

Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan Monitoring: Standing Committee

June 9, 2016 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

Rocky Mountain House Museum

In Attendance

Jim Allen	Paul Radchenko	Jim Duncan	Simon Dyer
Adena Earl	Lorne Hindbo	Michael Doyle	Dennis Schafer
Cal Rakach	Doug King	Jay Mills	Barry Wesley
Charlie Abraham	Rita Stagman	Dale Marshall	Rod Burns
Eric Brownrigg	Kevin Gagne	Mike Veltri	Lisa Schrader
Wade Colwell	Loyal Ma	Blake Christiansen	Laura Raivio

Chair

Jim Allen

Introduction

Round table conducted. Welcome to Barry Wesley the new rep for First Nations.

Activity/Enforcement

There will be a total of 13 Park Rangers located at Rocky/Nordegg. Seasonals are concentrated in the areas of the southeast slopes, not all over the province. Fish & Wildlife will be doing some recreational enforcement as well.

National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council has completed their Great Trails book, an excellent guide for creating or repairing OHV trails (or any trails). The hardcopy can be purchased or an electronic copy can be downloaded at the NOHVCC website: <http://gt.nohvcc.org/>

May Long Results

OHV ban restrictions were lifted so dispersed the OHV usage more.

May Long Weekend Stats: 79 Staff working, 5414 contacts with the Public

Enforcement Stats

- 3 Public Lands Act charges
- 1 warning and 1 charge for the Environmental Protection Act
- 147 warnings and 459 Charges laid under the Traffic Safty Act
- 3 warnings and 90 charges for the Liquor and Gaming Act

- 9 warnings and 13 charges laid under the Fisheries Act
- 1 warning and 3 charges under the Wildlife Act.
- 2 warnings for the Danger Goods Act.
- 31 charges for other Provincial statutes
- 24 charges for the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act
- 37 Criminal Code charges
- 9 road side suspensions, 6 impaired
- 1 Parks Act
- 7 motor vehicle collisions, 28 prisoners, 9 abandoned autos, 6 warrants executed.
- Additional Comments: There was one fatality and one serious injury within the region
- Medical attention required for a hiker who sustained serious injuries from a fall.

These statistics do not include the Drayton Valley RCMP.

Q: Garbage bins? There were 6 in total in the usual areas.

Q: What charges for public land? Monster trucks in bog areas, quads in James River. At the Bighorn Dam the trails are currently closed. There was much confusion with the bans for County and GOA.

On May long, some quads came along the North Saskatchewan and through the reserve. There used to be fencing and signs to stop quad users but they keep being torn down.

Action Answer: Fencing and signage for the border of the reserve is the band's responsibility to purchase and put in place.

Signage Update

Receiving an allotment for some signage and a 3 month summer backcountry maintenance person. Wayne was able to place a small signage order. Province put up some sign standards and we have to put in our own wording.

Stoney First Nation is working on a Stoney trail in the eastern slopes. Developing a map from Waterton Lakes up to Grande Prairie using Stoney names for landmarks and mountains. Hoping to have it ready by next year. Trails are mostly by foot and equestrian. There will be social trails for anyone to use and some hunting trails not for the public. The idea is for the protection of the environment both in the Parks and outside of the Parks. If one of these trails fall on an existing motorized will they try to stop the motorized? Not likely but would look at each one separately.

40 Mile/Eagle/Scalp Creek

It has been asked to bring to conversation opening the timing restriction on the Timber Creek trail into 40 Mile to summer OHV now that it has been upgraded. Also, winter access to cabin site. FOESA is in favor of going to cabin site. GOA reps spoke about a stop point at the cabin, put in a fire ring, making it a picnic site destination. People that still quad but are older and not able to walk in longer distances would like this access. Maybe make the trail a loop. Suggest it for winter motorized by Mike Doyle. That little stretch would be upgraded by the flood recovery group. How do you manage damage at the site? Wouldn't the level of disturbance to the cabin would be greater? We would have to look at the traffic there and decide how to reduce the damage. With the cameras there we have seen that there has been lots of compliance and people currently walking in.

