

# Bighorn Backcountry

## Access Management Plan

### Monitoring: Standing Committee

February 6, 2014 **FINAL COPY**

Rocky Mountain House Museum Boardroom

#### In Attendance

Don Livingston	Wayne Crocker	Lisa Schrader	Fred Wilton
Laura Raivio	Paul Radchenko	Lorne Hindbo	Gord Sanders
Robin McDonald	Dennis Schafer	Cal Rackach	Lonnie Earl
Rita Stagman	Brad Andrews	Dale Marshall	Roger Marvin
Jim Duncan	Chiara Feder	Kristofer Heemeryck	

#### Chair

Don Livingston

#### Introduction

Everyone thanked for attending the meeting. Round-table introductions were completed. Changes to the steering committee are: Sarah Froese, Land Management Forester replaces Arshad Ali as well as the addition of Lisa Schrader from ESRD and Fred Wilton from TPR. Loren Winnick has retired. Changes to the standing committee are County members Jim Duncan and Kyle Greenwood replacing Case Korver and Dick Wymenga.

#### Activities, Enforcement & Signage

Signage - Signage completed this fall for some interim closures by Lisa and Laura, as well as Carly, Peter and Laura having done a bunch of regular signage in the summer.

Activities - So far it has been quiet this winter west of Nordegg, much of the reason being that it is difficult to pull off safely and park anywhere with all the snow. We had one inquiry regarding the Sugarbowl random sledding area, and saw one set of tracks there near Christmas time. There has been activity in ditches and around the lakes in the Nordegg area. One person called in saying they had gotten into the Scalp Creek random sledding area even though the closure signs were up. They came in through Cutoff and where the bridge was out at Timber Creek they went down to river and then back to trail without issues the rest of the way. However, snow was bare in the bowl. They were told that signage is up to date and if ever in doubt, check the website. Hummingbird has been fairly busy but also has a snow plow issue leaving nowhere to park. We have talked to Shell about getting them to plow to the gravel pit and County is willing to go to the staging area if it's a safety issue. Cutoff has had some activity but running into the same problem.

How do we get more plowing performed? In the past we had Transportation plow Ram day use to park at and sled from but they don't do that anymore. County will do more, but without the budget they do Crescent staging and Cow Lake. All the other staging areas west of there are not currently being done. We have been asking about this and want to identify the places and try to come up with some solution between ESRD/TPR/Transportation. Need to deal with toilets and garbage then as well.

\*\*Recommend from group to look at the plowing issue and to take it to highways? Well used recreation corridors and there is currently no way to utilize safely.

Vision Workshop – This took place in November and was pretty successful, resulting in good ideas on where we want to go. The Landuse Framework will be starting to kick off right away. The South Saskatchewan Plan and here are completely different and they were unaware of all that has been done in the Bighorn. The resulting vision stressed looking outside the Bighorn Backcountry for trail connection. We are starting to set up an integrated land plan that would include the old Chungo plan. Also need to take into account the issues with grizzly bear recovery so we can't have trails all over the place. Weyerhaeuser has expressed interest in giving up the Marshy Bank area near Blackstone. The timing is right to involve the future Bighorn vision with all these ideas going forward. Everyone is anxious to go ahead and we are hoping to have all parties on board.

Question: The northern boundary would be the Cardinal Divide and south? It would be following the Marshy Bank boundary. Noted that Cardinal is currently of high recreational value and high usage.

Brochures - The 2014 PLUZ brochure has gone to print in time for the Red Deer Sportsman's Show at the end of February. In the South Saskatchewan plan Dormer/Sheep and Panther were PLUZs were included in our region but the current proposal is to convert all or portions of them into a Don Getty Wildland Park. ESRD is working with the South Saskatchewan group on the magic boundary line, hoping to use a river as opposed to an imaginary line on a map and would allow us to keep the Panther staging area.

Question: If it goes to a wildland park? Managed recreation, managed trails? Currently needs a management plan but they could allow current usage to remain. In the Dormer/Sheep, existing motorized trails should be carried over, however new trails may not be an option. Summer motorized told the wildland park committee to include the Bighorn Backcountry group in talks and not to make decisions in isolation. ESRD (Bighorn) is now involved in all of that. Worried that it is too confusing for users if there is not a clear boundary. If it becomes a wildland park the use of fire is a concern. Will it affect trap lines? It could potentially. Willmore still allows trapping so it may be the same. The link to access the proposals is at

<https://landuse.alberta.ca/REGIONALPLANS/SOUTHSASKATCHEWANREGION/Pages/default.aspx>

Brochures – The request was brought up to show the wildlife sanctuaries on the 2015 PLUZ brochure. This was agreed to as it was thought that sometimes people don't actually know they are in a sanctuary. Requested representatives to view the area maps and give suggestions.

