

June 8, 2017 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

Rocky Mountain House Museum

In Attendance

Lisa Schrader	Grant Santo	Erick Brownrigg	Adena Earl
Barry Wesley	Andrea McMillan	Rick Artzen	Michael Doyle
Dennis Schafer	Cal Rakach	Doug King	Ernst Bergmann
Jim Duncan	Simon Dyer	Dale Marshall	Rod Burns
Alan Ernst	Lorne Hindbo	Hal Jeske	Mike Veltri
Wayne Crocker	Bryan Mitchell	John Tchir	Charlie Abraham
Kris Heemeryck	Kevin Gagne	Laura Raivio	

Chair

Wayne Crocker

Introduction

Round table conducted. Ernst Bergmann new Hiking alternate. Alan Ernst new Eco-Tourism rep. Andrea McMillan, sub-regional planner, is sitting in. She will be focussing on CTI, Meadows and potentially the James River areas.

Activity/Enforcement Update

Rocky Mountain House GOA has had a request from an environmental group that is looking to represent on the standing committee. As inclusive as we are, we are going to be looking at expanding further in the next few months.

Q - Are you looking at an organization coming in or maintaining values?

A - We are looking at sector-based reps coming in for representation instead of special interest groups.

The function of this group is to support the management of the Bighorn so we are looking at an array of diverse groups and ideas.

Environmentally much is going on in backcountry with user groups, are we going to start looking at industry reps, forest companies? In the past environmental groups were asked to join but they didn't support the management plan and chose not to. The group currently asking is Y2Y but if the rep is a member they cannot come in solely with their own agenda. They would have to support the management plan. A diverse range of interests is at the table now but we don't want to start showing exclusivity. We have a strong TOR that we have

been working under and will continue to work under, and we will adhere to the plan until it comes up for review. We don't want to go down the road and turn into a table of obstructionists.

Parks has had discussions and they are open to this committee to become part of the Parks process if the Bighorn goes that way. There is a lot of value to every seat sitting around this table and in discussions with upper management we still see the value in this committee.

May Long stats – Numbers overall were down from previous years. 10774 people checked, 1137 OHVs checked and 695 tickets issued.

A non-compliant side x side was flown out by helicopter with 8 people found back on the closed trails. There was one person found driving up the North Saskatchewan River in a 4x4. A stolen truck in Abraham Lake appeared to have been ghost ridden into the lake. A couple of out-of-hand grad parties. RCMP in a helicopter stopped by to assist in one of those. No deaths that we had reported.

Rig Street was still quite busy. Some people were in the Clearwater River and charged.

We were able to hire seasonal maintenance service workers and they are performing lots of work on land outside PLUZ. Many new counters put out for motorized and non-motorized. Kiosks have been painted and new signage. New kiosks at have been installed at the Rail Trail and Nordegg Ranger Station.

Panther wagon trail is presently closed until the ground hardens to avoid erosion on the big hill. The latest will be July long weekend. Lisa and Mike will assess.

Q - Who signs off on if these trails are built properly, for grades etc?

A - All grades and widths come from the recreation corridors trails guide and on this trail are not larger than 10%. Flood recovery group assesses if complete.

Coliseum – General Issues

Parks will donate a toilet in at Coliseum Staging Area as well as bearproof garbage containers. Parks will build it but somebody has to maintain it so Wayne will be looking to town of Nordegg/Clearwater County for maintenance, or ideas from anyone from this group.

We encourage a user group to take on this role same as FOESA does. There is a town of Nordegg committee and we will be approaching them. 2014 averaged 3000 people per month on that trail according to our counters. Can hiking groups join FOESA to look after non-motorized sites like this? Hiking thinks GOA should provide money for this. FOESA disagrees whole heartedly that we shouldn't wait for being given anything. What's happening in FOESA lately is there is not as many people donating funding because they haven't been able to go ahead with any projects. People are not willing to volunteer with nothing in return.

