

**BIGHORN BACKCOUNTRY
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING**



JUNE 9, 2022

9:00AM – 12:00PM

Online Meeting

MEETING SUMMARY

Don Livingston	Blake Christianson	Julia Wachowski	Dale Marshall
Michael Doyle	Amanda Halawell	Andrea McMillan	Riley Wideman
Alan Ernst	Jamie Bruha	Dom Kmet	Loyal Ma
Benjamin Curry	Jordan Northcott	Suzanne Comfort	Peter Davies
Cam Sully	Larry Schmidek	Chiara Feder	Kevin Gagne
Vinton Lovell	Adena Earl	Jeremy Cooper	Lorne Hindbo
Travis Earl	Barry Wesley	Grant Santo	Laura Raivio

Item #	TOPIC
1.	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Larry Schmidek replacing Ian Stuart for Fishing and Hunting. - Cam Sully replacing Rick Artzen for Winter Motorized.
2.	<p><u>Enforcement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May long saw lowest numbers in years, weather, fuel costs and hockey may have kept many home. Same last couple of weekends. - Compliance around the high water mark at Abraham Lake has been really good. Bighorn Dam has had little usage, no OHVs. - Public Land Camping Pass (PLCP) is 75-80% compliance, 25% are unaware. Not many choosing not to get it. If no PLCP and in cell service, we have them buy it in front of us. If not in cell service we issue a time to produce. - Focusing on July 1 trail opener for Bighorn Dam and Hummingbird. - Outside of Bighorn Backcountry there was a side x side behind the gun range that got into the muskeg which was a big recovery, and wheels in water in the river by Ricinus.
3.	<p><u>Hwy 11 Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 sites being upgraded, some have had tree clearing, other sites will be mulched and upgraded in the fall. Contract proposal received a few bids. - Construction happening at Coliseum and along Hwy 11. - Installing bearproof garbage and recycling at the day use areas with an RFP going out for caretaking. At random camping sites still working on pack in-pack out. Right next to Hwy 11 so a lot of travelling public stopping in.
4.	<p><u>Activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mulching for xcounrty ski trails: 6km Shunda Meadows, 5km Snow Creek and 16 km Goldeye Lake. Ties together Snow Creek and Goldeye Lake. Upgrading small section of Goldeye Lake loop to the FireSmart trails which will then allow people to xcounrty ski, snowshoe or fat tire bike in winter. Stretch from Goldeye to Fish Lake and looking to

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do another connector to tie into the Nordegg industrial area. Need to upgrade bridge at south end of Goldeye to fit grooming equipment. Maintenance service worker looking after these trails this winter, partners wanted for grooming program.

- Glacier Trail has had the blowdown opened up from Wildhorse Creek to Banff National Park (BNP) boundary. In talks with BNP to open up their end of the trail from Warden Lake to boundary (about 3km). East from there is a bridge on Spreading Creek getting washed out so will fix that as well.
- New kiosk map display cases on trial at Preacher's Point and Coral Creek to see if they work well this summer.
- Working on Black Mountain bike trails with the Nordegg group. First Nations consultation pretty far along, waiting on funding. Going through Clearwater Trails Initiative (CTI) as the main group.
- Planning for Tershishner and Hummingbird loops. Capital request in planning stages for upgrades and reroutes where possible. Working with Rocky ATV to fix up Onion Lake trail.
- Planning for Eagle Lake/James Lake trail, looking at another upgrade and getting trail more sustainable with options for wagons.
- Planning for Rail Trail from Nordegg industrial all the way to Aylmer and then want to tie into the Bighorn Dam trail network. Need to inspect from the ground and looking at Joyce Creek at the same time.
- Rec Engagement Officer (REO) will be out and about for education purposes. Some data collection and surveys for the planning area around Nordegg.

Projects outside of the Bighorn Backcountry PLUZs:

- Rail Trail east of Saunders. Finished Taunton bridge, re-decked, railings, picnic tables and benches. Rail Trail completed from Harlech to Saunders and we have the approvals east to Sunset Creek past Misty Valley. Looking to complete this year with the County. Wanting to build staging areas at Saunders and Harlech accessing trail under Hwy 11.
- Looking to complete the Meadows loop, once completed about a 40 km loop.

