

Bighorn Backcountry

Access Management Plan

Monitoring: Standing Committee

February 6, 2007

Rocky Mountain House Super 8 Motel

In Attendance

Cal Rakach	Roger Marvin	Elder Rock Abraham	Loyal Ma
Deb Schroderous	James Brady	Lorne Hindbo	Ken Qually
Dennis Schafer	Clarence Stewart	Earl Graham	Derek Durocher
Doug Ritchie	Robin McDonald	Kristin McKenzie	
Wayne Crocker	Derry Armstrong	Rob Popowich	Kevin Wirtanen
Justin Ellis	Mike Revie	Brenda Anderson for	Yvette Choma
Les Forsyth for	Myles Jensen		

Chairperson

Don Livingston

Regrets

Bob Long	Rob Hunter	Rick Artzen	Philip Lacerte
Ken Schroderous	Jeff Wilson	Steve Taylor	R.W. (Bobby) Turner
Mike Adolph	Jeff Baltzer	Brent Young	Cory Wojtowicz
Christie Clark	Sandi Phillips	Myles Jensen	Yvette Choma

Introduction

Don Livingston thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The following changes have been made to the Bighorn Backcountry Steering and Standing Committees:

- Information Coordinator Rita Stagman joins the steering committee;
- Forest Health Officer Christie Ward has moved from the Rocky Mountain House office;
- Wildlife Biologist Anne Hubbs replaces Jim Allen;
- Recreation Management Specialist Justin Ellis joins the steering committee;
- Wildlife Prevention Officer Gary Mandrusiak has retired from the department, and
- Marvin Abraham and Elder Rock Abraham join the standing committee, First Nations.

Activities, Enforcement and Signing

Current activities are slow, with snowfall being too great for off-highway vehicle users and not enough for snow vehicle users. Two backcountry guardians are presently completing patrols.

On a slope near Kidd Creek, individuals drove past a sign that indicated motorized vehicle closure and were confronted by other users riding in the area. The individuals failed to pay the original tickets and were fined in court \$1500 plus additional insurance-related penalties. The maximum penalty amount for most charges will be increasing and it was questioned if some funds could be directed back into trail maintenance.

First Nations indicated high noise levels and garbage in the Kootenay Plains area. It was suggested the First Nations post signs on their land.

Long-time Commercial Trail Riding Operator Irvin Palmer passed away. The Hummingbird Forest Recreation Area Concept Plan recommends that leases associated with Commercial Trail Riding operations that are located within the wildlife corridor be re-located or removed. Mr. Palmer's permit in the Class 1 Trail Ride Management Area expired in 2006 and will not be re-issued and the associated miscellaneous permit has been cancelled. This area will have all structures removed and then reclaimed with native seed.

Vandalism to signs is a current problem and will most-likely continue to be a problem in the future. Wooden signs erected by trappers were vandalized and are replaced with metal signs. It was requested if additional signs could be placed in the Bighorn Meadows area.

In regards to the May long-weekend task force, it was agreed a common enforcement message and common consequences were required. The following concerns were discussed:

- what infractions would be most important (i.e.) alcoholic beverages, littering, no vehicle insurance / registration / licence plate, and
- who should receive a ticket if a family is operating several off-highway vehicles without lights but have vehicle insurance / registration / licence plate.

Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan Review

The Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan was legislated in 2002, with this year being the five-year review. The department is preparing terms of reference for the review. The review is intended to be a progressive review of work completed and potential adjustments or refinement of the access plan.

The terms of reference for review will be presented to the standing committee members for information and discussion.

Upper Clearwater / Ram Forest Land Use Zone Trail Plan

Derry Armstrong distributed the draft terms of reference for the forest land use zone trail plan and requested comments. The trail planning terms of reference identify the reason for preparing a plan, the steps to be followed and a time schedule. The plan will assess the use and condition of the existing trail system in the forest land use zone and identify improvements that make the trail system a better recreation resource. Work in 2007 will focus on gathering existing information, input from the standing and steering committees, input for other government agencies, with a Trail Assessment Report completed in the fall of 2007. The trail plan will then be prepared in early 2008. Clearwater Area Manager Bruce Cartwright will be responsible for approving the trail plan.