You can't manage things without some funding in place. We've done so much on the backs of volunteers but it's not sustainable everywhere.

Rec management is more front and centre with the GOA now. If the outhouse gets in place, GOA will take it on until we can get something else in place.

Fixed Commercial - Westward Bound maintains Nordegg industrial and Landslide Lake, they may be willing to work something out with you as well. Wayne to contact Adena to discuss.

At the last meeting there was talk about getting some interpretive signage on the landscape and are looking for some input into that from the First Nations reps. First Nations are currently working it and then will get back to GOA. It would have to be approved by the elders and then GOA will go ahead. Parks to add more signs as well for the sundance location at Kootenay Plains. We want to do more to explain the cultural significance of the sites and will work with the First Nations reps for wording.

Hiking would like to put up some warning signs from Search and Rescue who would pay for the signs. They would have to be authorized but we are in support of that and can work with you. Clearwater Trails Initiative is also interested in that information for their kiosks.

Single Track Request

Contact was made to summer motorized by a resident of Nordegg regarding the possibility of creating a single track trail for motorbikes. It was explained to him how the system works and a letter was received but it didn't really describe his intent. He is interested in putting in some single track from the townsite around Baldy and Coliseum. He would need to go out and take some GPS so we know where he is wanting to go. Summer motorized is going to work with him to do a proposal and this would be presented to the group. There is ongoing friction in that area between motorized and non-motorized.

There are new maps for Nordegg and west of Nordegg called Shunda/Goldeye that will hopefully make the trails clearer to the public, also geo-referenced versions on the website.

Volunteer Ball Caps

Volunteer ball caps were purchased and we would like to distribute them to all the groups. Looking for numbers of individuals from the clubs and Wayne will get the caps to you.

Backcountry Trail Rehabilitation Update

Planned projects: One project on Landslide with a volunteer group is yet to be determined. We had a group from Banff lined up last year but they backed out last minute. Project on the Bighorn Trail north of Crescent Falls. One on the ends of the Clearwater and Panther saddle trails for reroutes. Work on approach to Scalp random sledding area. Small repair on Hummingbird main trail. New bridge at Sawmill springs getting rubber matting. Hauling out junk lumber at Hummingbird. At Cutoff some trees not quite pushed over by the hoe so looking at using a HAC crew.

Largest amount of work for the flood recovery group this year is in the south in the Ghost, McLean and Livingston.

Mike will coordinate with Equestrian rep about the saddle trail towards Dormer Lake. Currently has two crews for two weeks for that but may not be in before Doug's crew. Also coordinate with Hiking regarding Landslide Lake.

Prescribed Burn Update

Same approved PB plans to date to accomplish when weather allows. This year we had late spring conditions and lots of snow on the ground. Took another look at the meadows for cleanup in the areas around the Blackstone cabin. May 23 after long weekend we were able to get out for the meadows. Started ignition, had good success in some areas, but not in others due to wet ground. Found the south facing slopes were fairly dry and allowed for some upslope runs. Ended up being more successful than initially anticipated and stayed well within the plan and the containment area. Had winds up to 90km that day and then received snow the day

after. There was some good crown removal but a bit patchy in the meadows. 726 ha burnt that day. June 3 we had another window and went out with the helitorch. It was looking promising but we ran into some technical issues so only completed about another 100 ha. Since then we have been monitoring conditions looking for another window. Notice has been posted to call into the fire centre for burning updates before entering the area. The area will be closed only for operational time but no prolonged closures.

A five year report is due in 2017, these prescribed burns are still within the plan created by the charrette that took place previously.

Q - What direction are you heading with Hummingbird burn?

A - There is some to come both east and west of the current burn. These are all capping units and shouldn't be coming close to the campground.

These burns are funded through a prescribed burning program through fire management throughout Alberta. We try to pick windows where we can use the base amount of resources.