Q&A/Comments

- No work being done this year at Tershishner, all planning in the capital program. Bighorn Dam planning being done this year to organize people camping. Contacted road engineers to find out if we can put a crossing at the cutline across from Tershishner entrance. If it works out it would take people out of the ditch.
- Wagon users are going to have a formal club before next meeting. Going out with AEP to look at work on the Panther Trail and may do some horse powered grading.

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- Please touch base with local trappers on trail changes and upgrades. Working with new trapper at Snow Creek regarding enforcement issues and we are doing some signage there. Any of the designated trails that come off the map trappers still have access to that, especially in the mulching area. Mulched wide enough to allow snowmobile beside xcountry grooming.

5.

Nordegg Trail Plan

- Presentation and map shown to the committee
- New Trails Act will give ability to designate trails outside of a PLUZ the same way we do inside a PLUZ. Bringing those planning initiatives together with the Nordegg area trail plan. There is a suite of existing trails designated under the Trails Act, not much change in PLUZ. We can now identify and designate, map and sign trails outside of the PLUZ so that industry knows they are there.
- Link to trails designated under Trails Act: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/trail-designation>
- Link to downloadable trail data (shapefiles) for designated trails on public lands and in parks: <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/gda-a80344fd-8510-4607-8959-ab1fd3724d70#:~:text=The%20Designated%20Trails%20dataset%20is,and%20Fish%20Creek%20Trails%20datasets>
- Trails shown, closely resembles PLUZ map including Snow Creek, Rail Trail and a start on Meadows.
- May 1st all new trails will require a trail management plan. Need a guide, so people can see what needs to be considered. Outlines expectations for partnerships, trail standard to show what can be done without authorization. Trail design manual update, directors guides for specific activities.
- Map shown for Nordegg planning area. Continuing to work with stakeholders and want to work with this committee or a subcommittee regarding the connectors, cultural analysis, identify routes, First Nations consultation.
- Soliciting support from this group and other stakeholders
- Terms of Reference (TOR) for trail plan itself May – June. Holding some workshops and then online sessions to talk about issues, concerns, vision and objectives.
- Rec use and experience - gathering info and doing research. What trails are being used, time spent, where staying, money spent? What experiences are we trying to plan for? Draft plan aimed for the fall and then finalizing in the winter. This is the opportunity to help develop a plan.
- Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee will be informed. Groups that want more information can contact Amanda.Halawell@gov.ab.ca

Q&A/Comments

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under the Trails Act what is the priority to trail heads and random camping areas outside of the Bighorn Backcountry? Thinking along 752, any priority for discussing that? In the next agenda item we will discuss scope. Are currently doing Baseline as a trail management area. Summer motorized have started doing this research in consultation with AEP and have identified many trails for future work, as well as completing a number of connector trail options for the Meadows area. - Funding through Trails Act is for inside and outside of PLUZ so investment in trails is protected.
6.	<p><u>Outside of Bighorn – Committee Sounding Board</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the committee expand its role to outside PLUZ? We now have the tools for both land bases with the Trails Act. Areas along Hwy 752, east of panther, trunk road east of James. This would not change the Access Management Plan but would go east into Clearwater County and cover those areas that have influence on the Bighorn Backcountry. - Would need to have participation from industry. Two forestry companies and oil east of the Bighorn is not that busy right now. Have connected with AER for Nordegg. <p><u>Q&A/Comments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plans for a corridor from Meadows further south? Part of trunk road OHV pilot is to extend south. If we can connect Meadows west to Joyce Creek, then can use trunk road bridge to the south. May be able to use old North Ram trails and connections into Lynx Creek. The idea of these major connections is the vision using industrial roads and trunk road. OHV pilot ends in December we have asked for entire trunk road from the Red Deer River to Nordegg (south). Alberta Transportation going through accident reports to determine if there is any reason not to allow it.
7.	<p><u>Friends of the Eastern Slopes (FOESA) Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessed Hummingbird PLRA for upgrade next year. Working on finalizing Peppers Lake reconstruction. Trees removed to open up roads and sites for larger vehicles at Elk Creek and 7 Mile. Gravelling to be completed. When done moving to Panther PLRA to expand the sites there. Planning new toilets and have to talk about down around the lake at Peppers. Hosts going to Hummingbird on 15th, currently at Ya Ha Tinda and Eagle. 7 mile and Elk Creek are open to camping. - Host surveys to check volume. Have online membership and have put the survey questions on the FOESA website as well. - Every campground FOESA looks after is first come first serve. FOESA maintains all the PLRAs and they have picked up a number of the sites along the trunk road. No fee associated with being in those sites. FOESA asks for voluntary yearly membership. Open year round. Parks reservation system are only for Parks-run campsites. - As of January 1, 2023, FOESA will be adding Wild Horse, Archie Creek, Deer Creek and James/Wilson. Hopefully will be able to run them all the same, pack in-pack out. Down the road if looking for OHV use out of those sites would have to work with Parks

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as it would be ministerial order.

