

January 25, 2018 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

**Rocky Mountain House Museum**

**In Attendance**

Wayne Crocker	Travis Earl	Lisa Schrader	Lorne Hindbo
Don Livingston	John Tchir	Chiara Feder	Tony Brooks
Kevin Gagne	Logan Vanlmschoot	Kristofer Heemeryck	Doug King
Cal Rakach	Rick Artzen	Dennis Schafer	Michael Doyle
Jim Duncan	Jeremy Cooper	Rod Burns	Dale Marshall
Alan Ernst	Grant Santo	Paul Radchenko	Loyal Ma
Rita Stagman	Crystal Damer	Andre Corbould	John Conrad
Laura Raivio			

**Chair**

Wayne Crocker

**Welcome/Introduction**

Round table conducted. New alternate for County is Michelle Swanson, new steering rep for Fish & Wildlife is Tony Brooks.

**Bighorn Update**

The Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Director of Land Use Secretariat will be here later in the meeting. Lots of concerned public making phone calls and action requests regarding the future of the Bighorn. It is a big topic right now with the public so communications are important. This will be an opportunity to meet the group and have one on one discussions as well.

**Activity / Enforcement Update**

There was some work done this fall at Rocky Creek on the way into Cutoff. It is outside of the PLUZ but we want to update as there is a bull trout study and Rocky Creek had many trails going in and out the creek. The creek itself was going down the quad trail and fish were getting stuck there. It was an emergency fish rescue. Pulled 15 bull trout out of quad ruts. This is the first time we've done this kind of work as an emergent response and we were able to put the stream back in its channel and close further OHV access to the creek. This is not an approved trail and is considered a linear disturbance as a result of the last 20 years or so of not managing motorized recreation. In some cases trails can be rerouted or bridged but not in this case.

Q - Worried that saying this is an emergency response seems like another tool to just close trails.

A - This was an emergency situation requiring quick action to recover bull trout, the OHV impacts could not be mitigated with bridges, and the meadow is all sensitive habitat with shallow groundwater.

Q - Seems like every time we turn around it's just more closures.

A - That is not the case, as we've been focused on trail development at Meadows and Rig Street for example.

40 Mile trail complaints about off trail use beyond 40 Mile cabin. Parks did targeted patrols but no more physical trail evidence or cutting of standing trees right now. We have future planned patrols by OHV and at staging areas. There is a priority patrol list. From the air there are no stray trails and it looks like compliance has been great this year. There were tracks but on the designated trails.

Patrols are planned monthly for high priority areas. OHV compliance is the goal, gathering information, no alcohol, etc. Officer presence patrols are very important.

Scalp Creek trail permit requests - we rely on Olds Snowmobile Club to let us know when there is enough snow to get through. In 2013 one of the ravines had been damaged with big boulders so difficult in the most optimum situation to get through. Want to temporarily post as closed on website/map, what is the standing committee opinion? It can it be reassessed to see if it can be made usable.

Committee members can email suggestions. Club member was on the trail two years ago. You had to be dedicated and you would do some damage to your machine. The trail doesn't get used so there's lots of downed trees.

Is it a difficult fix?

The trail needs to be rerouted. Initially the club wasn't allowed to make a safe trail because we can't go through the corner of the Yaha Tinda. A lot of the trail is in the completely wrong place. It needs to be rethought and rerouted, but still have to wait until we see what's happening to the Bighorn. Don't want to set up false expectation to the snowmobile community on access. Summer motorized agreed for now and will be changed to temp closed on map.

Peppers area – GOA did some trail assessments west of Peppers Lake and noticed a lot of damage. Also talking about temp closures there as well. Are there reroutes? Mostly the south end is the problem. We are going to have another look at them and see if a reroute is possible. There is one bull trout stream.

**\*By the next meeting Wayne to ask Cal to assess with GOA.**

### **OHV Specs on PLUZ Brochure**

In the spirit of cleaning up our brochure, nobody pays attention to the specs on there as the vehicles are larger now. However it's actually in the legislation. GOA discussed with counterparts and in the south they have gates with width restrictions to keep out the 4x4s. Discussed with steering, do we make every single trail wide enough for a 60" to pass? Infrastructure requirements – would you want all trails made to the biggest width. To a point yes, that's where we need to go so that it's safe for everyone. Stewards have been key in getting some companies to make vehicles to standards. Because it's in legislation we cannot change it quickly.