Open timing to longer OHV? Timing was placed for wildlife reasons, user conflict reasons and trail damage on unfrozen ground reasons. Need to look at that whole south and north end together. Put a proposal in? The current date of December 1st was picked to avoid conflict with the hunters. When doing work in there the volunteer didn't see any equestrian or hunters that fall. Trail upgrade was done all the way up to the Scalp. More work and rerouting needs to be done as well.

Scalp – triangular portion on map on north side of natural area on old right of way. We could stay out of Scalp Creek completely if we cut into the side hill as opposed to having to cross the creek twice as we do now.

***Flood Recovery Group - will look at that as well**

Eagle Lake – FOESA and the GOA will take a field trip out to look at that trail again. It is currently out of the scope for the flood recovery group. FOESA has some dollars to go towards that trail repair. Somehow we would have to take it off the bed and shore. Can OHVs travel on the road to YaHa Tinda legally? It is a Clearwater County road so you are legal up to the Parks gate, so you could possibly make a loop. Most of the footprint is there for a large loop all the way up to Cutoff.

Scalp Creek road – you get into some large wildlife disturbances. Motorized would like it all to be reopened and looked at completely. We haven't moved forward with our vision for the trails. Lots coming off the map but none coming back on, we need to have some progress.

We would like to be ready for when the LUF comes up not just waiting for it. Should be create a sub-committee to propose a revision these trails? How to move forward? GOA will discuss and decide how to move this larger discussion forward. Would like to start this discussion and move this forward before it all gets closed. Methodology that porcupine is using could be used for this as well. GOA will get back to this group.

Stoney First Nations would like to be consulted before new trail creation due to traditional land use.

North Saskatchewan Regional Plan has been bumped down the priority list but no the RAC report may be going to cabinet in the fall. We've taken so long it's outdated now with the new GOA, etc.

Backcountry Trail Rehabilitation Update

South – Panther reroute at a bit of a holdup on the water act but looks promising. Consulted with reps from 6 bands to have a look and influence trail decisions with a favorable outcome.

North – Cutoff/40 Mile still needs some widening as wagons are having difficulty getting through. Some flag work has been done. Closing the ford completely at Timber Creek. Trail will be improved to Forbidden Creek and widened a little bit. Making the reroute on Forbidden for sleds.

Hummingbird – the section of trail on main Hummingbird trail goes through water and we would like to get approval for a diversion. Needs some basic maintenance along that whole trail. 2 bridges on Onion Lake trail.

Pinto – local crew went in for recon. Landslide, Shoe Leather and Lake of the Falls will all be improved. Banff Life is interested in doing a volunteer event there. Sled trail to Sugarbowl 99% done, still needs lots of snow to use.

Bighorn trail – AWA donated trail hardening and some basic trail maintenance.

There is a disconnect from staging to the trailhead at Panther. At this point the wagons have to go on the road, which isn't good. Can we provide them with an alternate trail? Option would be straight through the bush but needs 1000 yards of gravel and would be expensive.

*more discussion needed flood recovery group look up what happens on the Trans Canada Trail.

Safety discussions on shared road use

*Flood recovery to follow up with First Nations re: which bands were consulted

*Flood recovery – high need to remove the stumps at Canary and Terishshner trails, not just cut low.

What doesn't get done by the flood recovery group this last season just doesn't get done. The project dollars end. GOA trying to work on something to transition to after that. Recreation management stated that recreation is a higher priority of this current Dept. There is a start to getting this program developed and it would have budget money attached to it. Alberta Parks has allocated an outdoor recreation lead. The Bighorn Backcountry committee is always held up as a model and your contact remains Wayne. The group would like to activate the visioning process again.

Clearwater Trails Initiative Update

Spent \$400,000 with some funding left from Shell and one more year left from Keyara. Got about 45 km of trail upgraded. 195 km of trail all on the existing footprint. Would like to convert some of these camping nodes to random camping. 3 bridges in at Moose Creek, Upper Raven, Upper Stoney creek. Upper Raven culverts put in and resulting in good solid trail. Also on the north side of Burnstick Lake. Did some trail closure and rerouting on high hard ground. Some trail brush removal. Installed 2 quad cattle guards at gates. Staging areas at north end of Rig Street and north side of Burnstick. Still more work to be done and more signage. Had an open house at Boundary.