8. R11 – What a mechanical treatment would look like

- Discussions in past for potential for harvesting in Cutoff area and also from North Saskatchewan River down to the Red Deer River for wildlife habitat. The Kiska/Willson on east side of the PLUZs is zone 5. No commercial tenure for that section so only reason there would be a mechanical treatment is for firesmart or wildlife habitat.
- Sundre Forest Products (SFP) are up against the border but are willing to going in if we want them to. GOA put together a group to scope out what a mechanical treatment would look like based on normal disturbances with the majority over 600ha. Taking in all objectives and using Prometheus created a model based on spring/summer/fall to see if a fire ran, what would it look like, which would direct harvesting. Lorne’s map would be a perfect tie in with that. This would be a one-time permit, no tenure, no expansion of the FMA.
- Wapiabi, Chungo and Hummingbird would have prescribed fire if they come into prescription this spring.
- Tie in with Wild Sheep Foundation to improve some sheep habitat in deeper backcountry. Bison introduction is at year five and being reviewed at Parks Canada. Discussions on if we want bison on public land. Parks Canada worked with lands team regarding possible fencing at 40 Mile, Wild Horse Creek, James pass and the Panther for if some bison do escape, and do we let them mingle around? Right now they get euthanized if they come out.

9. Open Floor

- Interest in a field day? Some suggestions are Hwy 11, Snow Creek, Black Mountain
- Ski trails are all in the muskeg north of Goldeye and Black Mountain, single track are multi-use non-motorized. Winter use are all on wet, not motorized. Connectors at the Rail Trail, the loops, the link up through the Gypo road are all multi-use. Connection to the Bighorn Dam and Tershishner are multi-use.
- Does this group have any input regarding feral horses? No. Have been working on a management plan that involves linking back to First Nations rights on horse capture which will be based on numbers. Barry Wesley of this standing committee has been involved, management plan is finalized and awaiting ministerial approval.
- Request for operators using trails to give presentations to Bighorn Reservation community so they can see what is going on around them. Want operators to understand the history of this area which goes beyond the boundary of the reserve.
- Sundance planned for June 30. Would like to see Parks and REO there for educational purposes
- Barry/Amanda to connect. Would be happy to do presentation to give a sense of the Nordegg area plan and hear from the community on how they want to be involved and

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identify what is important to First Nations.

- We have to do formal consultation through trail plans with Stoney/Nakota and other nations as well. Pipe ceremony will take place before Hwy 11 work. Frontier Lodge and Loyal would like to set up a meeting. Cycling club interested in the history before the dam, would like to work with you to get a better understanding of the traditional use in the area.
- Request for directional signage to outhouses.
- Request for Bighorn sheep signage with flashing lights to get driver attention at Windy Point. Seeing quite a few more incidents of sheep being killed on the road. In busy areas with road crossings like at Hoodoo and Allstones, a crosswalk will be marked on the highway. Include in discussions with Alberta Transportation about Windy Point.
- Do parking upgrades mean trail maintenance? Major upgrades are the parking, then trails fall to maintenance service workers. Brushing day use trails currently. Spoke with hiking and eco-tourism about citizen science, setting up an app for trail reports.
- **Next meeting – Thursday, October 6, 2022**

Action Items	Description	Assigned To:	Due Date
1.	Nordegg trail plan sub-committee interest email	Amanda/Laura	June 17
2.	Email rec use and experience surveys link	Amanda/Laura	June 21
3.	Connect with Lorne to review map regarding mechanical treatment – bring back to committee in the fall	Lorne Hindbo/Don Livingston	Summer
4.	Email thoughts or interest in a field day	All	End July
5.	Barry/Amanda to connect regarding Nordegg area plan	Amanda/Barry	June/July
6.	Barry/Loyal to connect regarding bike trails, traditional uses, history and naming using Stoney language.	Loyal/Barry	June/July
7.	Outhouse and Bighorn sheep signage	Blake	July
8.			