



Wapiti Corridor Planning Group

Public Meeting

February 3, 2009 at 7:00pm – The Grovedale Hall

Approximately fifty people, representing residents, lease holders, recreation & community groups, and industry, attended the meeting hosted by the Wapiti Corridor Planning Groups Steering Committee and led by one of its Co-Chairman, Jim Smith, on February 3, 2009.

Introduction:


Lesley Vandemark introduced the group, and gave a brief overview about the MD of Greenview's involvement.

MD of Greenview Involvement: (Lesley Vandemark – Councilor)

This is the first time the MD has been involved in a process like this. The river valley is used extensively for recreation purposes as can be seen from the growing NiteHawk Ski Hill, and the numerous people at O'Brien Park and east of the bridge in the summer. The Rock Valley Raceway motocross track, built in a former gravel pit, can also be found on the south side of the river. The Wapiti Corridor is an excellent resource that must be protected. It would be beneficial to see this process carried over to other areas in the MD.

History of the Group:

Jim Smith gave a brief overview of how the group was formed, and outlined the objectives of the meeting.

- Initiated by the County of Grande Prairie No. 1, the first meeting was held in September of 2007, to review the work that had been done in previous studies pertaining to the Dunes and to see if there was a need/interest to proceed with another plan. This meeting was primarily comprised of people involved in previous work.
 - In July of 2008, the County again initiated the discussion by holding another meeting in which there was a drive to move ahead with the project, and the Steering Committee was formed.
 - The first Steering Committee meeting was held in August 2008. Up until this point, the discussion revolved mainly around what to do with the Dunes area. However, seeing
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the success of the “Eagle Pointe-Blue Rapids Parks” in Drayton Valley, the group decided that a plan encompassing the Wapiti River Valley was the direction to move.

- In September 2008 and again in October 2008 the Steering Committee, expanded to include the MD of Greenview and input from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, met to discuss the direction to take and the process of developing a plan for the Wapiti Corridor.

The meeting on February 3, 2009 was held as a way to inform the residents of the Grovedale area of the initiative and see if they supported the idea, get input as to the direction the study should take, and determine who the stakeholders in the area are.

County of Grande Prairie No. 1’s Involvement: (John Simpson – Director of Planning & Development)

While the County has initiated this process, they would like to see it being a stakeholder driven initiative with the user groups making the recommendations as to what they would like to see in the area. That being said, they are willing to aid in the facilitation of this endeavor by providing administrative supports, guidance, and funding.

Study 2000-2002: (Ken Zurfluh – former Alberta Parks Northwest Area Manager)

In 1999, the Northwest Boreal Environmental Resources Committee made a recommendation to create a plan for the Dunes area as there was an increasing need for enforcement in the area. This plan was to create a Provincial Recreation Area in the Dunes area and was initiated by the provincial government. The plan included public input, and was supported by the County and City. It addressed a number of issues, OHV use being the primary driving force for the plan, but did not address other areas like hunting and 4x4ing. Unfortunately, in 2002, due to a case of bad timing and a lack of funding, Alberta Parks acquired a number of additional parks and no additional funding, the plan was never approved by the Alberta Government. The province had also considered the area under its “Special Places” designation, but rejected it due to the level of OHV use.

How to Succeed Where the Last Plan Failed: (Jim Smith – Resident & Co-Chairman of the Wapiti Corridor Planning Group Steering Committee)

There is a need for direction in the Wapiti Corridor; rather than having the government lead the process of developing a plan, the user groups and stakeholders will let the government know what they want for the area. This process will be open to the public to provide this direction. We will use the previous plans as a starting point and build upon them with input from all stakeholders. There is a wide range of existing and future stakeholder needs to consider and a long term plan is required for the future use and benefit of the region by all.

The boundaries have been expanded from the previous studies because the Wapiti Corridor Planning Group sees that a number of issues are wider spread than just in the Dunes area. A long term and larger scale plan allows for the accommodation of the many uses. The provincial government is in the process of developing the “Land Use Framework” and this plan will provide important input and direction to the government as this policy is applied.

Vision: “To create a multi use plan for the Wapiti Corridor that accommodates, protects, and balances both current and future needs”

Discussion:

Who are Stakeholders?

- *Municipalities*
- *Lease Holders*
- *Public*
- *User Groups*
- *Government*

What areas should we have Consultants explore?

- *Historical Analysis*
- *Gravel Reclamation*
- *Trail Systems*

Concerns about the area:

- *Destruction of Resources*
- *Conflicting Uses*
- *Hunting*
- *ATV Use*
- *Garbage*
- *Fires*
- *Land Needs to be Protected*
- *Cattle Leases*
- *Property Destruction*
- *Lack of Respect for the Land*
- *Lack of Accountability for Actions*
- *More Enforcement*
- *Swans Being Shot*
- *Impact of ATVs on Wildlife*
- *Managing Pipelines*

Outcome:

- The Valley (both sides) is an asset. A plan is good to manage uses in the area.
- Boundary
 - Crown land mainly, but can incorporate some private land where necessary
- Individuals were asked to provide their contact information if they would like to be involved as the group forms a society, and if they wanted to stay informed.

Getting Involved:

If you or anyone you know would like to or should be involved in this process, please contact the Wapiti Corridor Planning Group:



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