

**BIGHORN BACKCOUNTRY
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING**



OCTOBER 10, 2024

9:00AM – 12:00PM

In Person Meeting

MEETING SUMMARY

Brad Jones	Doug King	Curtis Nichol	Jeremy Cooper
Julia Wachowski	Celie Interling	Troy Dezall	Loyal Ma
Chad Willms	Alex Miller-Tait	Jim Turner	Michael Doyle
Dennis Schafer	Dom Kmet	Garett Schmidt	Jamie Bruha
Adena Earl	Matt Cornfield	Stephen Shenfield	Genny Mehlhaff
Phil Lacerte	Larry Schmidek	Dale Marshall	Suzanne Comfort
Lorne Hindbo	Blake Christianson	Mark Handel	Grant Santo
Laura Raivio			

Item #	TOPIC
1.	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Round table. Ernst Bergmann (alternate-hiking) as left the standing committee.
2.	<p><u>Future of Committee</u> *see PowerPoint (ppt) presentation Asked for input prior to meeting to obtain feedback and on the future of the committee and whether it is meeting the outcomes of the Terms of Reference. Today is to go through what was heard and have discussion. 6 questions located on ppt regarding Terms of Reference (TOR) review.</p> <p><u>Q&A / Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committees or associations often have terms for representatives (reps), anywhere from 2-6 years. - Need to tell the committee the vision GOA wants for the committee to move forward. - Need the local input and community involvement on what is happening in our backyard for it to work. - Reps should be representing all associations related to their user group. - Hearing that we need a full perspective, local club should be part of a provincial group. - Want this to be meaningful recreation. Comes down to communication. - For capital expansions it should be that the GOA does not represent any groups, it is a facilitator for the groups. Specifically, once GOA defines a box, then the sectors work with the GOA to make those things happen, not be a recipient of what the GOA has done. <p>Do you want everything to come across the table?</p> <p><u>Q&A / Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The committee is here for a purpose and before a project goes ahead it should be

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asked if it is feasible, or even something that is wanted.

- We need to see what your big picture is and GOA needs to understand that we understand the big picture.
- Key piece in the planning process should be to bring it to the meetings.
- Local input is key; there has to be a bigger picture to make that happen.
- Local involvement but need someone to comprehend the whole area and user groups.
- Communication is a two-way street. Locals get communication through your association and back.

Nordeg Trail Plan for example, did you feel engaged? A sub-committee was used and information brought back to the Bighorn Standing Committee.

Q&A / Comments:

- Found the need to include the residents from Nordeg and started the Nordeg Trails Society
- Rail Trail is supposed to be multiuse but as a cyclist it is not great. If consulted beforehand we could have spoken to the needs of cyclists to make it more user-friendly.
- Motorized users were not consulted on Rail Trail. If there is a focus in the area would suggest to start with all the rec groups that are going to be using that trail. Ways to make the trail multi-use safely and more interesting.
- Input on the Rail Trail took place in 2009 but it took 10+ years for implementation, so that may be where the gap in communication was.

Future state – not much input came back. We heard comments to planning and better monitoring/performance metrics. We heard that we must find a balance between trail initiatives and projects. Desire to give input at a higher level, get in ahead before the decisions are made.

Q&A / Comments:

- If we are confined to the boundaries of the Bighorn Backcountry is there really a need for the committee anymore? We have it managed and legislated well. Most of the conversation is outside the boundary so need to expand.
- North Saskatchewan Regional Plan (NSRP) still in draft form after all the work had been done. Missing piece is more land planning.
- It seems like motorized users have taken the net loss of trails and have put in many hours of the work. Response – we have been understanding the history and how we got here to our current map. Right now, new trail proposals are carefully considered and assessed.

Trail management system – ppt – broad overview given

Before 2022 there was no overarching legislation to deal with trails. You had to come to the GOA to get authorization for work on a trail. Now, the Trails Act gives the GOA and user groups a framework to manage recreation on the land. A trail management plan needs to be developed. The Act also gives some protection to trails on the landscape; there is a requirement to fix a designated trail, (i.e. if industry damages the trail, it is obligated to fix it). Before there were people managing the trails, but they were given no funding. Volunteerism in the Bighorn area is alive and well, and to see all the effort that has gone in truly is remarkable.

