this information varies from district to district.

#### Viewing Local Resource Roads

iMapBC: <https://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/imap4m/>

- *Add Provincial Layers > Licences and Permits > Forest Road Sections > All Forest Road Sections – FTEN – Colour Themed*

For each tenure section line, note the Life Cycle Status Code. ACTIVE suggests that motorized access is possible, while RETIRED road sections will likely not be accessible and may be reclaimed.

For each tenure section line, note the client name, which will indicate who has responsibility for maintaining the road. In most cases, it will be one of the following:

- 1) DISTRICT MANAGER – contact the Natural Resource District.
- 2) TIMBER SALES MANAGER – contact BC Timber Sales.
- 3) Local forestry operations – contact the company mentioned; note that the location field may mention the relevant office location.

For a view of all related resource road tenures in one area, use the Explore by Location tool at <https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/explore> and generate a detailed Area of Interest Evaluation Report. Road tenures will appear in Section 3.



## CARIBOO REGION

### Cariboo-Chilcotin Natural Resource District (DCC)

200 - 640 Borland Street  
Williams Lake, B.C.  
[FLNR.AdminServicesCariboo@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FLNR.AdminServicesCariboo@gov.bc.ca)  
250 398-4574

### 100 Mile House Natural Resource District (DMH)

300 Cariboo Hwy 97  
100 Mile House, B.C.  
[Forests.100MileHouseDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.100MileHouseDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 395-7800

### Quesnel Natural Resource District (DQU)

322 Johnston Avenue  
Quesnel, B.C.  
[Forests.QuesnelDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.QuesnelDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 992-4400

## KOOTENAY / BOUNDARY REGION

### Selkirk Natural Resource District (DSE)

1907 Ridgewood Road  
Nelson, B.C.  
[Resources.Nelson@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Resources.Nelson@gov.bc.ca)  
250 825-1100

### Rocky Mountain Natural Resource District (DRM)

1902 Theatre Road  
Cranbrook, B.C.  
[FCBC.CBK@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FCBC.CBK@gov.bc.ca)  
250 426-1766  
Toll-free: 1 877 855-3222

## NORTHEAST REGION

### Fort Nelson Natural Resource District (DFN)

6100 Alaska Highway  
Fort Nelson, B.C.  
[Forests.FortNelsonDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.FortNelsonDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 774-5511

### Peace Natural Resource District (DPC)

9000 17th Street  
Dawson Creek, B.C.  
[Forests.PeaceDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.PeaceDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 784-1200

## OMINECA REGION

### Mackenzie Natural Resource District (DMK)

1 Cicada Road  
Mackenzie, B.C.  
[Forests.MackenzieDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.MackenzieDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 997-2200

### Prince George Natural Resource District (DPG)

2000 South Ospika Boulevard  
Prince George, B.C.  
[Forests.PrinceGeorgeDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.PrinceGeorgeDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 614-7400

### Stuart Nechako Natural Resource District (DSN)

#### Vanderhoof Office

1560 Hwy 16 East  
Vanderhoof, B.C.  
[Forests.VanderhoofDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.VanderhoofDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 567-6363

#### Fort St. James Office

Stonesbay Road  
Fort St. James, BC  
[Forests.FortStJamesDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.FortStJamesDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 996-5200

## THOMPSON/OKANAGAN REGION

### Cascades Natural Resource District (DCS)

3840 Airport Road  
Merritt, B.C.  
[forests.cascadesdistrictoffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:forests.cascadesdistrictoffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 378-8400  
Toll-free: 1 800 665-1511

### Okanagan Shuswap Natural Resource District (DOS)

2501 - 14th Avenue  
Vernon, B.C.  
[Forests.OkanaganShuswapDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.OkanaganShuswapDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 558-1700

### Thompson Rivers Natural Resource District (DKA)

1265 Dalhousie Drive  
Kamloops, B.C.  
[ThompsonRiversDistrict@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ThompsonRiversDistrict@gov.bc.ca)  
250 371-6500

