

**BIGHORN BACKCOUNTRY
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING**



OCTOBER 6, 2022

9:00AM – 12:00PM

In Person Meeting

MEETING SUMMARY

Don Livingston	Michael Doyle	Rod Burns	Brad Jones
Julia Wachowski	Dennis Schafer	Suzanne Comfort	Blake Christianson
Dom Kmet	Doug King	Dale Marshall	Loyal Ma
Stephen Shenfield	Lorne Hindbo	Vinton Lovell	Barry Wesley
Adena Earl	Peter Davies	Grant Santo	Jim Turner
Drew Baker	Alan Ernst	Jamie Bruha	Larry Schmidek
Laura Raivio			

Item #	TOPIC
1.	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curtis Nichol replacing Logan Van Imschoot on the steering committee for the Environmental Enforcement Branch
2.	<p><u>Enforcement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental Enforcement Branch stats from June – September 2022: 129 total enforcement actions written by COs (Primarily PLAR, TSA, GLCA, PPGR) 50 – Non-PLUZ (non-bed/shore issues), 35 – Kiska/Willson PLUZ, 20 – Vacant public lands bed/shore, 24 – Parks and Protected Areas. - Primarily 3 Conservation Officers (COs) since the last meeting in June. Now fully staffed at 4 COs. Made for challenges in performing proactive patrols, most patrols were reactionary in response to a high number of 310-LAND complaints or public safety responses (overland flooding, wildfire, extreme wind events, SAR response). - Challenging for COs to proactively conduct PLCP related patrols due to competing complaints and priorities. - Compliance rates vary between user groups – backcountry hikers appear to be among the lowest compliance rates for purchasing PLCP. - Among the highest compliance rates for PLCP compliance are users camping in non-PLUZ areas. - Still much confusion between PLCP, Kananaskis Conservation Pass and National Parks Pass – PLCP often the pass most overlooked or not known about. - Officers’ primary focus patrol time was in the Kiska/Willson PLUZ, due to the intense public use and complaints received.

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- Problematic summer for human-bear encounters in the Kiska/Willson PLUZ around Abraham Lake and Kootenay Plains. COs worked collaboratively with FWES to address numerous issues involving messy campsites, attractants and lack of awareness/ignorance. Several tickets issued for failure to keep PLUZ campsite in satisfactory condition (mainly Preacher’s Point).
- COs, in conjunction with Alberta Parks staff, conducted backcountry patrols into Whitegoat Wilderness Areas – general patrol, log book replacement. Significant use from Great Divide Trail users recorded in the log books.
- General observations:
Use across all land bases has decreased to pre-COVID levels.
310-LAND complaint line seemed to be well utilized.
No major ‘Wheels in Water’ investigative files this summer.

Q&A/Comments

- Difference between Fish & Wildlife Officer (F&W) and a Conservation Officer (CO)? Under two different branches. COs focus is on protected areas and public lands recreation, F&W focus is on wildlife issues. If either see infractions in progress that are not necessarily their primary mandate they will check on those as well.
- Conversation regarding Public Lands Camping Pass (PLCP) dollars going towards enforcement boots on the ground vs. camping and infrastructure. Realize that these funds have to cover trail crews, education, vehicles, garbage, outhouses, cleaning contractors, signs, printing costs and more for the whole south. The PLCP is in response to the increased pressures we were seeing, it didn’t change what people were allowed to do.
- Concerns over garbage at the new staging areas and campsites. Garbage cans will be placed in day use areas along the Hwy 11 corridor, as well as bearproof lockers at some of the rustic campsites.

3. Activities

Hwy 11 Upgrades:

- Rustic campsite work started at Wildhorse, Preacher’s Point and Abraham Slabs. North Preacher’s Point is flooded, will need to redesign road.
- Hoodoo, Kinglet, Owen Creek, Coliseum, Coral Creek and Pinto staging areas still scheduled.