What would it cost to do that project over the areas east of the Bighorn PLUZs? The trick is to actually do a ground based assessment and see exactly what's there for trails. How much is actually trail that people are using? Need a good inventory before you can figure out how much money.

Used signage to direct people what is not a good trail to keep people out and give them an option of where is good to go. Trails held up extremely well with the dry spring.

Comment: Contact Stoney office with this as well as they would like to be involved. May be some unreported burial sites. Clearwater Trails Initiative used the existing consultation that West Fraser had for those sites.

FOESA Update

February was the banquet and we had a great year fundraising. Over 700 family memberships sold. Dale Marshall stepped down as president and Larry Frischke took over that position.

There was a work bee at 7 Mile making loops bigger to accommodate bigger units, spread gravel. Hummingbird – gravelled highlines and road holes. Eagle Creek – cut danger trees. YaHa gravelled highlines. Parks Canada – waiting to hear what we can do for road and expansion. OHV poker rally at Hummingbird is July 16, horse poker rally Aug 18 at YaHa

7 mile is accessible to horses but not OHVs yet. No highlines in there yet.

Prescribed Burn Update

Completed a small meadow burn at 40 Mile and a small burn at Raven. Wapiabi burn, identified capping unit and burned the large unit. Started April 20th and took off very quickly.

Comment: Smoke affected the Bighorn community.

***AgFor – smoke monitoring options for the reserve**

FireSmart Ecology Trail

Goldeye and Fish Lake areas. Consulted with the immediate commercial stakeholders and they expressed the desire for more trails as a result of the firesmart work. Firesmart work was initially only to make a secondary firebreak for Nordegg but has resulted in recreation, education, firebreak, species conversion and future access for hazard reduction.

Tied into a lot of the existing trails and was able to provide connectivity. Single track trails for biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing. HAC crews hand grubbed about a km. Improved areas of existing trail and brought in gravel to harden.

Trail is usable currently although some connectivity is required for completion, probably by this fall. These trails will be updated on 2017 Bighorn Backcountry PLUZ maps. Maintenance is going to be performed by AAF in the future as well. Staging areas are at Goldeye and Fish lake. Summer usage expectations – Fish Lake alone has 105 sites and is booked up most of the summer so expecting a lot of use.

Future hazard reduction burning being performed next spring. Comment: Trail is existing close to the reserve and will impact hunting. Worried that introducing another species will impact the landscape. Noted that traditionally that area was aspen.

Tour of Alberta

Rocky is a start stage on Sept 3rd and there is a brochure on how you can get involved. The actual route hasn't been officially announced. Impact is 47 million viewers worldwide and marketed by Travel Alberta mainly to Europe.

Open floor

- This group became successful because we work together and try to do what's best for the Bighorn Backcountry. We are starting to ask for new/more/better things for the area. We haven't had a proper discussion amongst the group as to where we want to take the Bighorn in the future. Are we going to continue to do things that are somewhat out of the mandate with what we are wanting from the group? Have we really talked it over? Wasn't that the visioning group? Should we spend the time to review the TOR and the vision results? The vision group was more on how to integrate into the surrounding areas.

***GOA to look at and either call something prior to, or bring to the next meeting.**

Comment: How is fixing an existing trail when flooded out, outside the scope? We are outside the scope if we go outside the original mandate.

- Clearwater district goes to Morley for consultation. I used to clean up the pack trails, and know all Clearwater district. I believe it is a mistake to discuss Stoney issues with Morley instead of the local

band. Foothills corridor has a lot of Stoney heritage. Asking to be involved in decisions. Followup with band requested on Tershishner, Bighorn Dam, North Ram and Blackstone.

Field Day – Timber Creek wagon accessible bridge – Wednesday, August 3, 2016

Next standing committee meeting – Thursday, October 6, 2016