

October 12, 2017 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

**Rocky Mountain House Museum**

**In Attendance**

Wayne Crocker	Don Livingston	Larry Frischke	Grant Santo	Logan Vanlmschoot
Dale Marshall	Jay Mills	Rod Burns	Alan Ernst	Simon Dyer
Jim Duncan	Kevin Gagne	Cal Rakach	Doug King	Dennis Schafer
Michael Doyle	Rick Artzen	Chiarastella Feder	Travis Earl	Adena Earl
Margriet Berkhout	Laura Raivio			

**Chair**

Wayne Crocker

**Welcome/Introduction**

Round table conducted. Travis Earl, new Fixed Commercial alternate.

**Activity/Enforcement Update**

GOA have been having many discussions regarding the Bighorn Backcountry and these are ongoing. We want to be transparent and honest with this group. Looking at what we've been hearing it's apparent that there will be changes, leaving it as is isn't an option. Beyond that there are a bunch of options on the table still in discussion. The Landuse Secretariat gave a presentation and is leading the whole plan for North Saskatchewan Regional Plan.

With Alberta Parks being part of AEP, they are a small part of the landuse plan. They are the ones at the table with the user groups. Regarding the RAC advice submitted back in January of 2015, GOA has been, and will continue to use that information and first nation's consultation as well. NSRP is still under development, expected to be completed by spring of 2018 (draft) and looking at finalization of plan in fall of 2018. Expected that the RAC will be part of the plan. There will be invitations to attend consultation upon release of the draft NSRP and directed to the landuse secretariat website.

So it's not really an update for the Bighorn area. They wanted to fine tune some decisions in other areas first. Other key initiatives taking time from this are the caribou range planning, Castle provincial park and wildland park, improving relationships with indigenous peoples, explorations on management in Castle and emergency

operations for fires locally, in Waterton and BC. Bighorn Backcountry is considered part of the NSRP, and GOA will explore some level of protection of the land inside and outside the Bighorn Backcountry.

As per our visioning plan, this is driving at looking at east of the Bighorn as well. We may see some things happen here prior to finishing in other areas. Saw an increase in usage here from the south with the OHV/firebans there. Looking at staging areas, trails, toilets, what kind of opportunities can be provided and have GOA dollars to move forward. Most of the recreation on public land is occurring this way in the NSRP as opposed to east. Current levels of protection and management may extend to grasslands to the east as well.

Comment - 17% protected represents all areas, not just boreal. Can the ranches in southern Alberta qualify?

Ans - That is what is being discussed.

Comment - Alberta is choosing not to take municipal conservation lands instead of PLUZ. Even grazing leases could qualify. Ans – that is what is being looked at.

Comment - the process of the LU framework is being bastardized. We were told this would be a community process, that's why the RAC. Once that came out this should have went public and then a plan be made. So far there is no public input and decisions are being made internally. Ans - Its consultation on the RAC, then draft a plan, then put it public and tweak. The draft plan is being put together on what GOA heard from the RAC. That is the intention. Comment - That was the intention but it doesn't seem to be happening. Questions asked were watered down and spin-doctored. It's been fully documented in the SSR and all our input was gone.

Comment - What happens to organizations like the Bighorn standing? Ans - In all discussions this committee is the model to move forward. What about FOESA? Ans - Existing success stories and partnerships should carry on. Would expect to see some expansion. Hopefully we are able to designate some other opportunities closer and with the same successes.

Grazing leases? – have nothing to do with Bighorn processes.

Comment - Revolts during meetings on the RAC in other regions. The advice that came out of the RAC, the GOA seemed to have a hard time rationalizing. Ans - We at GOA have not seen the RAC report for the NSRP.

Comment - The impression a member got was that among the planning folks was already a done deal.

Comment – didn't hear if this committee will get any insight? Ans – The Bighorn Standing Committee will get direct consultation once the draft plan comes. This will be one of the stakeholder groups. Sending the message about the value of a multiuser group should be involved.

Comment - Expanding Don Getty wildland? Ans - Within the SSRP a boundary was put in, but haven't seen a change in the legislation yet.

