

# Bighorn Backcountry

## Access Management Plan

### Monitoring: Standing Committee

June 5, 2014 **FINAL COPY**

Rocky Mountain House Museum Boardroom

#### In Attendance

Don Livingston	Wayne Crocker	Lisa Schrader	Kristofer Heemeryck
Kevin Gagne	Jim Duncan	Neil Godlonton	Adena Earl
Gord Sanders	James Brady	Dennis Schafer	Cal Rakach
Michael Doyle	Lorne Hindbo	Simon Dyer	Brad Andrews
Dale Marshall	Larry Frischke	Chiarastella Feder	Roger Marvin
Jay Mills	Loyal Ma	Laura Raivio	

#### Chair

Don Livingston

#### Introduction

Everyone thanked for attending the meeting. Round-table introductions were completed. Sad for the passing of both representatives Robin McDonald from Fishing & Hunting and Don Rilling from Fixed Commercial. Their groups are looking for new members. We have a couple of names who might be interested in becoming reps for the first nations and they have been informed that we are looking for community input, not formal consultation. We want community involvement and discussion on impacts as well as trail knowledge.

#### Activities, Enforcement & Signage

May Long Update (see attached stats report) – Overall May Long was a success, the best overall in 22 years. Still a number of issues including some garbage and party sites, but no major accidents or fatalities. A factor was that there were definitely a lot less people out with Rig Street being the worst area. Lots of liquor coming through Caroline at check stops, none at Drayton Valley. Quad tickets were handed out but not really serious-type ones. The Allstones random camping site, which traditionally was bad, only had one youth group and one family and it was clean. Clearwater County's Sasquatch program was effective and overall well received. Total number of tickets handed out was 815. No hospital numbers yet due to freedom of information.

During the long weekend there were two closures in effect. All of the designated Bighorn Dam trails south of the Dam were closed on request by Bighorn Heritage ATV Society. Concrete blocks were put in

place to keep people out. We received phone calls ahead of time so people are checking in first or on the website. Falls creek area was the second closure and overall the general population were good. The RCMP caught some motorized users trying to remove the blocks and driving through the creek. Outside the Bighorn Backcountry there is still definitely some work to be done. The new Sasquatch program at least informs people where they can and can't go and gives them opportunity to make a choice. This program is a joint effort and yielded very positive results.

The dumpster program was in effect with 17 dumpsters out. To date no report back on how full they were. Companies wanted to participate because it was better to get into the bin program then pay their guys to clean places up. Some members of the public were going back to other people's abandoned sites and cleaning them up.

Signage / Activities – We have received funding for backcountry trails flood initiative program. Most of our damage is within the Bighorn Backcountry PLUZs. We currently have a two person survey crew out to do inventory and a four person work crew to repair trails. There is funding as well to hire contractors and volunteers will be contacted and a student summer wage person has been hired for signage. There is a meeting next Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at the Canalta to discuss this flood initiative. Invitations are being sent out to all the representatives after this meeting. We are currently working on the list of priorities set out at the last meeting and are looking at potentially realigning the Canary Creek trail. Want to engage the general public to find out other trails out there that were affected. The inventory crew will go in ahead of the work crew on each site for measurements, etc.

Also being hired is a volunteer coordinator to engage the volunteers. The project coordinator would like to talk to the volunteers at the meeting, not just the general public. This funding is not just to cover PLUZ trails but otherwise have to be approved trails. Alberta Parks is also putting up money for the trail trial and summer motorized will be putting forward some upcoming projects from BHAS.

Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society was doing work up the Clearwater valley last year. We contacted them and they won't be doing any in our area this year but have someone going in to check the equestrian trails. We would like to invite them to our next meeting. They have an historic map that would be interesting to see where these trails were and if anything can be opened up or used.