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New trails – you need a trail management plan then it can be designated by Minister Order. Many existing designated trails have trail managers now and is funding available.

“Capital” is funding to build new things. “Operational” is funding for maintenance and operations.

Q&A / Comments:

- Trail management seems to be ever-changing.
- When is the Trails Act due to be reviewed? Could this group give input?
Response – There is no built-in legislated expiry date, not on any agenda for review.
- Who applies for a trail management plan? Response – it can come from anywhere. User groups, regional or sub regional planning, etc., not always a big process, just documentation we need to use.
- The Minister having to designate a trail seems like the most complicated way for this to happen.
- Clarification: The Minister does not have to approve the trail plan itself but rather is the authority to designate the trail.
- Old historical pack trails remain on the Bighorn Backcountry map but were not necessarily put in with the order.
- A trail application form will be finalized in the next couple of months after input from you.
- As one of the trail managers, for the first time we are seeing good example of GOA working with the stakeholders, not one telling the other what should be done. Working together when we find issues. Outcome is to deliver sustainable trails for future generations. Where is the trail, what is the plan, how are we going to maintain it – that is the process.
- Prior to having this, approvals for trail work were done differently everywhere. This puts in the regulatory framework and then the rest is built around it to work smoother. One of the bigger items, the trail management portion, is about stakeholder involvement and that is this group.
- New mandate and policy not necessarily aligned. Very focused recreationally. Prescribed fire and bison fencing, for example, were items that used to be brought up and we are missing the landscape management piece.

Future state – ppt

Two groups proposed: 1. Integrated Lands Management Committee (ILMC); 2. Recreation partner/trail managers.

Q&A / Comments:

- How does this fit in the Trails Act to be consistent throughout time? Response – right now the Trails Act is not going anywhere. There is no other committee like this in the province, and no reason to get rid of it.
- Being volunteers, every time I have worked as a volunteer involves trying to train someone else to take your place. It takes years to have the contacts and knowledge of the background. All of us represent broad perspective and associations of associations. We have stake in this for the associations as well as being local. Think we all have that to a degree and look at the bigger picture.
- A wagon association received funds to work on a wagon trail at Cutoff Creek. The snowmobile club built it. Is the wagon association now the trail manager for this trail?

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	<p>Will they work among the groups? Before the operational report for this meeting we did not know they were given funding. In the past were told it was the snowmobile club’s responsibility to get out there and fix the trail/bridges. Are we now partners with the wagon association? Response – Cutoff is not one of the trails designated as a snowmobile trail currently. And we anticipated more than one group could manage the same trail due to different and seasonal uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many trails are multi-use. Motorized are all shared trails and non-motorized are non-motorized, so I cannot see motorized wanting input on those. Same for hiking, for example, wanting input on OHV trail specs regarding whether to go left or right of a particular tree. <p>We envision a trail manager committee for the Bighorn. This would include things like “what are the motorized groups’ plans for the trails?” “What is NORCA doing?” It is better together for thinking and pooling resources. There is a lot of opportunity there; a trail manager working group. Then we can have a broader integrated land management committee. Would be good to have others, i.e. FMA holders, at the meeting to level up the committee.</p> <p><u>Q&A / Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggesting the same as what a development board does with referrals. People weigh in on that development and provide their input. Response - This is a somewhat different in that we need to work with the other stakeholders and land users in the area. Could almost have opposite effect and stall development. - Looking at a variety of recreation types that influence each other. That is the idea for bringing more than just you in to plan a trail. For example, invested in the Rail Trail, but it is not a cycling trail. There is uses in having a trail manager committee when working together. Sometimes the same user has a horse, hikes and quads, so sees a bigger picture. - Suggestion that instead of having two groups, have an overarching group and then a details group. - Do not want to see stakeholder information be broken up too much. Knowing each portion helps with overall knowledge. - What are the plans and who is responsible for emergency access. That will be in the plans. - Send comments in by deadline.
3.	<p><u>Project application, assessment and decision making process</u> *see sample decision document and scoring rubric The Department requires a process to assess new proposals. Three steps - 1. Application to put forward the idea, no fee. 2. Assessment. 3. Decision document.</p> <p>*draft trail assessment documents used for reference for Eagle Lake/James Pass and Scalp Creek. This trail concept has many challenges, mainly historical resources, which can be expensive to assess and mitigate. High ecological values and the trail is on a flood plain, not easy to maintain and still have it exist in the future. For the trail to be rerouted up into high ground is also very expensive. We could mitigate all the values and spend a large amount of funding, but is it a priority? It is really hard for development here.</p> <p><u>Q&A / Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This document scoring rating and matrix is good idea. However, it should include recreational values. there is zero reference to recreation value. Response: Good point