Comment – Committee members are starting to get extremely frustrated. A few have been here for 15 years with the most attendance and have no faith that this is going to carry forward in a positive way.

Ans - we have an ethical concern and don't want to see it broken. Status quo is not currently an option on the table and we want to tell you what we know. No decisions made right now. It is important that we don't give up. Please continue to provide input and attend the meetings and trying to be heard. The GOA members have been showing the issues and learnings repeatedly as continually requested from planning.

### **Activity/Enforcement Update**

New toilet at Coliseum trail head constructed by Parks. Bearpoles up at Landslide Lake. Still another two sets to put up elsewhere.

A couple of fires this fall made difficulties for access up Coral Creek and South Ram. Benchcamp is currently only a day use area. We are looking at opening it up for overnight camping.

Summer Motorized - try putting it as a campsite and also need to fix the last bridge before the site.

Field day was a wash out.

Temp closures on lower McMullen trail – is there a possibility of a bypass on the boardwalk? Issue is beavers. Dennis had ROM program but it ends up there are two ravines on the east side. Once receive some dollars the club can push a trail straight down to the east and push some dirt over. West section on McMullen needs to be rebuilt and looked at.

Issues with the wagon trail to 40 Mile and Panther. Prior to the reroutes, river crossings (still at Panther) at Clearwater limited when wagons could access the area. Right now an unlimited amount of wagons can go down in the spring. Idea of timed closure for wagons similar to OHVs to keep from rutting. July long weekend there were something like 22 wagons back in there.

Equestrian – think it's a good idea for both trails. Keep it in line with the OHVs for July 1<sup>st</sup>. Can we look at opening up for both OHV and wagons on July long when it falls in the middle of the weekend? Can we do that on a site by site basis? Enforcement-wise there needs to be hard and fast rules for court so a floating day would not be enforceable. Would suggest stating a hard July 1<sup>st</sup>. May be able to adjust for wagons. Could we define it legally by something like the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in June, for example, like Kananaskis? Will look into.

### **Parks Update**

For the period of May 1 to September 15 - contacts 8500, enforcement actions 535 (written warnings, violation tickets, court appearances), several arrests – 2 within the Bighorn Backcountry, officer hours 1593 (for Parks only in PLUZ). Other enforcement came from AEP, RCMP, County and Fish & Wildlife. Not a substantial increase this summer.

Extreme amount of enforcement outside of the PLUZ and would like to see the committee not lose hope as we need this work to continue with lands to the east.

When you make a call to the RAP line or directly to Parks it does come to the conservation officer team, sometimes it takes some time to move forward on tickets. If you provide a license with geo-referencing, it can be moved forward on at a later date as well.

### **Prescribed Burn Update**

Busy summer, initially didn't look like it would be busy with a late winter and very slow spring. Dried out well on May long and went in to burn meadows at Blackstone. Burnt right after the long weekend and it went really well, burnt some of the south facing slopes. Actually burnt about 730 ha on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. June had two more attempts at the standing timber on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup>. Had issues with torch fuel and technical issues with the torches on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and then the humidity was up on the 8<sup>th</sup>. July had good weather but we don't typically burn then with commitments elsewhere and the optics of it. Went ahead and it turned out to be productive for two days. Burnt 2300 ha in Blackstone this year, added to previous equals 2500 ha and Blackstone is completed. Had very little hotspots to deal with afterwards and got about 25mm of rain right after.

Put in area closures initially and then decided to go with area notifications. Worked well and phone calls were coming in with people inquiring, posted on Bighorn website.

Wildfires within the PLUZ:

Coral Creek – RWF 062 – 841 ha with modified action as we are able to see the benefits of fire in that area. Some ignition on south end.

South Ram – RWF 063 - 628 ha large closure area, more potential to spread. Never really ran past Benchcamp. South Ram cabin made it but the corrals, hay shed and outhouse did not. Was mostly up on the slopes.

Investigations are not wrapped up but is looking like campfires.

Crescent falls – RWF 065 – 67 ha was actively suppressed due to proximity to campground and the Bighorn Reserve. Tanker action was effective. Most likely lightning caused.