Wheelbase and widths and weights no longer fit. Will they be strict on this if it becomes a park? A lot of times the size is less important at the noise.

There is a GOA trail committee creating standards right now. Classification and standards manual being redone.

Regulations – are electric bikes on your list for regulations? Yes

### **North Central Native Trout Recovery Program**

John Tchir delivered a presentation on the program and relevancy to the Bighorn.

Primary concerns of the committee were with respect to dealing with invasive species as a threat, Otters, and comments on use of other options like bait bans to reduce mortality and questioning the value of the consultation for the program.

Invasive species are being considered in recovery actions where appropriate. In many streams where introduced species have replaced native trout this would not be useful.

Otters have not been considered a threat at this point however, if otter densities are high in areas we are trying to recover bull trout this may become something to look at.

Administrative management actions like bait bans, and single hooks may reduce hooking mortality by a small margin but modelling indicates it would not be enough to decrease mortality enough to see a meaningful increase in the target fish population.

Over 1200 respondents to on-line surveys and two information sessions were held along with over 40 meetings with clubs, special interest groups and other agencies on this program. We recognize now that Alberta's anglers are highly mobile and local public meetings don't sample most of the Albertans that actually use the resource. With online surveys and organized information sessions we reached anglers from across Alberta and considered their feedback.

A presentation was delivered on the North Central Native Trout Recovery program. The following questions were asked and responded to:

- 1) How does the overlap with the Bighorn? The Upper Berland, Upper Pembina, Lower Ram/North Saskatchewan, Upper Clearwater and Pinto Lake will be temporarily closed to angling. Pinto has been closed for 30 years.
- 2) Anything dealing with access into certain areas? It all boils down to pressure; roads and trails, how many anglers get to the creek.
- 3) Doing anything with the predatory fish? Invasives are a problem and some creeks do not even have bull trout in them anymore. Will not be trying to clean these non-native species out as it is just about impossible.
- 4) Concern that otters kill a lot of trout and we should be doing something about it? Work with the wildlife manager to see if this is something that can be worked on as a trapper.
- 5) Future bait ban? Did the math on a bait ban and a single barbless, would only bring angling mortality down minimally.
- 6) Worried that once any area is closed it is never opened again. Comment - Don't feel 1200 out of 400,000 anglers is enough of a survey? A- We are trying to reach as many people as we can but we would have to do nearly 2000 smaller meetings to generate the input that we received online. We used to only do local public meetings but found many of the anglers weren't local. Going online covers more

ground now, we can't force people to take the survey but Albertans have the option for input.

### **FOESA Update**

Mostly a good year. Cleaned up at 7 Mile campground, work bees at the rest of the campgrounds, redid highlines at Eagle Creek, Cutoff had gravel put in place. 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at YaHa. Overall use at 7 Mile went up this year. Last loop on the left seemed to be popular. Annual banquet is Feb 17<sup>th</sup> at the legion.

### **Prescribed Burn Update**

Same plans, big one is Bighorn Creek working with Parks Canada, currently in FNC. Ram mountain pending approval in cut blocks. Capping units in Wapiabi, Hummingbird and one unit left in 40 Mile on the Clearwater.

### **Open Floor**

- Q - Member did do the survey, agrees with what they are doing with the bull trout. Worried about introduction of walleye into all the lakes. A – Looked at over 200 lakes for density and are finding there is no relationship between more or less walleye and the others species of fish. Anglers are driving the system and what they are fishing.

### **Discussion with the Deputy Minister**

Introductions

DM was in the area back in September trying to understand what is going on, what exists, and meet people. Cannot tell you when things will be in place formally. GOA is doing regional planning and is doing this first before the formalized process. Don't know when the release of the RAC is coming but when it is out, you will be informed. Lots of meetings, phone calls, letters, emails. Know there is a lot of FB and social media happening. This is just the pre-process to get out and meet people. Regional planning is all about managing the land in the right way. Trying to be pro-active.

In terms of steps going forward, this is not formal consultation, just getting perspectives and ideas. Will be speaking with many different groups. Questions are what's your vision of overall outcome, what's working well now, where are the conflicts, where are the opportunities, what's the key issues, what types of experiences should be considered for tourism?

So far realized this committee is doing great work and is well informed. Would like to see it carry on as I see this as having great value. Can guarantee this committee will have a voice of influence.

Want to reinforce that the Alberta Stewardship Lands Act deems that consultation is a requirement. It is a legal requirement, we cannot put out a plan without first putting out a draft plan....this is not a final plan and consultation is required.

