

February 2, 2017 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

Rocky Mountain House Museum

In Attendance

Don Livingston	Lisa Schrader	Chiara Feder	Adena Earl
Tom Daniels	Jay Mills	Grant Santo	Logan Van Imschoot
Rick Artzen	Michael Doyle	Dennis Schafer	Cal Rakach
Doug King	Lorne Hindbo	Kyle Greenwood	Jim Duncan
Kristofer Heemeryck	Kevin Gagne	Dale Marshall	Larry Frischke
Rod Burns	Jeremy Cooper	Phil Lacerte	Curtis Nichol
Brad Jones	Barry Wesley	Loyal Ma	Laura Raivio

Chair

Don Livingston

Introduction

Round table conducted. Logan VanImschoot is now representing the Rocky Parks on the steering committee. We still also need an alternate for Guides & Outfitters, rep/alternate for Youth, rep/alternate for Eco-Tourism, alternate for Fishing & Hunting.

Activity / Enforcement Update

In early November the ADM said 6-8 months until a Bighorn Backcountry vs. Parks decision will be announced, so we are still waiting with no updates. We are still working with CTI outside of the Bighorn and working in the Brazeau area. More things happening outside of Bighorn than within while we wait. Getting back into recreation with lots of subjects coming up, one goal is a regional connected trail system within the North Saskatchewan region.

Canary Creek Trail – changed status to dark green (OHV open Dec 1-Feb 1, snowmobile open Dec 1-April 30). The large 2017 Bighorn Backcountry brochure is complete and we are reprinting. There will be two new area kiosk maps, one Nordegg area and one Shunda/Goldeye area.

Summer motorized commented they did a tour of Canary and expected it to be worse than it was. Currently it would maybe take a half day to fix. With more people going through to Monument there was a lot more damage to that particular trail. BTFR will be looking at more work on the Hummingbird Trail.

Enforcement was substantial around Nordegg area and the Bighorn Dam. Compliance was really good around the Dam. Overall in throughout the Bighorn Backcountry compliance is good.

Bighorn Dam violation tickets were down from last year. Return customers were being checked again so it shows compliance continues and their presence is being known. With that, we tried to focus on other areas.

Compliance was really high at Hummingbird. More activity is being noticed in the Cutoff Creek area. May have been the result of fire bans down south pushing people north to that location. Lands outside of the Backcountry were more of the concern.

People with community service obligations were sent out west to pick up garbage.

Nordegg – some compliance problem with motorized. There's non-motorized trail construction around Nordegg that hasn't been permitted. Passed on to the community association that if people are interested in building trails we can see if it's within the plan we will look at it. If they build an unauthorized trail they do not necessarily get to keep it, we will close it down. Bring proposals to the Hiking rep to bring to the group. Also when grooming for cross country ski trails you need a permit to use the machine to groom the trails.

Castle – 60 days for public input from the announcement date.

Wheeled usage is no longer allowed in the timing restricted areas of the Bighorn as of Feb 1st. We still get calls from users regarding usage of tracks on quads or side x sides. Snow vehicle is meant to be primarily operated on snow and ice (i.e. not able to drive over 2-3 km of rock) Snow bikes with a ski on the front and a track on the back are considered a snow vehicle because they wouldn't be going anywhere without snow. Some modifications can be done to quads/sides for skis on the front as well.

Clarity on what constitutes making a trail – basically if you are planning trails to facilitate some sort of use you need a permit. Does not include cutting blowdown from an existing trail. Old trails being reopened with major work required, it counts as a new trail. That applies to any area on public land including for trappers.

In the Bighorn the agreement with trappers was that if they had a trail that left the designated trail, they needed to sign it as for trapping only, not for public use.

Mapping for trails protocol – it comes to AEP and we include or remove a trail and then classify, but not to minute classifications. Recreational trail data was only allowed to Alberta TrailNet if it was a designated trail and then goes from our GIS to TrailNet. Ultimately we should veer to towards better classifications, especially types of trails like wagon trails to help people avoid accidents.

Larger OHVs are on the radar provincially regarding disturbance standards, but we do not have an outcome from that discussion yet. We've seen a change of usage from each individual having their own machine to themselves or doubling to now a unit having 2-4 people riding.

OHVs On Closed Trails

Initially AEP would not go in with OHVs outside of the timing restriction unless it was an emergency or for enforcement on trails that have a permanent or timed motorized closure. Also trappers would have to sign their trails. If we are planning to do a project we need to put a sign up to alert the public that it's us, not the general public on the trail and let enforcement know as well in case we receive reports. Volunteers are also given permits to head up the trails for work. When people see tracks they think it's okay to go even with the timing signs there.

James Lake Trail –It needs a lot of work with half the trail not in the Bighorn, and the section between Eagle/James is in prime protection area. BTFR will look at it again in unfrozen ground

conditions. We don't want FOESA doing a bunch of work for nothing if it gets closed down with Parks. There may be some options to head down to Wildhorse outside of that prime protection zone. Would suggest the best use of money and time would be on a trail that can be guaranteed to be open.