FOESA Update

At 7 Mile campground leveled gravel in the back. Cleanup at YaHa Tinda. We had a memorandum of agreement with federal parks on that campground and it has been five years since we've gotten the go ahead to do anything with the campground at Bighorn Creek.

Cutoff staging maintenance. Hummingbird cleanup planned.

Recurring issues – quads in the Parks, gates unlocked and wanting Eagle Creek Trail assessed for work. Would like to do some of this while we still have some people interested in helping. It's been sad and tremendously difficult to keep people interested when we can't go ahead with anything.

Questions brought up by members around bridges being left in or removed during industry reclamation. Bryan is going to do a trail inventory around Limestone and if it's sustainable, companies would not be asked to reclaim bridges they are willing to leave.

Eagle Creek – this has come up several times and we are not in favor of fixing that trail until we know what the status of the Bighorn is going to be. Comment – there are quads getting in so we may want to go take a look to see where and what that particular access is looking like.

This process of waiting is destroying our clubs. The Bighorn is going to destroy our club. People have no reason for going anymore and are trying to get out and just ride while they can. These volunteer communities are quite concerned about what is coming down.

Q - Is there a process for requests to go through, is it documented?

A - Sometimes it's verbal. The process is everything we are saying today is being recorded so we can go back and look at the conversations.

Open Floor

- Letter for proposal from an FMA holder was brought forward on their behalf. At the last meeting there was a presentation to this group. He's been working on a letter with CPAWS regarding the Bighorn very similar to the one presented here. Many reps here are looking at inside and outside of the PLUZ. The pressure that has been coming onto the FMA holder, one is a push from an environmental group to

push the Park suggestion to the Trunk Road which would be detrimental to the FMA holder. 17% of land needs to be in a protected form and has to fit in with certain categories, some of these categories are not recognized within Alberta. Asked if we are interested as a group to co-sign a letter to support that the PLUZ is recognized and that we continue in our management process going on and ensure that we have success in that area. This letter was forwarded out to the Standing Committee last week.

Prior to this the group has sent letters to the GOA. What does this mean and what kind of consensus do we have for this letter? AEP - The concern is that this is advocating for broader policy changes as opposed to the scope of this committee. This shifts the mandate from the Standing Committee to an advocacy group. Strategically I would have to look at a proper approach. As mainly members of groups there's nothing stopping you from presenting and signing on behalf of your member groups.

Disagree – we all came together to protect this area. The current boundaries should fall under whatever is happening with the area.

AEP – It's a slightly different message as it shifts the mandate from implementation of the Bighorn plan. Hiking

– it seems a bit weird as there is no forestry within the Bighorn so it seems out of our scope. It seems like it's a proxy letter not really talking about the real issue. People at this table are worried that a change would result in a loss of balance on the trails we have and we need to focus on those issues, not is PLUZ equal to Parks. Suggest we should be surfing the waves of change to have input on that focus. This letter has not been well received by the hiking group as they view Parks as being an opportunity to obtain resources.

Comment - PLUZ isn't the reason we don't have resources. Parks has locks on many things.

Hiking - one issue is Parks has a history of not being very receptive to community engagement. That's where there is a trust issue with many of the groups. Suddenly recreation activities become off limits due to some Parks guy's decision with input only from those who are of the same mindset, from alpine groups to motorized.

Hiking – would be using our group to push for recognition and not losing what we currently have.

AEP – this is coming to a head and there are concerns on all sides. Unfortunately we don't have answers still. Upon reviewing this letter the scale is provincial as opposed to just the Bighorn Backcountry. Not all PLUZ managed the same but there are tools to meet this criteria. Parks has these tools already. This letter is asking for a policy shift so you need to consider the scope of the committee in sending it.

Equestrian - Feels the letter is saying the PLUZ could meet the criteria if managed properly in the Bighorn, not provincially. There is a huge amount of distrust for Parks. Have been involved in regional planning for ten years and NSRP was the most civil. If you do public consultation and have stakeholder committees without listening, and with population on the rise we can't just close places off.

