

October 6, 2016 @ 9:00 **FINAL COPY**

**Rocky Mountain House Museum**

**In Attendance**

Wayne Crocker	Don Livingston	Lisa Schrader	Rita Stagman
Jay Mills	Rick Artzen	Michael Doyle	Dennis Schafer
Cal Rakach	Doug King	Lorne Hindbo	Jim Duncan
Rod Burns	Adena Earl	Dale Marshall	Jeremy Cooper
Barry Wesley	Margriet Berkhout	Grant Santo	Charlie Abraham
Chiara Feder	Laura Raivio		

**Chair**

Wayne Crocker

**Introduction**

Round table conducted. John Tchir is replacing Jim Allen and Grant Santo is replacing Greg Ottway on the steering committee.

**Activity / Enforcement Update**

Trail closures, delayed work due to rain. Enforcement in PLUZ and at the Bighorn Dam was done by Parks. 200% less charges and warnings at the Dam and it seems we have gotten message across. Other areas are seeing similar infractions and numbers. Overall enforcement and education was very successful and Parks won't be downsizing any time soon.

Canary Creek trail status – before August long Canary Creek trail was closed as well as Pleasant Valley into Benchcamp for protection of the trails due to a wet season and erosion. Initially not a lot of push back until hunting season, and a lot of charges have been laid on hunters going back there. Need to discuss how we respond to trails being closed before they get damaged. We have come to the conclusion that it is not a sustainable place to have a motorized trail. We have been struggling with defending that trail as a sustainable place for years and are sensitive to all the effort that has gone into trying to keep that Canary Creek trail open. Steering committee decision is that the Canary will be closed permanently.

Question: To winter motorized as well?

Response: It is worth considering certainly. We will take that suggestion back to the steering committee.

Where were the issues? On the top end and with no real ability to get out of the creek. Everything got washed out and even the new reroute was washing out in places. Pleasant Valley needed to be closed down for this year as there was getting to be a lot of braiding. By next summer it should be fine again and all the way down to Benchcamp, they just needed to dry up.

Comment – groups spent a lot of money and time on campsite work and parking and believe this committee should look at creating alternatives. We would like to create a trail outside to have some connectivity. There might be an opportunity to do another 30 km of trail into Lynx creek for example.

Comment - Summer motorized spoke to six directors last night and they agreed that Canary should have been closed temporarily but not permanently. We need to put real equipment in there and do good drainage and grading so that if we have the rains the area can handle it. Biggest issue on Canary is that it can't be in the bottom. As a standing committee we have an obligation to our stewards. We've had no funding and have done all this work with nothing. What is the GOA doing to support us? Closure seems to be the main tool. Close it at the bottom but allow alternatives. We have to get past this mentality of minimalizing work on the trails.

At this same time we are looking at creating other trails somewhere else. We cannot look at putting a highway in the middle of the wilderness. We are looking at opportunities with industry to create trails somewhere else.

Comment - We are trying to maintain trails with quads and little dump trailers, we need to be able to use real equipment. We've gone into the backcountry our whole lives, give us an opportunity to make the trail sustainable. It's like a slap in the face every time there's closures. The infrastructure is there and it's busy. If you start shutting areas down then people divert to somewhere else and double the usage there. Suggest that summer motorized get in there and see what they can do with that trail.

We can build more things with bigger equipment but it all costs money. Is that going to fall on the volunteers too? There is still no money for rec management in place.

Note - Discussion about the closure and summer motorized want the ability to look at the trail and opportunity to do the work. 2017 season GOA is not planning to have it open.

**GOA - "We do not have a consensus yet from the Managers – further discussions required"**

It will have to be closed until we can find a real means of rerouting it. We are needing to head east across the trunk road and find those real opportunities there. James Pass/Eagle Lake is another trail that needs a lot of work and will cost a lot of money.

The intent is that we are trying to move forward and not just use closure as a main management tool. That can be supported by the club.