Question: Any new status on getting a phone app or other phone friendly map access? Does backroad maps have anything? ESRD will look into

Enforcement – TPR Seasonal Park Rangers worked really well as a presence over the summer, Fish & Wildlife and RCMP worked weekend OT. Pretty effective, especially with TPR working 5 days a week. It is very obvious that compliance in Bighorn Backcountry is a whole lot better than outside of the PLUZs. We have witnessed people sheep hunting, following the rules and leaving quads on side of trail with hunters walking from there. People being questioned were familiar with the rules on a regular basis. We may have to look at taking out some signs now due to good reclamation, making that particular signage no longer necessary. One report from equestrian is that every time they met someone quadding on the trail, the quadders would stop, remove helmets and let them by. Others reporting how polite motorized are. Seeing big changes, so it's significantly different than it was before. Water crossing issues – outside the PLUZs there is work to do, but inside seems to be good.

One RCMP has put in a proposal to have 1 or 2 dedicated RCMP strictly for backcountry patrol. Unsure of funding for this yet and it would cover backcountry, lease sites, environmental impact sites, etc.

### **Societies & Foundations**

There had been a suggestion in the past of creating a Friends of Bighorn society with FOESA being the umbrella group, similar to the Willmore group, etc. Would we want to do this and would FOESA want to be the umbrella group? Thoughts?

FOESA is still interested but have lost a lot of the guidelines. Some people think a society would lever money. It's a good idea but not going to happen because it would mean creating a whole new organization, board of directors, etc. The existing people that would be involved all would not have enough time. FOESA doing fine funding-wise to date.

Links to two of those existing societies' websites are:

[www.willmorewilderness.com](http://www.willmorewilderness.com) and [www.rmws.ca](http://www.rmws.ca)

### **Panther Wagon Trail**

Panther traditionally had two wagon trails, one high and one through the river. The one through the river has washed out and it was suggested to put forward making the high route the only wagon trail, with some work done to it to make it accessible in summer as well. This would mean work on a steep incline with bringing in heavy equipment, which has been a problem in the past. It would reduce a number of river crossings. Tests on the Panther show that it is a bull trout spawning river, so we should be keeping wagons out, just like quads. This would tie into flood money if we were to agree and do it now. People are currently upset over the proposal and say that items like platforms and such are being left back in the bush. They are concerned that using equipment will start a use of equipment everywhere. Comes down to do we want to see a sustainable wagon trail into the Panther? Do we want people going all the way up through the river repeatedly or close it?

This bighorn group's mandate is to make suggestions. Any change to any trail that lasts more than one season has to go through the group. It's sounding like ESRD is getting more involved with trails again. Every crossing has to go to DFO for approval for either a single span bridge or hard bottom with armored sides.

### **Flood Funding & Priorities**

The Southern Rockies Area and the areas within the PLUZs of the Bighorn Backcountry received approval for project dollars over 3 years, to cover damage done by 2013 floods. We had a good idea what we had issues on for the Bighorn, some being the Cline Bridge, Glacier Trail in Kootenay Plains, the sled trail into

Scalp, look at another route for the Canary trail. We did not look outside the PLUZs for the area. Looking at getting a couple of seasonal people to do inventories and see what needs to be fixed or re-routed. Also a project manager to look after priorities. Maybe priority should be given to trails with stakeholders already willing and ready to go to a spot? Not just all motorized or non-motorized.

Priority list suggestions:

- Scalp Creek to be completely re-looked at. Go through the ranch?
- Up from 40 mile, Canyon Creek, put bridges in.
- Pinto Lake Trail bridges, 1 at Entry Creek and 2 at Waterfalls Creek.
- Timber Creek bridge
- Glacier Trail
- Coral Creek
- Dormer/Sheep before wildland park? Have to inventory.
- Eagle / James Lake trail

Bridges are priorities and we need to do a bulk bridge order looking at a number of types of bridges. Need to do inventory in the spring first. We are also looking at trying to adopt parks trails standards and looking at sign standards. Discussion of having a separate meeting to get input from the standing committee on funding priorities.

### **Prescribed Burn Update**

\*copy of powerpoint attached.

Dave Finn has gone provincial so looking at getting a replacement. In looking at the R11, the completed burns are in black, approved in red and proposed in green. 2013's big success was the Upper Clearwater. The area in grey is what was burnt on 3<sup>rd</sup> slide. This was for sheep habitat creation and sheep and elk are now all over the slope. For 2014 the Chungo/Blackstone/Wapiabi are still on priority list. Also the Hummingbird capping unit in conjunction with FireSmart trials.

There is no real priority list, just depends on which one is ready to meet the objectives. Look for signage notifying of trail closures for burning.

### **Open Floor**

- FOESA banquet coming up Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Regarding volunteer acknowledgement for flood trail work. How would you like to be acknowledged? Signage? A plaque at the trail head? Kiosks? Trinkets? We find that when the general public know it's volunteers looking after the trail they are more respectful. With signage will we run into someone wanting a bigger acknowledgement if giving more money to a project. Send suggestions to Laura.

**Next meeting – Thursday, June 5, 2014**