There is trust issues in this area, and that is known. Want to try to genuinely build that trust up and will work hard to earn that trust.

There is some really collaborative planning that is happening here and good things going on as far as multiple users due to committees like this. Have better clarity on what is a trail and not a trail. Hearing from motorized not wanting change and some wanting major change. Continuing to assess all that out. A lot of people are very

passionate about the area. Am seeing a lot of common ground through all the letters and communications, i.e. the need for more enforcement.

Everybody wants to pursue some economic opportunity. Generally happy with how R11 forest management is working. I am hearing all the different views and am searching for the common ground to start and then work on the things people disagree about.

Once we know how we want to use the land and we can then figure out what is the right designation.

Process perspective – RAC is still coming out and will allow people to talk about it. Make it clear that the RAC is advice and not a plan, but will be able to talk about those recommendations. After that a draft plan goes out, and then consultation takes place, and then things change. Timings are just not there yet.

Public interaction; have been asking how people want to see that happen, i.e. online, sessions, etc. Some want to voice their views publicly and some don't.

No major announcements today, this is where we are.

Comment – would like to see some guidelines. FOESA put money into bridges and trails and have money but keep having projects declined because we don't know what's going to happen down the road. Want guidelines on what we can do in the meantime so we can go ahead. Maybes have been losing us funding. DM - Agree we need to do this and will approach Don with some guidelines in the near future.

Comment – We've all been circling for a long time and need to have direction. Need certainty and tools. This needs to be addressed. Locally GOA have been doing everything they can with nothing. We are trying to carry on in good faith.

DM - Would like to get Don in front of the Minister in the near future. Trying to ensure the staff on the ground are better involved and get rid of some of the bureaucracy.

Comment - Seeing the amount of volunteer groups and money going into the green zone, if GOA can remove the obstacles, we are on the ground. Always carry Bighorn stuff and stop and explain if we see an issue. A big part of this is education.

Comment - Biggest struggles for the upcoming future is the difference between public lands and parks. Need to come up with a way to address that without it being such a polarized issue. We all want to protect certain areas but until you start picking the land apart, would like to see a plan that covers all the public lands.

DM – have to stop using imaginary lines on maps and use perspective. Grazing leases, for example, that go on public lands that cross into parks, one person should manage it. Would want the professional agrologist to do that.

Parks used to be in a different department but is in the same department now. Need to give clear guidance to the staff. Solution is to focus on management of the area and then put the lines back on.

Bighorn had a visioning group and they wanted to see that vision move east of the current PLUZ.

Comment – why does it have to be a park to be designated a protected area? DM – there are some definitions of what is a protected area but also examining and expand current definitions. I.e. Why can't private land be designated protected or military training area buffers? Trying very hard to have this changed and accepted which would bring our numbers up very much. There are some values in having a parks designation and the GOA can be much clearer about what is allowed with each parks designation. Comment – in reading some designations, it fits as protected now, why have to change to a park? DM – what you are asking is being considered and talked about. There is value in parks from an economic perspective as well. When you identify a park it does bring more people.

Comment - More people, higher level of management; where does that extra money come from? DM - Part of the decision is allocating the resources to the decision at the same time.

Comment – there is a trust issue. Perception on a management perspective, senior management will not commit on how they are going to manage the land. If you want to make it a park, need to commit on a management plan. i.e you told us this and then it didn't happen. DM - in the end the elected officials will ultimately decide. Agree there's uncertainty there.

Comment – Is there a strategy for an increase in enforcement? Definitely agree we can't do this without increased enforcement. Big area and it's always going to be a challenge. The joint interagency for enforcement is another unique quality for this area.

Comment – Big issues are trust and additional trail closures. We've agreed to additional trails closures here again today for the right reasons. We are still wanting to trust and keep going out on a limb.

Comment – Are we that broke that we have to be fixed in this area? DM - Regional planning is happening and we are making sure we have a good clear plan. We haven't been free-for-all here in the PLUZ and it's a proven fact that it has been working here. DM - if what's currently working well meets the land use and the designation for the region that will be considered.

Comment – Water quality, going back to when the dam was permitted on the North Saskatchewan with big boundaries for low and high flow. Looking at the silt and all kinds of damage to that river as a result of the drastic fluctuations, can we not regulate the output to minimize the damage? DM - will look into that, and the specs and info. Permits will be looked at.

**NEXT MEETING – THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2018**