Question – What is this group's opinion on what constitutes needing a bridge? Foot bridges being built right now are two logs wide with split logs on top. Glacier trail is wide enough so an OHV-size bridge might be wanted. Hummingbird may be requiring metal bridges due to lots of washout. Outside of the Bighorn Backcountry we are expecting designated trails to happen and to have common staging areas with decent trails. Some is accomplished using bridges and roads timber and oil companies leave behind. Good, hard fords are possible or use of boat pads.

Question – In dealing with Parks Canada would a trail from Siffleur to the Saskatchewan River Crossing ever be a possibility? It's doable but they weren't willing in the past. Will pursue with them again.

Question – Is it possible to do a big picture trail inventory? We're not going to see that out of the NSRP but they are looking at a sub-regional plan. Inventory is what's existing for trails now...not what you want in the future. They will look at how many km's of what type of trails and this will get tied in with dollars associated in general. A recreational opportunities spectrum was done to identify where we need expanded opportunities. Planning happens first and then it's always harder to get the work done.

Comment – we should remain focused on a plan that the framework will recognize, the one that we came up with in the vision group.

Enforcement – We tried to have park rangers specifically but there wasn't enough staff. However we can pay them some OT to do some of our enforcement callouts. One is stationed at ranger station so it would be easy to go into the Bighorn Dam. Fish & Wildlife enforcement and the RCMP have also made a commitment so we definitely have a coordinated presence out there. Sundre RCMP are eager to learn the land use items and may apply for an additional man for recreation.

### **NSRP – North Saskatchewan Regional Plan**

Would the Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee like to have a presentation directly to them regarding the LUF? We are unsure on who will be managing the landbase in the end. Maybe better after the draft?

At the Rocky Mountain House NSRP consultation facilitators had the cards on the wall and someone commented on too much funding going to OHV trails, not hiking. We just wanted to reiterate that the volunteers are doing the work, historically mainly OHV groups, and it's up to the hiking groups to do the work and say what they need. We do have signage and some materials that we can provide. We can help but they have to do the work, similar to what was done on the Ridgeline trail. Comment that the Alberta Hiking Association would send volunteers to help and it's noted that the Frontier Lodge does work on the biking trails.

Sub-regional planning – the current leaseholder of Marshy Bank is interested in kicking off a sub-regional plan in conjunction with the LUF plan. The push is to deal with access, core and secondary grizzly bear, but is just in its beginning stages. We would like to delete a portion of their FMA west of the Marshy Bank and it could be added to the PLUZ or the Wildland Park. This would result in having a managed forest all the way down to the Red Deer River.

We are also currently reviewing with biologists to get input on the Blackstone PLUZ. The IRP allowed for industrial use originally. We are proposing not to sell any more leases and the ones that were initially there expired in the PLUZ. There are no commitments for timber there and very little oil and gas.

Sub regional planners are hearing our recommendations, ie connective trails, etc.

June 25<sup>th</sup> is the NSRP open house at the Sheraton in Red Deer. It is encouraged to sign up for the daytime session as there are facilitators at each table, whereas the evening session relies solely on your

workbook input.

The important document is the terms of reference. If they are missing something in the TOR and you don't bring it up your issue could get missed. Please note that you can go to multiple meetings, not just restricted to one.

Delegations from the Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee are to be assigned to talk to the RAC, sooner rather than later to be first thoughts in their minds. Then they can update to us in the fall.

### **FOESA Update**

Please see the attached project update, financial statement and letters regarding campground closures.

One year ago the standing committee talked about the closing of 7 Mile campground. FOESA composed a letter to MLA and Tom Sutherland which eventually was sent. The background to the request is to take over campground and make it quad access site so that it is being utilized. Concerns have been voiced that the old PRAs (Alberta Parks-Public Rec Areas) are group use now and hard to get into. 7 Mile was on the books to close and what's being talked about now is to turn it into a PLRA (Public Land Recreation Area). GOA is looking at some alternatives as to where PRAs and PLRAs should be. One problem is the trunk road...it's officially a highway and quads can't go on a highway. They can travel on County roads though. We are going to need recreation opportunities and these sites are already set up and would be a shame to let go to waste. Definitely worth pushing the issue.