Again thoughts were that the RAC report would be released prior to Christmas. In Don's two meetings with the RAC thoughts were that some, all or none might be designated as a Park. All but Kiska in prime 1 protection zone. Names of all the PLUZs are to allow for site specific guidelines and intentions for each of those areas. Definitely a number of groups that don't like the idea of motorized use in prime protection. Whether motorized use in prime protection areas will still be allowed is unknown until we get that RAC report. We will continue work on existing trails but it's prudent to wait to build new ones until a decision is made.

Plans within the LUF were to create a new PLUZ in the green zone between the Bighorn Backcountry and the east crown border. This model moving forward is still planned with good staging areas and designated trails, that is still the goal. Planning is trying to focus on places where we are pretty sure things are okay to go ahead.

In planning we are talking about getting a road authority within the green zone to allow for legal connect ability over rivers, etc.

Backcountry Trail

Rehabilitation Update Joyce

Creek Loop - Contractor project

Damage Summary: numerous wash outs, damage to trail where watercourse has rerouted onto trail Repair Summary: reroute where necessary, create positive drainage where possible. Repair may not be necessary.

Bighorn Trail - Crew project, volunteer project (AWA)

Damage Summary: multiple washouts and soft spots, watercourse has rerouted onto trail Repair Summary: collaborate with AWA to reroute where necessary, install ABS matting

Dormer Trail - Crew project

Damage Summary: numerous washouts Repair Summary: reroute where necessary

Upper Clearwater Trail - Crew project

Damage Summary: washouts and damage between Forbidden creek and Clearwater river, washouts and damage Repair Summary: reroute where necessary

Hummingbird Trail - Crew project

Damage Summary: multiple points with deep scours, watercourse rerouted

onto trail, Repair Summary: create positive drainage, fill where necessary, reroute where necessary

Landslide Lake/Lake of the Falls Trail - Crew project, volunteer project (volunteers TBD) Damage Summary: trail washed out in multiple places, impassable, bridges damaged Repair Summary: replace bridges (done), finish remaining reroutes and trail repairs

Signage - Crew project - Install signage on new Clearwater trails, Panther wagon trail

*Suggestion that the Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee Group to recommend that this rehab should not end, that it is an ongoing problem and that we need to have rec crews and dollars to maintain.

Are commercial operators responsible for trail maintenance? There is no real requirement but it's understood that if they don't maintain the trail they can't use it either.

Anything south of the Panther River was turned into Don Getty Wildland Park a few years back, but we are still maintaining it as the Dormer/Sheep PLUZ until such time as it gets moved over.

Prescribed Burn Update

Nothing has changed on the plans since last fall. For this year Hummingbird, Wapiabi, Upper Clearwater has one more unit, Blackstone and Chungo. Also a plan at Bighorn Creek is almost wrapped up.

Changes to the Forest and Prairie Protection Act. One of note is the fine structure – there will be the ability to write tickets i.e. for abandoned campfire, burning without a permit, etc. Also provisions for public safety, i.e. OHV restrictions and exploding targets restrictions.

Fire season will officially start March 1st.

FOESA Update

Dale Marshall will be in attendance at the Bighorn meetings. Annual General Meeting & Banquet is Feb 25th at

the Innisfail Legion, Work Bee / Clean Ups for the following locations are on the following weekends - Seven Mile / Cutoff Creek - May 13th, Bighorn / Eagle Creek - May 27th, Hummingbird on June 10th and the Annual Horse Trail Ride & Poker Rally at the Bighorn Campground on August 19th. Hummingbird OHV rally is on hold right now due to the trail situation, maybe move it to the Bighorn Dam? The OHV rally can be in excess of 300 units there. Debating about whether to continue on with it at all due to such wet conditions happening.

Partnerships – Bighorn Standing / Sundre Forest Products (SFP) – Tom Daniels

Cal introduced SFP and mentioned that discussions have been taking place as to what the Bighorn Backcountry vs. Parks means to SFP and community stakeholders. CPAWS and Y2Y would like to see bigger parks and boundary changes. Bighorn Standing and Clearwater Trail Initiative (CTI) are always thinking beyond our boundaries on how we manage this region. Good opportunities for partnerships with industrial.

SFP through West Fraser (parent company) and other forest companies across Canada are signatory to the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA), as well as CPAWS and other ENGO's. If you go on the website for the above you can see some of the goals. The Forest Management Agreement (FMA) area is SFP's management responsibility. Have been looking for direction from LUF on the whole issue of protected areas, but that process was stalled.

