

Bighorn Backcountry

Access Management Plan

Monitoring: Standing Committee

Meeting Summary
May 12, 2003
Rocky Mountain House

In Attendance

James Brady
Rick Artzen
Dennis Schafer
Keith Pettyjohn
Jeff Wilson

Jack Walker
Bob Long
Clarence Stewart
Ken Zelt
Loyal Ma

Lorne Hindbo
Calvin Rakach
Richard Smith
Nathan Moore
Bob Haagsma

Doug Ritchie
Greg Mallo
Philip Lacert
Mike Adolph

Yvette Choma
Don Livingston
Jim Allen

Chairperson

Butch Shenfield

Introductions:

Butch S. thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Round-table introductions were completed, with individuals identifying their user group and their position of primary or alternate.

Backgrounder:

Currently, the boundaries of the Bighorn Backcountry are as follows:

- the wilderness areas and national parks to the west;
- the timber Forest Management Area (FMA) boundaries to the east, north and south.

Prior to the Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan, there were two main concerns:

- 1) impacts on the environment;
- 2) conflicts among user types.

Unregulated trails managed by policy and the impact of users on the environment had resulted in a number of problems that included damage to the land and watercourses, improper trail locations and trail braiding, and improper disposal of human waste / garbage. User groups were in conflict with each other and with other user groups, resulting in dissension on trails and at staging areas. Through a public advisory committee, meetings with user groups, open house, website with a detailed survey, and public correspondence through letter / fax /e-mail, the Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan with the supporting legislation (Forest Recreation Regulation) became effective in October 2002.

Terms of Reference:

The Steering and Standing Committees and Terms of Reference (draft) were reviewed. The Steering Committee consists of provincial government members, with Butch S. communicating to the Assistant Deputy Minister and Deputy Minister. Both federal parks and industry (timber, and oil and gas) have been consulted. Some of these groups do not wish to participate at this time, but will become involved when directly affected. The Steering Committee will use the recommendations of the Standing Committee balanced with all other area aspects to develop steps to implement area management.

The Standing Committee captures user types to represent the users of the Bighorn Backcountry. The primary and alternate are asked to not only represent their user group, but also look at the other users types and the community as a whole to ensure representation of all users. The Standing Committee will provide to the Steering Committee advice and recommendations regarding access management, and may also participate in implementing many access management mechanisms. It was recommended that the term “Dog Sledders” be replaced with “Eco Tourism” to capture commercial tourism of all seasons, and recreation dog sledders be captured under “Winter Non-Motorized.” Currently, not all primary and alternate persons have been identified. Once this is completed, the Standing Committee members and their user groups will be identified on the Bighorn Backcountry website (personal information, including addresses and phone numbers, will not appear). It was discussed the potential of a student as part of the Standing Committee membership, and an application form will be developed by and sent to the members for recommendations, prior to being made available to students.

The Terms of Reference (draft) were reviewed, and recommendations given. Once the revisions are accepted by the Standing Committee, the Terms of Reference will appear on the Bighorn backcountry website.

Bighorn Backcountry Brochure:

The proposed updated Bighorn Backcountry brochure was presented. This brochure was presented at the Sustainable Resource Development Bighorn Backcountry booth at the Rocky Trade Fair (May 2-4, 2003), and at an informal group meeting February 13, 2003. The Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan and legislation remain unchanged, with some cosmetic changes to the map and brochure information being identified. The following recommendations were made by the Standing Committee:

- darken three pre-existing road systems from pale grey to black for easier identification;
- identify Clearwater County roads, as these roads and right-of-ways permit use of off-highway vehicles;
- update the date of “Reprinted, March 2003” to reflect a revision and May, 2003.

It was motioned and approved to proceed with the reprint of the Bighorn Backcountry brochure with the above cosmetic changes and Standing Committee recommendations.

Trail Monitoring:

“Recreational Trail Monitoring” was distributed and asked to be reviewed by the members. It is preferred that measurable criteria be non-subjective as opposed to subjective, and the monitoring be able to measure the present situation compared to the situation in the future. In regards to water crossings, a representative from Alberta Environment will be involved in the process (through the Steering Committee). Trails or trail portions that fail the monitoring evaluation may be closed until the appropriate maintenance and repair is completed, and user groups will be encouraged to participate in trail maintenance and the Adopt-A-Trail program.

Trail monitoring will also include trail counters. These sophisticated counters will count the number of users, and the user type (eg) off-highway vehicle, hiker, equestrian. Rather than replicate monitoring, research and surveys for Bighorn specifically, existing programs funded by other projects including grizzly bear, other wildlife, fish, and natural land reclamation will be used to provide links to our monitoring.

A map of Hummingbird Forest Recreation Area (FRA) and surrounding area was distributed. For the next meeting, members were asked to view the map, and consider how this FRA should be designed to accommodate all user types. The following items should be considered for the future development:

- all user types;
- commercial and recreational users;
- on-highway vehicles: they are not permitted off maintained roads (county or transportation maintained) and must remain within the boundaries of the FRA;
- potential toilet facilities;
- equestrian waste issues and potential facilities (eg: hitching rails, highline issues);
- parking spaces for all user types and their placement within the FRA.

For this FRA, a blueprint needs to be designed to accommodate all user types, prior to any work being completed on the site. Recommendations for the blueprint will be brought forward to the Steering Committee. There are other FRAs that will eventually need to follow a similar process.

Next Meeting:

The Standing Committee decided the next meeting will be held on Monday, June 16, 2003 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, with the Rocky Mountain House venue to be announced. Because of members' work schedules, future meeting start times may fluctuate pending the needs of the group.