Question - Are we appearing to want for more OHV friendly? For some areas it just needs to be dealt with and is the main recreation in that area.

This 7 Mile site fits in exactly with initial site plans for other PLRAs to have the facilities right there where the recreation is taking place. Not just OHVs but equestrian use as well. Another example of a minimally used campground that would be a perfect PLRA would be Ram Falls with its five loops. It could quite feasibly be a mixed equestrian and OHV site. It could easily be used as a staging area and then ride to Hummingbird. We support FOESA to push this direction and they can prove by example that it can actually be done.

Comment – It's a slippery slope to keep volunteering for stuff. We need to have GOA step up and fund the maintenance of PLRAs. There is industry support in this area as well and they would like to just charge a nominal fee (i.e. \$5), to be able to keep fires in pits and have a bathroom available for people to use. This is also where the need for a trail pass / camping pass would fit with the fees that go back to the operation of these PLRAs.

Question – Is FOESA looking for a letter of support or caveat that the GOA should be helping in some way? Both, we don't know for certain what we need. If you have more flexibility would you want to do it? Chambers creek is another good example for opening to OHVs. Is it more a major issue with the OHVs themselves? Not sure. The campground operators love OHVs because they show up in all

weather. Those private campgrounds that currently allow OHVs, do they corral the OHVs somewhere or allow them to be brought straight to the camper? Both, each one does it different. McLean Creek is designed so that you ride out the back of the campground. Another example is the Tay River campground. Right now Prairie Creek campground is always full of the off roaders with street legal units so they are currently doing the same as would be done with OHVs.

FOESA has the signage ready to go around Ya Ha Tinda. Comment that the trail signs they are using are really good! Signs were put up May 24<sup>th</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup> we fix up around highlines at Hummingbird. July 19<sup>th</sup> is the poker rally at Hummingbird (see updates).

Just received an \$8701 donation from the Calgary Trail Riders. A lot of people are still supporting the Friends of the Eastern Slopes Association so it's very heartening. It's a big job for volunteers and we are gaining a little bit.

May look into using SKIP – a student bursary program where you can get a student to do your website information/updates.

### **Prescribed Burn Update**

This spring FERD burnt 40 Mile meadow through prescribed burning. We purchased a remote camera that feeds through satellite and now can monitor when the snow is gone, etc. It takes pictures once per day and allows you to monitor the area without having to go out there so frequently.

Successfully burnt about 70 ha this year before May long, and it was a very short season. Whole burn is a capping unit to be able to manage fire more freely, and creating habitat will be an outcome.

New signage at Cutoff letting people know that the area is a prescribed burn area and we could be burning whenever conditions are right which would mean smoke and helicopter activity.

### **Open Floor**

- Olds Snowmobile Club has had a recreation lease since February 2002, and every year they fill out a tax exemption. This year they got a tax notice. They provide a free winter service and it's closed in the summer time. Have put 100s of hours of time into the staging area facilities and are frustrated because suddenly they are being charged. The majority of rec leases are the County's and the rep will look into it for the club, which may have to make a letter to council.
- Bighorn Dam campground, through LUF it's one of the primary sites, sitting ready to go but waiting on funding. If the campsite was there would trail system be able to be open longer? Maybe, if we could maintain Tershishner, etc. as well.
- Mountain Legacy project was mentioned, reviewing photos from 100 years ago. See attached report for more info.
- Change to winter motorized - Mike Doyle is taking the lead, Rick Artzen and James Brady will do the alternate.
- Change to hiking - Jane Ross will be the alternate, with Rob Unkauf stepping down.

**Summer field trip – Wednesday, July 16, 2014.** Preachers point, Landslide Lake Interpretive Trail, North Saskatchewan prescribed burn. Meet at yard with van shuttle.

**Next Standing Committee meeting date Thursday, Sept 25, 2014.**