**SKEENA REGION****Nadina Natural Resource District (DND)**

183 Highway 16 West  
Burns Lake, B.C.  
[Forests.NadinaDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.NadinaDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 692-2200

**Skeena Stikine Natural Resource District (DSS)****Skeena Stikine District Office**

3333 Tatlow Road  
Smithers, B.C.  
[Forests.SkeenaStikineDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.SkeenaStikineDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 847-6300  
Toll-free: 1 888 540-8611

**Hazelton Field Office**

2210 Hwy 62 West  
Hazelton, B.C.  
[Forests.SkeenaStikineDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.SkeenaStikineDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
1 888 540-8611

**Coast Mountain Natural Resource District (DKM)**

200-5220 Keith Ave  
Terrace, B.C.  
[Forests.KalumDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.KalumDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 638-5100

**SOUTH COAST REGION****Chilliwack Natural Resource District (DCK)**

46360 Airport Road  
Chilliwack, B.C.  
[Forests.ChilliwackDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.ChilliwackDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
604 702-5700

**Sea to Sky Natural Resource District (DSQ)**

101 - 42000 Loggers Lane  
Squamish, B.C.  
[FLNRO.SeaToSkyDistrict@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FLNRO.SeaToSkyDistrict@gov.bc.ca)  
604 898-2100

**Sunshine Coast Natural Resource District (DSC)**

7077 Duncan Street  
Powell River, B.C.  
[Forests.SunshineCoastDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.SunshineCoastDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
604 485-0700

**WEST COAST REGION****Campbell River Natural Resource District (DCR)**

370 South Dogwood Street  
Campbell River, B.C.  
[Forests.CampbellRiverDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.CampbellRiverDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 286-9300

**Haida Gwaii Natural Resource District (DQC)**

1229 Oceanview Drive  
Queen Charlotte, B.C.  
[FrontCounterHaidaGwaii@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FrontCounterHaidaGwaii@gov.bc.ca)  
250 559-6200  
Toll-free 1 800 663-7867

**North Island Natural Resource District (DNI)****North Island District Office**

2217 Mine Road  
Port McNeill, B.C.  
[Forests.NorthIslandCentralCoastDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.NorthIslandCentralCoastDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 956-5021

**Central Coast Field Office**

1681 Airport Road  
Bella Coola, B.C.  
250 982-2000

**South Island Natural Resource District (DSI)**

4885 Cherry Creek Road  
Port Alberni, B.C.  
[Forests.SouthIslandDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.SouthIslandDistrictOffice@gov.bc.ca)  
250 731-3000



## BC TIMBER SALES

BC Timber Sales has various roles including managing about 20 per cent of the province's timber harvest, building and maintaining logging roads and reforesting harvested areas. The 12 local business offices may be a good source of information related to Forest Service Roads managed by BC Timber Sales (as indicated via IMapBC):

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/bc-timber-sales/contact>

### **Babine Business Area Office**

183 Highway 16 West  
Burns Lake, B.C.  
250 692-2200

[Forests.BabineTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.BabineTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Cariboo-Chilcotin Business Area Office**

200 - 640 Borland Street  
Williams Lake, B.C.  
250 398-4345

[Forests.CaribooChilcotinTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.CaribooChilcotinTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Chinook Business Area Office**

46360 Airport Road  
Chilliwack, B.C.  
604 702-5700

[Forests.ChinookTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.ChinookTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Kamloops Business Area Office**

1265 Dalhousie Drive  
Kamloops, B.C.  
250 371-6500

[Forests.KamloopsTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.KamloopsTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Kootenay Business Area Office**

1907 Ridgewood Road  
Nelson, B.C.  
250 825-1100

[Forests.KootenayTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.KootenayTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Okanagan-Columbia Business Area Office**