Black Mountain Trail Plan:

- Referrals and approvals complete. Work not happening until next summer.
- Funds from Sundre Forest Products (SFP) for the Nordegg cycle club.
- Resulting from fire, cat line and roads can be used towards trails, deciding what to keep and what to reclaim.
- SFP salvage planned to complete before Christmas, will have realignment then.

Q&A/Comments

- Pipe ceremony important for Bighorn area.

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- Asked to bring any artifacts or buffalo skulls found during construction to the local indigenous community.

Activities

- Cleared blowdown south of the Bighorn Dam just after July 1.
- Upgraded 2 crossings on Coral Creek with 2 bridges installed
- Widened bridge on Goldeye Lake loop to fit grooming equipment, about 300m of trails to be graveled in future.
- Trail clearing on Thompson Creek and Hidden Quartzite.
- Bighorn Heritage ATV Society (BHAS) worked on Tershishner, cleaning up some of the big mud holes from T1 to T3. Will not be open for 2023.
- Hummingbird/Onion loop upgrades, bridges.
- Connection from Aylmer to Bighorn Dam trails in very early stages.

Q&A/Comments

- Groomer designed for mountain bike trails and has a x-country ski setter. Has a narrow gauge and wider grooming options.
- Black Mountain will be winter multi-use for snowshoe, ski and fat bike. Hoping to go from Nordegg to Snow Creek.
- Glacier Trail – work on getting ability to clear from Banff National Park (BNP) through to Warden Lake. Mountain bike group has people available to move some bridges back in place if needed.

Signage

- Installed along Abraham Lake for high water mark.
- Wildlife signage regarding keeping domestic goats and sheep out of backcountry.

Planning

- Looking at Bighorn Dam upgrade to camping areas.
- Trail and road crossing to Tershishner.

Outside of the PLUZs

- Harlech staging complete, needs gravel.
- Received approvals for Rail Trail from Saunders to Sunset Creek, start construction next week.
- Alignment for parking above Taunton bridge for a viewing parking lot, not a staging area, with staircase down to bridge. Want partnership with Clearwater County.
- Meadows construction continues with Clearwater Trails Initiative (CTI) with watercourse crossings and trail building.
- Bridge at Rocky fish pond.
- Cleared trees at Shunda Viewpoint.
- Outhouse at Baseline Mountain.
- James Pass Trail - Looked at potential for a wagon trail for the James to Eagle connection. Proposal still going in with the biggest issue being around historic resources. If widened out to fit wagons more historical resources are effected. OHV trail is smaller. No approvals yet.

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4.	<p><u>Nordegg Trail Plan Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing one-on-one meetings with stakeholders and AEP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o General information about the intent of the plan with Alberta Hiking Association (June 17) and Alberta Wilderness Association (June 22) o Discussion with NORCA regarding the FRIAA grant for Black Mountain trails and tour with the trail builder (July 5) o Cycling community meeting to discuss the Nordegg plan broadly and the Black Mountain trail proposal specifically (August 18) o Site visit with Lands Division and Parks staff to discuss important staging areas and campgrounds to support existing and planned trails. o Meeting with Clearwater Trails Initiative to review the trail build for Meadows OHV area and potential OHV trail connectors (Sept 20) o Meeting planned for mid October with hiking community - Bighorn sub-committee for the Nordegg trails plan has been contacted to confirm their participation and outline their commitment over the next few months. - Letters will be sent to Indigenous communities soon with information and an invitation to provide Indigenous perspectives to the plan. - Information emails were sent to companies with oil and gas interests in the planning area (Sept 22). No response to date. - So far, we have had generally positive feedback regarding the trails identified on the engagement map
5.	<p><u>Banff National Park (BNP) Bison Fencing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bison reintroduction is at the 5 year report stage which will be submitted to the province once approved by BNP. - Containment fencing for strays has been constructed at Panther, James, the Clearwater river and YaHa Tinda road, similar to that at the BNP boundary, which allows for wildlife passage and gates for wagons <p><u>Q&A/Comments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comments regarding lack of consultation to all users and this committee. Viewed ewes go on one side of the curtain and lambs going up through. If first fences are supposed to work why need additional? Intent is to eventually be able to allow the bison to move out of BNP and a hunt introduced. - Now the issue is does the province want the herd to expand onto traditional lands? If not will there be a First Nations hunt in the Park? It is only an assessment at this point. BNP can do what they want within the Park, Alberta needs to be consulted outside of the Park. . Current process is if a bison comes out, it gets shooed back in or euthanized. Next stage is do we have the ability to keep them in there or not, then it will go out for general consultation. Province will see what the report says and then consult for next steps.