SFP is working with CPAWS through the CFBA partnership on the drafting of a letter to support the Bighorn Backcountry becoming a protected area. Depending on the protected area designation this could affect large portions of the community. CPAWS is also working with Y2Y to try and protect everything west of the trunk road, which goes significantly east into SFP's FMA. The CBFA group organized a stakeholder meeting on April 14, 2016 to talk about the CBFA letter and people at the meeting were quite concerned about the wording in the letter. In general they were finding that people don't trust Parks. Participants did say that the PLUZs seem to be working very well. There is an opportunity for people to do activities in the Bighorn without the difficulties on these multiuse trails. Thoughts raised were that the worst thing to do is put a fence around the forest and expect it to be okay, with nothing being able to happen in there whether it is recreation, logging, prescribed burning or other. The western boundary of SFP's FMA was looked at and what was found is that you could actually increase the Bighorn area and decrease the size of our FMA by subtracting/adding areas that could/could not be logged along the edge. The Minister has lots of pressure from environmental groups and the eye is towards making Bighorn a Park.

IUCN criteria website has six categories and all were encouraged to go on that website. For Alberta only four categories qualify for designation as a protected area while in other jurisdictions all six categories are used. PLUZ's could fit well into those categories if all six were recognized in Alberta. This would support the GOA goal of protecting 17% of the province.

Would like to see some category changes within Alberta for what qualifies as a protected area. Land doesn't have to be necessarily made into a Park for people to be happy. There can be a balance of use within PLUZ's that would also meet protected area criteria. During the April 14 meeting it was suggested that a letter that many groups would support would be a positive outcome. The letter could be signed by multiple parties (including SFP and possibly other industry). The support at the meeting was not to have the Bighorn Backcountry turned into a Park as it is already under protection with the PLUZs. This pressure might help persuade GOA to not make the Bighorn into a Park if it is considering to give area protective status.

Discussion of how Bighorn PLUZs came to be and designations of each.

Would like to confirm if it was designated as a Park it may remain the same usage...or not?
Depending on which Park designation.

Comments: Changes in both Parks and PLUZs have to go by ministerial order. As a PLUZ we can change trails without going to order in council, it's under signs and notices, same as Parks. How many groups like our standing exist in Parks? Just groups associated. Parks agrees that this committee works and he sees that it works. There are other types of successful groups around the province.

GOA is still asking us to buy into their plan without giving us any details – why should we??
Nobody can say what the rules are going to be so why should we support a change to Parks?

Show us what it would look like. Castle has blown the trust, it feels like deception. It was supposed to be a modern park and then it was brush- stroked away. Perception is things get done just because of some minister's vision not necessarily on what people want.

Maybe the positive thing we can do is to write a letter addressing our concerns that this process has not been respected and we have not been part and parcel to consultation, and that we as a group think this is the wrong direction for our GOA to go. This feels like a land grab to put a name of Parks on by our GOA. This will impact us all with or without businesses. We need to let the powers that be know our concern.

As a group if you would like to pen a letter please do.

What would have to happen for PLUZ to be recognized as a protected area? More than just recognizing the last two categories mentioned by SFP. It has to have certain wording mentioning biodiversity. R11 mentions biodiversity but would have to become part of the PLUZ description to affect.

How do First Nations feel about living in a Park? They've been approached as Stoney Nation by the group with the initial consultation process a few years back. They haven't met with them again yet. It will have an impact, all development in the area has an impact. Would be wise if this group approached the nation and met with the leaders as they are the ones that make the decisions. If you are doing up a letter send to the first nations as well. For Castle they were consulted and they opposed but GOA still went ahead anyway. They don't want to see the disturbance. There is a group called the Y2Y that has been coming to their doors.

Is our PLUZ the largest? They are the biggest connected PLUZs at more than 5000 km². The Bighorn would add 1% to the 17%.

**SFP to work with member and do up a draft. Send concerns, numbers etc. to Cal.

South Saskatchewan Region – Standing/Steering Committees

SSR is in the process of recreation management planning from south to north with a management plan for each PLUZ. We had a monitoring group with a lot of good energy but things didn't proceed well and they agreed to dissolve. Would like to set up a steering and standing committee similar to the model used for the Bighorn Backcountry. How would you set up a new group like this? What works, what didn't?

- Value-based as members i.e. here as summer motorized not as a rep for an OHV group.
- Terms of Reference are critical and membership is to support the success of the management plan.
- GOA initially went to ask the provincial associations to see who they wanted at the table.
- Making the selection down to the people from the actual community who have the vested interest.
- When picking people it may not necessarily be from an association so long as they know the area and the users.
- Administration is a big part (issues, mapping, web, organization).
- The group needs to be very open to outside input.
- Do not have a quorum stipulation.
- No approval process involving sub committees within sub committees as items would never get passed.

- The standing is advisory to steering, management power sits with steering.

*If you have any more suggestions please forward to Laura

Open Floor

- County is trying to get tourism providers all under one roof to have people coming to do more than one activity in the region. Really looking for maps and participation at the meeting in early March.
 - Tour of Alberta for 2017 would like to come from Nordegg to Rocky.
 - Time is coming where we need to expand our borders and this is a golden opportunity to expand and take in all the boundaries of the David Thompson country. Is it part of current GOA planning to take all of that area in as a PLUZ, including this type of management group? Would like to have the area planning done before LUF instead of waiting.
 - First Nations this year are going to be doing traditional land use studies on the landscape.
- **Next Standing Committee meeting June 8, 2017**