We all agree that it is important to give each user group a place to go. Society is recognizing the importance of recreation. There are more and more people and it becomes more difficult to minimize the footprint. Sometimes there has to be a footprint to allow for utilization. It's a social aspect and sometimes that's the point we are missing. Sometimes there has to be trade-offs.

User/pay system? Users paying for maintenance of the trails. This is more acceptable than it was from the past GOA. Now it is definitely one of the funding models.

Vision/TOR Review – on hold for now as it looks like changes are coming through. We need to wait until we see who the land managers are going to be. We still know where we are going from the last visioning exercise and it still pertains. Expect in the next couple of months to see the RAC report. Questioning if we need an update to make ourselves stronger as a group? This group and this model is the provincial model. Regardless of what happens this group will be involved.

Stepping to the east side of the trunk road we definitely want to have that link with this committee and to what is happening on the outside. There would be a need to expand the folks at the table, i.e. industry reps. Outside of the PLUZ the Clearwater Trails Initiative infrastructure is already in place.

### **Signage Update**

\$20,000 for signage, including some educational, posts and hardware. That funding goes towards signs only no manpower, however we were able to have one seasonal signage person.

Wagon/equine signage – worked with Edmonton and got some consistent wagon signage for the south. This can be used in the north as well.

Request for education signage at staging at the Bighorn Dam about the reserve boundaries. Similar ones have been done at Kootenay Plains. GOA can work with Edmonton on that with placement perhaps on the powerline at the Dam and from the trunk road side.

### **Backcountry Trail Rehabilitation Update**

Work completed for 2016: Cutoff Creek, Scalp Creek, Panther reroute, Whitegoat trail, all of Pinto Lake trail up to Cline headwaters at the pass, repairs on Landslide Lake trail and various small trail repairs throughout Bighorn.

Planned for rest of Season: Two OHV bridges near Onion Lake, two hiking bridges near Landslide Lake and Lake of the Falls, one hiking bridge on Waterfalls Creek.

Panther is done with a huge improvement with contractors. A few long pulls with wagons but no really steep grades. FB group has posted photos and comments and all were very good. Who signs off on it? BTFR and AEP. AEP is going in on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The standing committee is interested in going out as well to evaluate it.

Agreed last year to do the Dormer River trail? From what we understand if BTFR didn't do it this year it won't be done. Would like to put priority on that trail as it is a major corridor. Major access to the Park and makes a nice loop.

Is it the intent to close off the access up the river now that this new wagon trail is in place? Not really much of a trail left to close on Panther, intending to block off on the Clearwater.

### **Forty Mile /Clearwater Area Discussion**

We are going to allow winter access into 40 Mile cabin as a destination site.

Have new trail from CC3 open to summer use motorized? Decided to keep it as a winter use only. Trail will now continue to the cabin. Would like to move the kiosk to connection with the reroute. Do we close the piece south of the cabin and just leave the reroute or leave entire loop open? Winter suggests to close it. Will be putting up a sign to stop wagons as the Skeleton trail was not built with that in mind – some steep grades. No access or just suggest? i.e. danger steep slopes

CC8 – Scalp Creek washout – BTFR was trying to get the contractor up there to fix it but AEP never heard back so will have to check.

### **Nordegg**

Working with County regarding brochures and realigning to include trails within the town site as well. There has been some stress amongst user groups and we have put up some signs. Both groups needing

to talk to us a bit more as there are new, unapproved hiking trails appearing as well. It seems that the fear is that trails may be lost if we go to Parks and some folks would like to see no motorized as well.

### **Memorial Benches/Tables/Placards**

Bench placed at windy point. Cement bench/table and goes well with the landscape. We really have no standards when it comes to these types of things however Parks does. Do we want to set a standard and offer those choices? Some requests come in.

Disagree – trying to keep this as a wilderness. Won't it get cluttered? Do we try to focus it to certain spots? Do we maybe just allow items within the staging areas/campsites?

Agree – in the campground but not all over. Need to provide an option. Price tag on a table may deter some people and keep amount of items down.

Parks memorial benches are subscribed for a 10 year period. Parks installs and maintains but it costs the buyer \$3500 and Parks has to agree on the site location.