Parks – I agree in the past Parks focus was to go ahead without a lot of input. I've seen changes in the last ten years in Parks about community involvement. They are not meeting all the demands that we get but with that being said, the RAC will be coming out. Cannot give you a date any more than the others but they respect the time effort and passion that went into this. Don't think this has been pushed aside. They are not adverse to getting letters from the public and industry on what they want to

see us do. Restricted on what they can go forward with. Working together with AEP they are participating and listening more and are optimistic about the future. Something will be coming out before the end of this year.

Wanting a decision on this letter today? Comment – maybe work on being individual groups to sign the letter. Want this group to say that Bighorn meets that criteria spoken about in the letter and let the world know that we support the Bighorn.

Q – Are these the only PLUZs without any industry in it?

A - There are some spots within our PLUZs for coal leases etc. A lot of it is dormant applications. Parks cannot go over top of those things until they are dealt with either. Parks are the experts on recreation management in the province and we refer to them constantly for things like trail standards, parking lots, toilets, enforcement, etc.

Parks – with the PLUZs and the enforcement problem identified through this committee we got funding for enforcement. Another thing looking at right now for in and out of Bighorn over next ten months is getting more OHV campgrounds and doing some upgrades over the next ten years. We see the need and are putting a plan together over the next few months from Rocky west to the Banff border.

Advice on message to FMA holder - From a political perspective there is that line we cannot really cross. The message is getting out there. We need to be standing up for ourselves here as well like was commented on. There are advocacy groups out there using the criteria in the letter forcing us to push back the same way. Hearing that we need to make comments restricted to the Bighorn.

Comment – A large portion of the FMA is across from the trunk road, not in the PLUZ. Need to gear the letter towards Bighorn Backcountry and need to support the industries working out there as well.

First Nations – suggesting instead to have Y2Y, make a presentation and put our voice into that presentation. We need to communicate and take a step towards this. Most are protecting their recreational views, first nations protecting their traditions. Need to collaborate and move forward, with this it's not about winning it's about protecting. Bighorn is probably the last undeveloped zone in Alberta. Look at Hwy 1 and 16, development is huge. Next in line is Hwy 11. We want to protect the use of this area down the road. Maybe invite them to this table and see what is in their plans? They need to hear us, this is Bighorn Backcountry right here in this room.

Q – Regarding traditional rights, is it going to change if it changes from PLUZ to a Park?

A - There's a consultation policy and so far we haven't been consulted. When that time comes we are going to see that our rights are being protected. At this point we would hear them out and have them listen as well. Haven't seen their proposal and wasn't involved in the RAC but with SSRP.

For the letter maybe we should think about it and reflect on what was said here today. If the group is uncomfortable with signing, could we get some kind of consensus to send another letter and cc the FMA holder? We could do what was suggested and state what we've been doing and the management intent so as not be considered advocacy. Hiking - Would like to support a letter to state this and suggest getting the RAC out as well.

AEP – Advice is that should the Standing committee wish to send a letter, the scope needs to remain within the mandate of the Steering committee.

Q - Why is the FMA holder requesting from this group to send a letter regarding FMAs when there is no FMA within the PLUZ? A - It was just a knowledge sharing on behalf of the FMA holder and we are looking beyond boundaries. It was also Y2Ys suggestion that their proposal would include the PLUZ plus east into their FMA.

There's not a lot of certainty about where the Bighorn is going and this causes fear. There's a huge lack of trust and it's showing. Hopefully a lot was learned from what went down in the Castle. Resource and Parks reps can try and influence the amount of consultation that goes on with the Bighorn Backcountry certainly and address the concerns about planning and listening.

Field day suggestions – Perhaps elders could do a presentation up at Kootenay Plains. Barry will to get back to Wayne on when this could take place this summer and then we will send out a date.

Next Standing – THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2017