Bighorn Backcountry prescribed burning program totaled 2256ha, managed wildfires 1470ha

R11 target was about 1400ha per year PB and assumed would have about 1400ha per year wildfire

### **Damage from Random Camping (DT Corridor)**

Past three years along Abraham Lake, Kootenay Plains to Park boundary random camping has increased tremendously. Firepits, garbage, attractants, human waste are all becoming a huge problem. Getting negative feedback from guests. On highway vehicles pulling off wherever they can and camping. Is there anything that's being discussed for management?

In general the problems are inclusive of everywhere, not just auto access, if you hike in somewhere for example as well. We are seeing human waste and garbage at all these types of sites being a serious problem. Organized,

managed camping is being developed with staging areas and toilet facilities. Regardless of what happens within and outside the Bighorn this is being looked at.

Will include a better blurb in the PLUZ brochure on what to do with waste.

Can we do an assessment of how many random camping sites are along Abraham? We are currently doing assessments across the board and it includes Abraham.

Is the campground plan for the Bighorn Dam still there? That plan is still there, maybe not as grandiose.

### **FOESA Update**

The annual general meeting was once again almost sold out. 7 Mile workbee - cleaned up a lot of tree branches and hauled in gravel to the sites and redone. Whole campsite is functional, but not a lot of units in there. Horses are currently allowed in that campsite but not OHVs. Bighorn Creek / Eagle cleanup. Highlines at Hummingbird and cleanup got cancelled due to weather. 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of YaHa Tinda ranch and FOESA was involved with the open house. Annual trail ride poker rally had 140 riders. Sept 13 was the Park Wardens Service Alumni Society 100 year celebration. Books about the wardens and wardens' wives are available on Amazon or other bookstore sites. *A Home Place* – by Kathy Calvert and *Silent Partners: Wives of the National Park Wardens* – by Ann Dixon

Roadwork into YaHa Tinda, from east gate to ranch has had some setbacks and not on schedule.

### **Backcountry Trail Rehabilitation Update**

- Landslide Lake main trail up Entry Creek - almost complete
- Lake of the falls trail - complete
- Washout on dormer trail just past the cabin - complete
- Joyce creek loop - kicking off work soon. Minimal actual flood damage but Hal found some qualifying repairs on the north end.
- Clearwater trail near Banff - incomplete
- Hummingbird trail various washouts and damaged waterbars and cross ditches - complete
- Very end of Skeleton Creek to the random sledding area - complete

Panther Trail – originally laid out to be low maintenance but didn't turn out that way. Not actually as proposed. Felt like what they were doing was a complete disconnect. Will contact the rehab group to figure out how to realistically maintain and deal with the pushed aside trees.

AEP will have to figure out how to maintain the wagon trails as a reality. How to get the pushed aside trees dealt with. Will send out explanations to the group, including Dormer as well.

### **Bull Trout Recovery Upper Clearwater / Red Deer Drainage**

Extensive work in and outside of PLUZ. Trail crossings are of concern to the fisheries in these areas. May or may not be some signage in behind Peppers. They want us to build or close crossings in this area. Looking into to see where these crossings are and what can be done.

### **Signage Update / Other**

Lots of signage both in and out of the Bighorn this year.

### **Open Floor**

- Equestrian – the impression was if we are doing equipment work in and around the Panther, this summer was the last summer? Hoping to have the repairs and maintenance brought in under AEP.
- Signage from staging area to the wagon trail, the sign on north side of the Panther River cannot be seen from the south side.
- There is all kinds of trail riding south of the trapper’s cabin and would like to look at that.
- Equestrian – the river trail in the Panther is still being used. Riding on a saddle horse it was navigable but not really with a wagon.
- Native trout recovery program re: phosphorus and temperature – spring meeting have Jessica Reilly speak.
- Winter Motorized - Bull Trout – what about the agreement with TransAlta and the Bighorn Dam. River doesn’t freeze so it causes huge issues. Major fluctuations, is this being looked at as a problem? Red Deer River dam runs 5 megawatts steady with no problems. This will be brought up with Fisheries.

**NEXT STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING – Thursday, January 25, 2018.**