### **FOESA Update**

Bison are coming into the Park by Feb 2017. 14-2yr old heifers to calve and 2 bulls. They will be in enclosures or building a fence. Will be in an enclosed area for 2 years and will be fed and watered there.

Gave up on the Klein Lake battle and putting efforts into James Lake trail. Would really like to go ahead with that, still waiting for AEP.

Federal Parks has still not been out to assess for the Bighorn campground expansion. They are going to want to change the existing campground into designated sites.

7 Mile campground – is this group behind getting quads there? Would like to take poker rally out of Hummingbird and put it at 7 Mile where the ground is better. Would like to talk with Parks about that option. Looked like the campground was used quite a bit. Rebuilt tables, flattened gravel piles.

Cancelled quad poker rally due to wet conditions. Went ahead with horse poker rally. Membership still around 700 so still a lot of interest.

Question – YaHa Tinda – alternates for equine and taking trailers into campground. Fed Parks said only mandate is at YaHa and nowhere else. AB Parks' goal is to try to find some alternatives. Would like to see FOESA talk to Fed Parks about the oversaturation of equine at YaHa and possibility of opening other places.

### **Prescribed Burn Update**

Most of the prescribed burning was done in the spring as it was a very early fire season with low snowpack.

Plans were for three capping units at Chungo, Blackstone and Wapiabi. Capping in Hummingbird and Upper Clearwater. Some alder burns around YaHa completed. Some plans have been on the books for a while and are still there. Were able to complete Wapiabi and Upper Clearwater and some small burns around campsites.

March 10 went into Clearwater to burn the meadow, which happened March 23. Used the new wagon trail to get in as opposed to helicopter.

Random campsite hazard reduction. Important as people still don't put campfires out properly and a wind comes along and re-ignites.

Wapiabi – completed the capping unit as a fire break for future fire management purposes. Looked at it the end of March. It was snow free early but still had seasonal temps. Got a window later in April and were able to ignite on April 20. Placed signs and sent out updates and pretty much only had one day. Burn went really well but had a wind shift part way through. This area required few resources so we were able to go ahead without taking resources from suppression. It did take a bit of a run down the valley. Achieved the 80% or better of crown removal. Started to rain the next day and just had to monitor it for the next few days. Good regrowth and greening up incredibly well.

Cost for Wapiabi for example? – used helicopters already on standby and crews already on standby so cost was minimized. Cost not easy to pull out as these equipment and crews were already being paid to be at the base.

Rest of the season we were unable to do any more prescribed burning with the start of Fort McMurray and then rain. Brushed out a trail at 40 Mile and performed some trail maintenance at Thompson Creek, Hidden Quartzite trail and Landslide Lake Fire Ecology trail. If it's a slow season they can do some trail maintenance so please let them know. Mostly cleaning of deadfall and removing hazard trees.

Bighorn Creek draft proposal is ready and will hopefully move forward over the winter.

FireSmart Update - Since our last meeting in June we have been granted approval by Parks to build approximately 1 km of trail through the Park to connect the trail through the Goldeye Lake Park to the FireSmart Ecology Trail south of Frontier Lodge

- Work is well underway on this section and we should have it totally completed by end of October
- We also have a good portion of the connector trail on the north side of highway 11 completed and have built an approach up to highway 11 and expect to have this connector also completed by end of October/early November
- Weather pending (hopefully it stays decent until mid-November), our goal is to have the entire trail system useable by mid-November and the only outstanding items after that will be some additional gravelling work and debris clean-up later this winter

#### Open Floor

- Request to put sign at Pinto about first nations' history there and would like to put a history about grandparents recognizing us as the first nation who was through here so people can learn about us through this corridor.
- Last meeting mentioned the Stony trail and how the trails there now are the old Stony trails. We didn't come from Morley, we've been here from the beginning. We've definitely recognized on this committee that the First Nations rep is from the Bighorn not Morley.

- **Next Standing Committee Meeting – Thursday, February 2, 2016**