

Bighorn Standing Committee

Meeting Summary

Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan

June 13, 2019 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

Rocky Mountain House Museum

In Attendance

Adena Earl	Don Livingston	Larry Frischke	Rick Artzen
Alan Ernst	Doug King	Laura Raivio	Rod Burns
Aliah Knopff	Grant Santo	Lisa Schrader	Theresa Laing
Andrea McMillan	Jamie Bruha	Logan Vanlmschoot	Tom Davidson
Chiara Feder	Jim Duncan	Lorne Hindbo	Tony Brooks
Dale Marshall	Jim Turner	Loyal Ma	Travis Earl
Dennis Schafer	John Tchir	Michael Doyle	Wayne Crocker

Chair

John Tchir

Welcome/Introduction

Round table conducted.

General updates

We have a new government with a new mandate being put together. Last two times this committee met the meetings were circling around the proposal and whether a park was coming. That is not coming as far as we know.

Bighorn Heritage ATV Society (BHAS) received the TFA to go in and do the work at the Bighorn Dam. They are heading out this weekend to check out the trails and will start thereafter. Had hauled in some culverts last fall. Looking for help? Contractor there, volunteer help would come at the very end. Goa has materials as well if needed.

Not a lot went on this spring for prescribed fire. Hummingbird, Wapiabi, Ram and Bighorn Creek are still on the books. Resources required were called up north on operational fires. The next possible window could be in the fall.

Request was put forth for other items of note:

Logging west of Nordegg. Loggers completely blocking off trails with trenches and logs stacked on trails. Location is north and west of Nordegg. It was found that this is located outside of the PLUZ boundary and the Sundre Forest Products ground rules encourage the company to close seismic lines that are not designated trails and fall within cutovers.

Action: Don to contact timber and get back to Tom on if anything can be done since those are not officially designated trails.

Updating the Terms of Reference (TOR)

In terms of scope we will still be focused within the Bighorn Backcountry PLUZ, but we will also be updating this group on recreation outside of the PLUZ and using the group as a sounding board for recreation management in Clearwater County as a starting point.

Comment: We went through the vision before. I would like to table this discussion until we make some sort of presentation to the current government. A lot of people didn't like what went on last year outside of the scope of the PLUZ. We could write it into the mandate as far as the scope. Answer: Outside of the PLUZ tools are limited to a DRS (Disposition Reservation) and a DLO (Department License of Occupation). There are also hurdles with historical resources. We just don't have a way to protect any infrastructure built outside the PLUZ. As far as the rest of the westcountry, there is no budget for a program so far this year unless Clearwater County has some funds to go ahead with things like the rail trail or the work being done by CTI in Meadows.

The platform for the government mentioned a trails act and trails fee. As more information comes out on those we can update the committee.

For projects outside of the PLUZ we can announce the status of what's going on and plans different groups have put forth.

Comment: A lot of the work in the Bighorn has been completed and many people have an interest in doing more. So much is going on outside of the current scope that we really don't have a say in. If there is a consensus from this committee we should let the minister and government know that a PLUZ for this area is a good recommendation for the future.

Comment: If we want to stay the poster child with this group, it feels that we should be expanded. Answer: Like the idea but if we start to get into work that we can't support we would get into difficulties. The Department didn't think the group would want to expand but it sounds like you do. The new scope can reflect that.

Comment: It's crazy that we can't enforce items to care for the infrastructure. Answer: Yes it is. Chair will not put up a barrier to continuing to expand the scope. The way to look at it is we need some tools to come but for now we can put forward the ideas. We will brief up through the system for information and will provide any feedback received back to the committee.

In the current TOR, advice goes to the steering committee and then up. Consultations should come to this group and then go through a briefing note up.

Question: Would the first step be to become a PLUZ outside of the Bighorn? Answer: Not necessarily. There doesn't have to be a PLUZ to be a sounding board. Question: What regulatory body is required, do we need a trails act? Answer: Once there's a law in place we could build trails and have enforcement. If we have a trails act then we have mandate and then enforcement.

A PLUZ is not similar to a Park. There is logging and industry in other PLUZs besides ours. The Bighorn Backcountry was based around the prime protection policy. There are no industrial pressures on what is currently the Bighorn Backcountry, that perception that this is because they are PLUZs was completely inaccurate.