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and we will have to figure out how to value that and bring it into the form. Decision document is based on a full assessment, which will include the recreational value. There is that information in the background, it just was not in the rubric.

- Evaluations were looked at by an assortment of the Recreation and the Lands officers for the province. Suggestion that this could have gone to the Bighorn Backcountry committee to be vetted, both evaluations and ratings.
- This is where higher level planning comes in. Need to address these items at a higher level instead of at a project level.
- Is enforcement considered in the matrix? Should be in the proposal.
- No consideration on the matrix that the Eagle/James trail example was a motorized trail up until 2016.
- At what point do groups submitting proposals have the opportunity for any appeal? Response: When we get through the complete process. Concerns should be addressed in the proposal.
- Form is intended to document decisions and be transparent.
- Suggestion that the trail assessment documents become part of the application side.
- Clarity on meaning of the score/numbers.

Provide further feedback on proposal process by the deadline. It will be a provincial piece and part of the trail management guide. Be specific about what does, and does not make sense.

7. Open Floor

- Mountain biking: Parking lot at Black Mountain is great. Users want a more extreme experience than other trails. If you don't have an ebike, it would take 16 min up, 3 min down. Green runs, less experienced cyclists like it but some bad corners. Blue run has banked corners but also has a jump gap. Different thought process, going to be dependent on a shuttle to get them up to come down. Nordegg Trails Society have done maintenance on just under 100km trails in just under a month. Uptrack 3 km, 3-4 viewpoints at the top. Need to have some trails signed to clarify what is multiuse and non-motorized. Boardwalks in the Meadows at Nordegg with lumber donations. Conflicts already at Black Mountain with higher than 500 watt being used on ebikes. Black Mountain blue signs in the works. Google-Black Mountain Bike Network.
- FOESA Update: Had a good year, fires and rain interfered. 2456 memberships sold compared to 2772 last year. \$65,370 dollars in memberships. New sites in Bighorn Creek and fixed up the campground. Cabin in at Eagle Creek. Toilets at 7 Mile, Red Deer North and South in A and B loops, levelled and sites bigger. No work at James River or Wildhorse yet, Wildhorse is waiting to get lines in right place for campground. We have a time period to spend the funding. Had a few incidents with dogs which was the biggest complaint. Planning on putting in new toilets and fixing roofs on camp kitchens at the new campground.
- Bighorn Dam OHV trails – a lot of maintenance work done on D side, currently addressing the old lease road going up to Kidd Creek hill. D15-D8 and the Joyce Creek point. Most other trails in D looking good.
- Do you require a PLCP while doing volunteer work? Yes but check with Lands for authorization.

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8.	Next Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee Meeting – TBA Jan-March 2025
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Action Items	Description	Assigned To:	Due Date
1.	Include AOA (Alberta Outfitters Association) to the partners list. Part of commercial trail riding permit holders agreement is to maintain trails.	Brad Jones	Present
2.	Standing and Steering Committee members to submit further comments.	All	Nov 8, 2024
3.	Updates to forms as per discussions	Brad Jones	End Nov 2024
4.	Request for fire ban signage to be placed at Banff National Parks gate when in place	Mark Handel	As needed
5.	Alberta transportation brochures/information for OHV use on Hwy 734.	Laura Raivio	Present