2501-14th Avenue  
Vernon, B.C.  
250 558-1700

[Forests.OkanaganColumbiaTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.OkanaganColumbiaTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Peace-Liard Business Area Office**

9000 17th Street  
Dawson Creek, B.C.  
250 784-1200

[Forests.PeaceLiardTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.PeaceLiardTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Prince George Business Area Office**

2000 South Ospika Boulevard  
Prince George, B.C.  
250 614-7400

[Forests.PrinceGeorgeTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.PrinceGeorgeTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Seaward/tlasta Business Area Office**

2217 Mine Road  
Port McNeill, B.C.  
250 956-5000

[Forests.SeawardTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.SeawardTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Skeena Business Area Office**

Room 200, 5220 Keith Avenue  
Terrace, B.C.  
250 638-5100

[Forests.SkeenaTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.SkeenaTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Strait of Georgia Business Area Office**

370 S. Dogwood Street  
Campbell River, B.C.  
250 286-9300

[Forests.StraitofGeorgiaTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.StraitofGeorgiaTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

### **Stuart-Nechako Business Area Office**

Box 190, 1522 Highway 16  
Vanderhoof, B.C.  
250 567-6363

[Forests.StuartNechakoTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.StuartNechakoTimberSalesOffice@gov.bc.ca)

---

## LOCAL FORESTRY COMPANIES

Forestry companies are active on both Crown and private land. Active companies in any particular area can be identified through various layers in iMap including forest road tenure layers. Note that company deactivation plans are posted in the [Resource Road Safety Information](#) portal for each Natural Resource District.

Published contact information online varies by company. Larger companies are members of the BC Council of Forest Industries; a listing is here: <https://www.cofi.org/about-us/>.

---

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### **Association for Mineral Exploration (AME)**

AME tracks issues related to resource roads, and in some cases, may be able to offer further resources and support.

Association for Mineral Exploration  
800-889 West Pender St., Vancouver, BC V6C 3B2  
604.689.5271 [info@amebc.ca](mailto:info@amebc.ca)

Staff lead: Jonathan Buchanan, Director, Regulatory and Technical Policy, 778.840.0620; [jbuchanan@amebc.ca](mailto:jbuchanan@amebc.ca)

### **Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources**

The Mineral Titles Branch of the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources administers the legislation governing the acquisition, exploration and development of mineral, placer mineral, and coal rights in the Province. Mineral Titles Branch staff may be able to help resolve disputes related to access to mineral tenure both on private land and with respect to private roads; 1-866-616-4999; [Mineral.Titles@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Mineral.Titles@gov.bc.ca).

## THE LAW

Resource roads are covered under various acts. Between 2009 and 2017, the province considered omnibus legislation through means including the Natural Resource Roads Act; however, since 2017, the province has aimed toward continual, incremental changes in legislation.

The following are some of the more common legislative tools used to govern resource roads:

### ***Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)***

The *Forest and Range Practices Act*, commonly referred to as FRPA (pronounced “fur-pa”), is the primary legislation that affects resource road management. Of particular note to the mineral exploration industry,



legislated wildlife management practices, known as general wildlife measures, particularly related to ungulate winter range, may be used to either partly or fully restrict access<sup>2</sup>.

General wildlife measures (GWM) may have two impacts on explorers:

- 1) Access routes are deactivated in accordance with GWM.
- 2) Access for mineral and coal exploration may have seasonal and other restrictions, or may be arranged under an exemption to GWM through the Notice of Work process.

### **Wildlife Act**

Regulations under the *Wildlife Act* including the *Motor Vehicle Prohibition Regulation*<sup>3</sup>, as well as the *Closed Areas Regulation*<sup>4</sup> and *Public Access Prohibition Regulation*<sup>5</sup>, control access to roads in order to protect wildlife from hunting activities. Access restrictions related to hunting activities are published in the *Hunting & Trapping Regulations Synopsis*: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/fishing-hunting/hunting/regulations-synopsis>.