Anyone not on board for this committee giving recommendation outside of the current PLUZ? Potentially have to look at bringing in Brazeau County, Mountainview, oil and gas, and logging.

Comment: In light of this discussion someone needs to explain exactly what a PLUZ is to this group so we can pass it along. We are in confusion on the definition of a PLUZ and if it's going to be a tool, we need to know exactly what it entails. That's how we can get to a management plan that we can do a good job of. A trails act doesn't deal with random camping, etc.

Answer: We can certainly do that at the next meeting and we'll have Jamie and Andrea come back and give a presentation. We've put together some materials on tools that are available and will give that out.

Action: Jamie and Andrea to present at next meeting. Prior to that date, send admin the materials on tools that are available for dispersal to the committee.

A lot of our current PLUZs are right along the Eastern Slopes. Prime protection area goes from Montana up to Grande Cache. Prime protection kept industry out and has been there since around the 1970s. The PLUZ is what regulates recreation.

Currently we don't have much information on the new trails act. We will share with the committee when we have something more concrete. It will depend on what stage it's at when the info comes out.

TOR changes:

Action: Draft of changes discussed at the meeting sent out to committee members

New work/Project ideas

List of projects written on side whiteboard asking for reps to put markers on those that would be priority if funds were received. Reps given opportunity to make any additions and then place their markers.

Action: Priority list attached

Action: Send out the concept plans to the committee

OH&S Process Clarity for Volunteers

Action: Draft powerpoint attached

Powerpoint was reviewed. Direct to crown means volunteers are considered our employees. Organization volunteers fall under the organization's policy and organization is the employer.

We will be issuing TFAs here and the assumption is that you are doing everything you need to do to work safely. We are taking on the responsibilities of owner in the OH&S Act and would be issuing TFA's.

Alternatively, Parks completes volunteer agreements dependant upon the complexity of the arrangements. Biggest pieces to take away: In these cases Committee members are considered to be doing work on behalf of yourself, not being directed by the crown. If there is work you are going to do, apply for a TFA.

FOESA

The Annual General Meeting & Banquet sold out. Cutoff and 7 Mile projects were cancelled due to snow. Bighorn Creek, Eagle and Panther had good attendance and were completed. 7 Mile had two families come out in the bad weather and they completed everything, even with snow. We had grants designated for trail and campground improvements and got a good bit completed. Approvals for gravel have been received.

Basically roads were bladed and topped up with gravel, highlines topped up as well. Three groups were involved for trail clearing and maintenance. James Lake and Klein Lake trails are priority for future. FOESA does have an OH&S program in place and will submit for approval.

Final profit from the banquet was about \$19,000.00. The next big fundraiser is the annual trail ride/poker rally on Aug 17th.

May Long Update/Signage/Enforcement

Clearwater County had 14 different agencies involved in the task force this year. It was the 15th official year for the May Long Weekend Task Force which sets the stage for the summer for the enforcement agencies to make sure we are most efficient for the entire season. Enforcement was generally down for violations and fatalities. No fatalities that were recreationally associated. Ran checkstops and jet boat patrols on the North Saskatchewan River on the Rocky side and Drayton Valley side.

Priorities were grad parties as 7-10 groups were out from areas across the province. South Fork was still the worst as far as cleanup goes. People leaving the westcountry are still burning garbage and leaving the fire. Lots of people not wearing helmets even though that requirement has been in effect for 2 years now. Bighorn Dam trails are not open until July 1st but people still flock to the Dam. Can legally ride around camp but not on the trail system. Did a big blitz and handed out maps reinforcing that the Dam trails are closed, Tershishner closed and no riding into the reserve. Despite proactive efforts still about a dozen violation tickets and people going right by trail closure signs.

Nine OHVs were apprehended on the wagon trail between Cutoff to 40 Mile. This trail is not open to OHVs until December 1st. Overall dealt with at least 6 failing to remain stopped issues with one resulting in an arrest. Recovery of a stolen RV at Southfork.

Action: Stats report attached

Tags for compliance checks on OHVs are still popular. That was one of the initiatives that was brought into play by this committee when it was started.

SUMMER PROJECT/TOUR – Would like to try for a Kootenay Plains tour since it was rained out last year.

Action: Don to look into having a speaker.

NEXT MEETING DATE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019