

Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan

Monitoring: Standing Committee

Meeting Summary

October 29, 2009 9:00 AM

Red Deer College, Rocky Mountain House

In Attendance

Les Forsyth	Rita Stagman	Robert Popowich	Gordon Sanders
Yvette Choma	Kevin Wirtanen	Kevin Gagne	Cal Rakach
Ken Qually	Dennis Schafer	Wayne Crocker	Robin McDonald
Clarence Stewart	Roger Marvin	Brent Young	Loyal Ma
Dick Wymenga			

Chairperson

Don Livingston

Regrets

Wayne Crocker	Cory Wojtowicz	Bernie Schmitte	Rick Artzen
Roger Meyer	Chiara Feder	Phil Lacerte	Lorne Hindbo
Marvin Abraham	Elder Rock Abraham	Neil Godlonton	James Brady
Mike Adolph	Doug Ritchie	John Evans	Kristin McKenzie
Sandi Phillips	Rob Hunter	R.W. Tuner	Bob Long
Steve Taylor	Jeff Willson	Jeff Baltzer	Derek Durocher
Myles Jensen	Paul Radchenko	Bernie Schmitte	

Introduction

Don Livingston thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Thank you to Jeff Baltzer and Red Deer College for the meeting room, and to McDonald's Restaurant Rocky Mountain House for the coffee.

Round- table introductions were completed.

Activities, Enforcement and Signing

The guardian staff generally had good contact with users during the summer months. In problem areas, staff conducted an organized undercover operation. In the Eagle Creek and Ha Ya Tinda areas guardian staff explained to users the intentions of horse highlines and the proper way to ties horses to trailers outside of the treed areas.

These staff members will finish the season in a few weeks and it is unsure of their employment for next year. There is consideration to relocating staff as recreation is busy. The Streamwatch program also receives corporate donations, and court fines can be put towards the program.

The May Long Weekend Task Force will be receiving a public safety award from the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC). Clearwater County and Department staff will be jointly accepting the award at the AAMDC/AUMA annual convention in November. The planning for May long weekend 2010 and other long weekends will continue.

Ticket Specifics	2008	2009	Act or Regulation
178		1	Environmental Protection Act
119(1)(a)		45	Traffic Safety Act
119(1)(b)		13	Traffic Safety Act
123(2)(b)		2	Traffic Safety Act
15.1(1)		25	Forest Recreation Regulation
120(2)(b)		28	Traffic Safety Act
124(1)		75	Traffic Safety Act
19		2	Off Highway Vehicle Regulations
53(1)(b)		1	Traffic Safety Act
179(1)		3	Environmental Protection Act
10.2(1)		5	Forest Recreation Regulation
33.1		3	Wildlife Act
119(1)©		1	Forest Recreation Regulation
8(b)		4	Forest Recreation Regulation
2(3)		2	Off Highway Vehicle Regulations
10.2(1)		1	Forest Recreation Regulation
TOTAL TICKETS	129	211	

Signage continues to be an issue including vandalism of signs, available personnel to install signs and more signs being required including the Terishshner area. Trail counter information continues to be gathered this autumn and winter.

Bighorn Dam Area

The Department and the safety representative from TransAlta met to discuss concerns of the Bighorn Dam area. These concerns include the following:

- off-highway vehicles driving over instruments and the resulting erosion;
- off-highway vehicles riding up the rock face of the dam;
- damage to the tee pee and gravel area surrounding the tee pee, and
- garbage that remains after users leave the area.

TransAlta has been asked to develop messaging for the public to be posted on signs or printed in a brochure. TransAlta and the Department have considered designated camping sites, toilets maintained by volunteers, forest recreation area, reclamation of inappropriate areas, additional signs and barricades. It was brought forward that funds may be available for future projects.

Trail stewards have completed considerable work on the designated trail where most individuals ride with respect. However, other areas are not respected and there is considerable damage.

Five Year Review

The *Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan Implementation Review 2002-2007* was distributed. This document captures comments from the standing and steering committee members and is not the final report. All members are asked to review the document to ensure comments were captured and represented. Please bring forward any comments to Yvette Choma by December 31, 2009. A final report will be consolidated and reflective of any further comments or alterations. This final report will be presented to all standing and steering committee members prior to finalization.

Considerable funds are being put towards non-navigational maps. This may be the time to consider the most efficient maps without duplication of areas. There may be also consideration of an Alberta Forest Land Use Zone booklet similar to the fishing and hunting regulations.

Kiska/Willson Forest Land Use Zone Trail Inventory

The *Kiska/Willson Forest Land Use Zone Trail Inventory 2008* was distributed to all members. This is a summary of trail inventory assembled by Derry Armstrong. Trail inventory was also completed in the areas of the Brazeau River, Landslide Lake, Lake of the Falls and Michelle Lakes. Trail stewards in the Littlehorn area have information that will tie into the Tershishner area. Some trail inventory will be required around the Nordegg area.

Plans are to continue with the trail inventory in the Crescent Falls, Peppers Lake and North Ram areas.