Often, commercial activities such as mineral exploration are permitted in roads that are otherwise closed<sup>6</sup>, but may require obtaining access through locked gates administered through the Natural Resource District.

### **Mineral Tenure Act**

The *Mineral Tenure Act* protects access to mineral lands<sup>7</sup>.

Specifically related to road use, it provides that a Special Use Permit be granted for access to mineral titles; see <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/forest-tenures/timber-harvesting-rights/special-use-permit-forestry> for further information. However, the Act does not provide that pre-existing access be maintained.

The *Mineral Tenure Act* also provides for access through private land, and provides a means for dispute resolution between mineral and surface rights holders in the event of a dispute related to access<sup>8</sup>. Related to accessing private land, the process is as follows:

1. Serve notice to enter private land in accordance with section 2.1 of the Mineral Tenure Act Regulation<sup>9</sup>
2. If the surface owner and the free miner cannot agree on the terms of access after notice is served, either or both parties may appeal to the Chief Gold Commissioner to mediate to resolve matters in dispute.
3. If the Chief Gold Commissioner is unable to resolve the matters in dispute, then the Chief Gold Commissioner will sign the SRB application form from either party to appeal the dispute to the Surface Rights Board.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02069\\_01#section149.1](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02069_01#section149.1)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/196\\_99](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/196_99)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/76\\_84\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/76_84_01)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/23\\_187\\_2003](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/23_187_2003)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/196\\_99#section8](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/196_99#section8)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00\\_96292\\_01#section11.1](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96292_01#section11.1)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00\\_96292\\_01#section19](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96292_01#section19)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/529\\_2004#section2.1](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/529_2004#section2.1)

4. The Surface Rights Board has authority to issue orders with respect to terms and conditions and access. (Note that such decisions are more common in the oil and gas industry than in the mineral exploration industry. However, written decisions on disputes under Section 19 of the Mineral Tenure Act and jurisdiction can be helpful to understand the Board's interpretation of legislation and how disputes are settled; see [https://decisions.surfacerightsboard.bc.ca/bcsrb/mo/en/nav\\_date.do](https://decisions.surfacerightsboard.bc.ca/bcsrb/mo/en/nav_date.do))

### ***Mining Right of Way Act***

The *Mining Right of Way Act* provides mineral tenure holders with the right to use a road on Crown or private land if the road was built under the *Mining Right of Way Act* or another Act<sup>10</sup> as well as terms for using existing roads regulated by the *Industrial Roads Act*<sup>11</sup> to access mineral tenure<sup>12</sup>. Similar to the *Mineral Tenure Act*, the *Mining Right of Way Act* provides a means for dispute resolution between a mineral tenure holder and access road owner, and the Surface Rights Board has authority to issue orders under this Act.

### **Other Legislation**

Access prohibitions can also be made under the *Land Act* and *Motor Vehicle All Terrain Act*, but these have a limited effect on mineral exploration activities.

## ROAD AUTHORIZATIONS

Depending on activities, different permits may be needed for accessing and constructing roads. The Natural Resource Online Services portal at <https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/-/mineral-exploration> contains further information. These permits are administered by Natural Resource District Offices.

Two authorizations frequently needed to conduct mineral exploration are Road Use Permits and Special Use Permits. Further information on each is available from Natural Resource District offices or FrontCounter BC.

**Road Use Permit** – Allows industrial access on Forest Service Roads. This permit specifies the size and weight limits and frequency of industrial vehicles to be used on the Forest Service road and can be applied for and filled out as an attachment to a Notice of Work application. <http://www.frontcounterbc.ca/apps/app36.html>

**Special Use Permit** – Allows for construction and maintenance of access roads including construction and maintenance of bridges and other drainage structures.  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/forest-tenures/timber-harvesting-rights/special-use-permit-forestry>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96294\\_01#section10](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96294_01#section10)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96189\\_01#section1](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96189_01#section1)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96294\\_01#section6](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96294_01#section6)