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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation  
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship  
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
Blueberry River First Nations

### **B.C., Blueberry River First Nations take next step to heal land, balance industry interests**

Updated May 30, 2024

FORT ST. JOHN – The Province and Blueberry River First Nations are moving forward with implementation of the Gundy High Value 1 Plan, consistent with the Blueberry Implementation Agreement, to protect Treaty Rights, support restoration and land protection measures, and create more certainty for everyone in northeastern B.C. who relies on resource industry jobs to support their lives and families.

“Finding balance to sustain the future lives of our members, elders and youth for generations to come is an important factor in reconciliation,” said Judy Desjarlais, Chief of Blueberry River First Nations. “Responsible resource development has always been the vision to sustain our Nations while we carry on the legacy of our ancestors of ensuring our cultural and traditional values, most importantly our Treaty Rights, are held at their highest regard. The government has proven since we first started this journey that they would capture the vision of our people and honour it.”

The Gundy plan will establish and implement actions to support the restoration and ongoing practice of Blueberry’s Treaty Rights and essential elements of their way of life like hunting, fishing, trapping and sacred site preservation, while enabling limited petroleum and natural gas (PNG) development under new rules and conditions. The plan provides clearer direction to petroleum and natural gas tenure holders about where they can undertake development causing new disturbance, and where there are protections.

Under the plan, Blueberry and B.C. are committing to work toward effective and efficient ways to balance the interests of Nations, the Province and petroleum and natural gas tenure holders, recognizing that a sustainable environment and robust cultural values, as well as a vibrant local economy, are essential for individual and community well-being.

“With this agreement, we are working collaboratively to make land, water and resource stewardship decisions and provide industry with greater certainty on where development can occur,” said Josie Osborne, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation. “We’ll continue working productively together, resolving challenges, and engaging with the community to bring good jobs and build a stronger future for everyone in the region.”

The Gundy plan sets out how B.C. and Blueberry will move forward together to protect and restore high-value areas that are important to the Nation’s traditional way of life and, at the same time, allow for a planned approach toward new industrial development in the region.

Specifically, the Gundy plan will:

- protect over 68% of the plan area from new disturbance from oil and gas activities, and enable healing of the land;
- implement new requirements for developers that include greater involvement of Treaty 8 Nations in planning and carrying out new oil and gas activities;
- provide better protection, consideration and management of values important for the exercise of Treaty Rights;
- bring predictability to development that enables companies to invest and plan ahead; and
- includes a robust framework for carrying out new oil and gas development activities as well as sets limits for any additional development that may be proposed beyond what has been considered in the production of the plan.

The Gundy plan will pilot these new mechanisms and requirements over three years, with regular reviews and oversight of its implementation.

In January 2023, B.C. and Blueberry signed the Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement, which laid out a partnership approach to land, water and resource stewardship that ensures Blueberry members can meaningfully exercise their Treaty 8 Rights, and provides stability and predictability for industry in the region.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship –**

“The partnership with the Blueberry River First Nations is part of work underway with local communities and First Nations governments, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, organizations, businesses and other stakeholders across the province, and we’re seeing real benefits on the ground: certainty and stability for investment, new economic opportunities and good jobs, healthier communities, and sustainable land, water and resource stewardship.”

##### **Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –**

“The plans developed with the Blueberry River First Nations secure a path forward for decision-making that respects Treaty Rights and gives clarity and predictability for industry. We’re building a stronger B.C. through partnerships and agreements based in reconciliation that create certainty, good jobs, and help build a better future for everyone.”

#### **Quick Facts:**

- The Province and Blueberry leadership will hold a series of community meetings to share further information about the details of the plan and the implementation agreement in general.
- The Gundy plan is one in a series of land use, watershed management, and HV1 plans being developed to manage the cumulative impact of industrial development on the Nation’s Treaty Rights, and to ensure that Treaty Rights are respected and not infringed upon.
- The Gundy plan was developed with, and informed by, Indigenous knowledge, stakeholder engagement, and expertise from various disciplines, including biology,

hydrology, hydrogeology, engineering and others.

- The Gundy plan focuses on two watershed management basins, Cameron River and Blueberry River, covering an area of nearly 53,000 hectares in an area northwest of Fort St. John.
- The BC Energy Regulator will be required to follow the Gundy plan with respect to new oil and gas development and will develop guidance materials and application procedures for oil and gas companies proposing new oil and gas activities within the plan area.

**Learn More:**

Read about the Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement here:

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/blueberry\\_river\\_implementation\\_agreement.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/blueberry_river_implementation_agreement.pdf)

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