Volunteer / Stewardship Activities

The following projects were completed during the summer months:

Eagle Creek Forest Recreation Area:

- installed 40 metal horse highlines in new areas and to replace older existing highlines
- spread gravel
- created a stock pile of gravel for future use

Hummingbird Forest Recreation Area

- installed horse highlines
- closed inappropriate camping sites
- opened the new loop road
- created a stock pile of gravel for future use
- cleaned ditches and removed deadfall

Cutoff Creek Forest Recreation Area

- expanded the parking area and removed the parking barricades
- constructed a ring road around the wet meadow
- installed culvert and geotextile fabric
- created a stock pile of gravel for future use

Ya Ha Tinda Area

- installed culvert and an overall cleanup
- installed STARS landing site and signage for medical emergencies

Two additional STARS landing sites and signage were installed in two other areas. The Ya Ha Tinda and Eagle Creek areas had a combined total of 14,000 horse nights.

Bighorn Dam Area

- installed culvert
- removed some boardwalk and culvert and hardened with gravel; the mini rubber tire backhoes make the work easier to complete
- reconditioned some trail sections

It was asked if the July 1st opening date on the Bighorn Dam Trail should be permanent. It was suggested the Joyce Creek Trail could be a permanent opening date of July 1st as this is a wet area. However, the many users would like to have the remainder of the trails evaluated on an annual basis for an opening date.

Forestry Division is installing reconstructed historical benchmarks cut from Tamarak posts. These posts indicate the trail names which are routed into the post.

Nordegg area received considerable blowdown during the August long weekend winds.

The volunteers were thanked for their work efforts and fundraising. *Alberta Bits* magazine will have an article that includes information on stewardship in the Clearwater Area.

A financial summary of *2009 Campground and Trail Improvements* was given by Friends of the Eastern Slopes. A copy of the summary will be distributed to all members.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Kevin Gagne gave a presentation on Mountain Pine Beetle. The prime objective of the 2009/2010 strategy is to:

- protect the spread on the east slopes and protect the watershed, and
- protect the mixed woods forest.

In the Clearwater Area there is currently no beetle infestation, other than beetles in controlled bait stations. The trees infested in the controlled bait stations are immediately cut and burned. The Department will continue to monitor bait stations and survey around the recent prescribed burn edges to see if any beetles were attracted.

In regards to the prescribed burns, the Upper Saskatchewan area removed pine susceptible to Mountain Pine Beetle. The majority of the north side of the burn area was completed with the south side of Highway 11 to be completed. Parks Canada completed a burn in the Ya Ha Tinda area that moved to public lands. The prescribed burn for the Hat Mountain area is planned.

White-Nose Syndrome and Bighorn Backcountry Website

Wapiabi Cave now has a sign informing users of White Nose Syndrome. This syndrome is common in eastern United States caves and results in bat mortality. Users are asked to be aware of the syndrome and use precautions when entering Wapiabi Cave.

The Bighorn Backcountry website now has a new look. This new look is consistent with other recreation websites and the website is in the transitional stage of both the older and newer format. The entire website will be converted to the new format.

Open Floor

The Fish and Game Association members were asked how the organization would like to be represented on the Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee and comments regarding off-highway vehicle use. The association brought forward the following:

- if more areas could remain open for responsible off-highway vehicle users;
- if off-highway vehicle speed could be regulated in areas that are being frequented by individuals travelling at high speeds;
- the association is willing to return motorized trails and areas to non-motorized trails and areas if there are concerns regarding fish and wildlife habitat, and
- if new trails are planned, to consider fish and wildlife habitat including streams, valleys, etc.

It was asked if retrieval of game would permit off-highway vehicle users to ride off the designated trail. There are questions of parameters, distance, time frame and enforcement.

The Forest Guardian program for 2010 is a concern to the trappers. They are asking other users to address this concern with the Minister.

Thank you to Clearwater County for their contributions with the summer work projects.

Trapper trail signs are available for all trappers. Signs will be placed on trails that are used by trappers but are not the designated trails.

It was asked why tickets are not being written to owners who fail to have their dog on a leash inside a forest recreation area. The goal of the department is compliance and situations are weighed for an educational or an enforcement process. It was suggested that enforcement results and the upcoming award for the May Long Weekend Task Force could be published in newspapers, club papers, magazines, etc.

It was asked if there would be a suitable time to plant trees in areas where many have been removed. It was remarked that tree planting should wait until there is more compliance from equestrian users.

A member informed the committee that the Bowden Light Horse Club contributes considerable funds and manpower to the Friends of the Eastern Slopes work projects and fundraising. The member was asked if this organization could be represented on the Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee. It was suggested that this request go to the Alberta Equestrian Federation and the Alberta Trail Riding Association, as these umbrella organizations decide the representative and alternate for the standing committee. A comment was made that equestrian clubs do not have to be a member of these umbrella organizations to be chosen for the standing committee. It was suggested the Bowden Light Horse Club make a presentation to the committee.

The Department's direction is to use LIVE meeting to reduce travel expenses for scheduled meetings. Edmonton, Calgary and Rocky Mountain House have equipment for LIVE meeting. This is an option for those travelling to or who live in these cities.

NEXT MEETING: February 4, 2010