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6.	<p><u>Friends of the Eastern Slopes Association (FOESA) Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2154 memberships sold. - Completed first phase on Peppers Lake, Elk Creek and 7 Mile. Looking at Panther, Red Deer, Wild Horse, James River, Deer Creek and Cartier Creek tomorrow. - All toilets pumped. <p><u>Compulsory FOESA Membership?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compulsory FOESA Membership or PLCP as some public deciding they won't get either. Ability to require a membership, PLCP or nightly fee? PLCP could be put in place to camp there and then FOESA could have the ability to draw from that fund. Then it would be clear. Cannot require public to purchase an organization membership or implement a nightly fee unless it is a GOA fee. <p><u>Fire Rings in Public Land Recreation Areas (PLRA)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During a fire restriction you can have a campfire in an engineered fire ring. If you want a fire you need to go to a private campground or Provincial Recreation Area. It can be allowed as long as the steel facility was not moveable. Problem is at Hummingbird it would be no more rock rings during a restriction and it would be within the approved rings only.
7.	<p><u>OHV Tire Restrictions Possible?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question is can the use of big lug tires be limited on trails to prevent damage? - By describing the size allowance of a vehicle and limiting to OHV as opposed to on highway vehicles, this limits the tire size being used. - Feeling is it is more an issue of people driving into vulnerable areas and ripping it up. More to do with size, weight of vehicle using the trails. - Engineering and upgrades to trails would need to reflect the current size of OHV and tires being used today as opposed to what was around in the beginning where the biggest OHV was an 8-wheel argo. If trail is hard it doesn't matter, but if it is soft there in an impact.
8.	<p><u>Bighorn Creek Campground</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campground flooded out and closed all season. - Need to determine the ownership of the bed and shore on the YaHa Tinda Ranch, to confirm if it is BNP or public lands. If public lands we would issue a temporary field authorization (TFA) for the work to begin. Waiting to hear back from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for working in the wet part as well.
9.	<p><u>Equestrian Panels</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current thoughts are if you are putting panels around where the tie rails are, no problem, but in the grass not allowed. - FOESA does not want panels in any campgrounds anymore. - Will bring back to steering for decision.
10.	<p><u>Open Floor</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue of toilets being closed in Provincial Recreation Areas (PRA), in particular Swan Lake, when there are still people using the area in the winter. Many times it comes down to no staff and/or money to maintain them year round. If an area gets identified as a priority there is the ability to give the 'okay' to leave them open as long as there is

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no vandalism.

- What are the restrictions for e-assist bikes at Crimson Lake? Pedal assist is a bicycle and allowed, throttle is not considered a bicycle and not allowed. Kananaskis has different restrictions. Right now pedal assist was based on federal legislation which has been repealed.
- Official wagon group has been formed, should be invited as part of the standing committee.
- **Next meeting Thursday, February 2, 2023**

Action Items	Description	Assigned To:	Due Date
1.	Pipe ceremonies for Black Mountain and Crescent Falls	Julia/Barry/Grant	Spring
2.	Send map of Black Mountain trail plan to reps once decided.	Blake	January
3.	Possible cultural awareness workshop	Don/Barry/Brad	
4.	Black Mountain trail plan presentation to Bighorn Reserve community	Blake/Barry	Fall / winter
5.	Equestrian Panels in campsites - to steering	Don	Jan 31
6.	Swan Lake toilets in winter	Grant	
7.	E-assist bicycles on trails	Jamie	
8.	Contact Wagon Trekkers Association	Don/Blake/Laura	Jan 31