The draft terms of reference were distributed to all members, with any comments to be forwarded to Derry Armstrong.

Bighorn Heritage ATV Society Proposal

At the previous meeting, a proposal was presented to open the Monument Valley Falls Trail, the Monument Valley Lookout Train and the Pleasant Valley Lookout Trail to off-highway vehicle use.

Don Livingston advised the committee that not all members were in agreement with the proposal. Opening of the trails will be considered in the context of the Upper Clearwater/Ram Forest Land Use Zone Trail Plan and the five-year review of the Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan.

Cutoff Creek Forest Recreation Area Concept Plan

At the previous standing committee meeting, members felt additional time was required to review the Cutoff Creek Forest Recreation Area Concept Plan with their users groups. Derry Armstrong requested any comments be forwarded for revision to the document. No additional comments were received.

The following items were noted:

- the size of the area and concerns for user safety, and
- the east side of the camping area should not be close to the creek due to concerns of drainage.

Following discussion, it was agreed to add a statement that future expansion of the campground at a nearby location would be considered if demand warranted. With this amendment the standing committee endorsed the Cutoff Creek Forest Recreation Area Concept Plan for approval by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. Approved copies will be distributed to all committee members.

Respect The Land

In 2003 the different divisions' messages were assembled under one umbrella called *Respect The Land*. The focus of this program is recreation education, ethics and user responsibility. It enables different divisions to pass a common message to users, despite a different main focus for each division.

The *Respect The Land* message is delivered through field personnel, print matter and garbage bags, the *Respect The Land* trailer in high-traffic areas and trade shows, school presentations and school curriculum. Any organization wishing to have the *Respect The Land* trailer for a function can contact Yvette Choma. The Alberta Trappers Association would like to use the trailer for their function in July 2007.

Youth Member

It was agreed outdoor education is a place to begin educating younger groups of youth. Currently the standing committee has one Youth Member Representative and requires an additional Youth Member Alternate. Four applications have been submitted to the Bighorn Backcountry Hiking Representative and Alternate, with one more application anticipated. Interviews will be conducted and one or two alternate youth members will be chosen.

Trails & Infrastructure Update

Four outhouses have been purchased for Cutoff Creek and Hummingbird Forest Recreation Areas, Strubel Lake and the day use area at Cow Lake.

There are concerns of the Mountain Pine Beetle and prescribed burn areas within the Bighorn Backcountry. These items will be clarified and reported back to the standing committee.

An Adopt-A-Trail meeting will be held in the spring with the agenda to include safety, technique, liability and trail building. For consistency, all trails should be constructed and maintained in the same manner. Agenda items will include the following:

- liability and insurance;
- minimum safety requirements, and
- occupational health & safety requirements and previous training of volunteer workers.

Bighorn Backcountry Brochure

The Bighorn Backcountry brochure will be reprinted for release in May. As the original brochure was released five years ago, this brochure is seeking a "new and improved" look and re-education for users. Any recommendations for the reprint can be forward to Yvette Choma by mid-March. One recommended was the current location of the Cutoff Creek Forest Recreation Area symbol and the correct location.

Open Floor

Trail counters have been installed on the trail leading to the ice climb approaching Two O'Clock Falls.

It was questioned which ambulance companies or volunteer ambulance organizations service particular areas and backcountry trails. Don Livingston explained the services for the areas.

Wandering dogs in provincial recreation areas are a concern. In any provincial recreation area all dogs must be on a leash not exceeding two metres in length. The maximum fine for an unleashed dog is \$275. Forest recreation areas also have current legislation with a specific penalty.

The next Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 29th, 2007.