

# Bighorn Backcountry

## Access Management Plan

### Monitoring: Standing Committee

February 3, 2011 **FINAL**

Rocky Mountain House Provincial Building

#### **In Attendance**

Don Livingston  
Wayne Crocker  
Jim Duncan  
Clarence Stewart

David Finn  
Laura Raivio  
James Brady  
Brent Young

Myles Jensen  
Kevin Gagne  
Dennis Schafer  
Lorne Hindbo

Rita Stagman  
Gordon Sanders  
Roger Marvin

#### **Chairperson**

Don Livingston

#### **Introduction**

SRD thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Round-table introductions were completed. On the Standing Committee, Jim Duncan has replaced Ken Qually as the representative for the County. Awaiting notification of representative and alternate for First Nations. Laura Raivio has replace Yvette Choma for SRD.

#### **Activities, Enforcement and Signing**

Activities were pretty quiet this fall. Charges were given for illegal camping at Benchcamp with resulting complaints from the recipient posted on an outdoorsman forum. Consensus from other users on the forum was that it was the complainant's own fault for not making themselves knowledgeable about the restrictions in the area as those rules have now been around for years. Good to see the public acknowledging and promoting knowledge of the existing regulations.

Bighorn Backcountry brochure is in the final stages with a few minor changes to be completed, then will be sent in for printing at beginning of February. Trails in the Dormer and Peppers Area have been updated to reflect trails confirmed on the ground.

Alberta Trail Net Mapping program still underway, contractor didn't start until late in the season so still lots of trails to be mapped around Ya Ha Tinda and Panther. Next mapping update for Highway 11 south to Highway 1.

County and SRD meeting tomorrow to discuss a concept plan for trails that extend to the Bighorn, around the Nordegg community and from the trunk road to the Bighorn Dam. Includes talks on a proposal resurrecting old mountain bike trails, Nordic trails, trails within the Nordegg community itself, etc. Status of the proposed rail line trail? Concept plan is done and waiting for word on initial funding and continual maintenance. As far as widening and changes to the rail grade trail, the idea is to keep the original feel of the

current trail and widening only if necessary and feasible. Talks with area holders about using existing equipment, bridges, etc. that may already be there.

Wapiabi Cave – the closure notice has been placed in the new brochure. No gate installed to date. Compliance seems to be good.

Lack of trail maintenance around Forty Mile and Lost Guide will be discussed at CTR meeting next week.

Winter update - guardians are working this winter, no decision on seasonal hires for upcoming summer. Awaiting budget review and enforcement review.

Concerns were brought up about guardian funding and re-opening of the Nordegg Ranger Station. Direction is to talk to your MLA's or contact the Area Manager to express your concerns.

Enforcement – tickets in general are up. Confirmation that you have to show registration and insurance documents even though the license plate has updated year on it. License plate sticker does not mean that machine itself has a valid insurance and registration. Rallies are required to have authorizations and post the requirement for insurance and registration. FOES expressed concern over public disregard for recent signage. Requesting more enforcement on highlines and equestrian policies. It was noted that a major part of enforcement is not just writing a ticket but education and warnings to the users.

Large events now require permits/authorization from SRD if on public land (i.e. poker rallies, private events of size). Currently no charge for the permit. Puts more liability on the organization for injury and destruction of area.

### **TransAlta Updates**

Update regarding the Texas gate at the Bighorn Dam. TransAlta has legal concerns about the width and would like a larger gap than initially proposed. Suggestions were placing a removable post in front or having a gate with a combination lock and signage so stewards with wagons can get through if required. Having difficulty with using vehicle designations because vehicles get modified to fit off-highway specs. To date initial vehicle designation is the one being used (i.e. quad with tracks is an ATV, not a snow vehicle). Thought will be given to what the trails are designated for and the future of the area.

Much of the signage in the area is up so we are now able to enforce. For future use and a campground, talks have resulted in three options so far. Interested parties are presently investigating infrastructure that will affect proceeding and dollars needed.

### **5 Year Review**

The draft review of the current Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan is nearing completion and will be forwarded for review when complete.

### **Kiska / Willson FLUZ and LUF Boundaries**

Currently there is an overlap of the boundaries. LUF boundaries are based on watersheds which would move the boundary to the Red Deer River. South of the River would become

part of the Ghost and eliminate the overlap. Members were asked for their thoughts and it was acceptable as long as trails don't change in their designation. It was noted that the director can decide whether to close or open a trail within a year under current legislation. If a permanent closure deems necessary it would have to come to the group to decide.

### **Prescribed Burn Planning - SRD**

PowerPoint presentation regarding usage of prescribed burning on the landscape and a recap of burning that took place in 2010.

Plans for 2011 – there are approximately fifteen PB plans on the books in various approval stages, six of these are approved and ready. Focus is on starting the first week of May with the Chungo Gap, Blackstone Gap and Wapiabi Gap, all capping units. Blackstone was initially done in 2007 but the size has been increased across the corridor valley between the front and back ranges. The Upper Saskatchewan 2 burn plan is being revised to address WhiteBark Pine and cross agency concerns. The others are the Clearwater capping unit adjacent to Forty Mile, Hat Mountain north of the Ya Ha Tinda ranch and Hummingbird capping unit.

FPD will be moving ahead as conditions allow. Operationally looking into the R11 regime analysis results. Fire deficit ranges are from moderate to severe with fire deficits more than two fire cycles behind in some areas.

Carbon release problems? Fire is historically on the landscape with small fires and then a massive fire cleaning up the landscape. Prescribed burning gives us a chance of distributing this large carbon release over a period of time.

Website stating if burns are occurring? Yes under the Alberta SRD website

### **Edmonton Recreation Update**

Updates were provided on status of the Land Use Framework (LUF), Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO), Public Lands Administration Regulation (PLAR), Alberta Parks Act and current staffing at the Edmonton office.

### **Open Floor**

FOES update, changes are coming with the current standing committee representative informing the committee that he will be stepping down after 17 years, as well as 6 other FOES board members. New board will come into effect at the annual meeting on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Special thanks to the member for all his time and effort.

Nordegg is forming a Chamber of Commerce, opportunity for business to join.

Concern and disappointment expressed over the temporary closure of the Nordegg Ranger Station and who to contact now for information. Nordegg is growing and feelings are that SRD is pulling out of the area. Contact will be Rocky for everything excluding fire and Christmas tree permits which are available at the store. It was indicated that concerns could be put forth to the MLA or the Area Manager in Rocky.

**NEXT MEETING – June 9, 2011**