



Wapiti Corridor Planning Group

Public Meeting

March 11, 2009 at 7:00pm – Grande Prairie Golf and Country Club

Approximately seventy people, representing residents, lease holders, recreation & community groups, industry, and government, attended the meeting hosted by the Wapiti Corridor Planning Group's Steering Committee and led by one of its Co-Chairman, Jim Smith, on March 11, 2009.


Introduction:

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

- Keep the public informed of the initiative, by providing them with an understanding of the work done to date, the next steps, and the timeline.
- Increase involvement through society structure, by identifying individuals to participate on the society.
- Alignment and support for the program, by gathering input and comments for consideration.

MD of Greenview Involvement: (Lesley Vandemark – Councilor)

The MD had requested that the Wapiti Corridor Planning Group hold a meeting in Grovedale to determine if there was support for the project from the south side of the River. The meeting was held at the beginning of February, and there were approximately fifty people in attendance. While a few people were unsure about the intentions prior to the meeting, by the end there was nothing but support. As a result, the MD's Council determined that due to the support, what is good for Grovedale is good for the MD and opted to contribute \$25,000.00 to the Group. The Council also agrees that the tentative boundaries make sense for the time being and could be changed should the information gathered indicated otherwise.



County of Grande Prairie No. 1's Involvement: (Leanne Beaupre – Councilor)

The County had heard many concerns regarding the illegal activity, fires, dumping, etc. occurring in the Dunes area. The Dunes area became one of three areas of importance to the County, the other two being Saskatoon Mountain and Kleskun Hills. While the County initiated this process, the province recommended that it should be driven by stakeholders. Therefore, while it is encouraging user involvement, the County still wants to be involved and provide resources.

City of Grande Prairie Involvement: (Dan Wong – Alderman, Dwight Logan – Mayor, via letters)

The Wapiti Corridor is important to the City as many residents work and play in this region. It is important to find a balance between industry uses, environmental sustainability and recreation for all stakeholders involved. The City encourages all users of the area and stakeholder groups to get involved in this initiative. Mayor Dwight Logan indicated that the City supports this group and will continue to provide aldermanic representation as well as making available any city reports that may be of use.

Society Formation: (Jim Smith – Resident & Co-Chairman of the Wapiti Corridor Planning Group Steering Committee)

The application for society status has been submitted, it is suspected to take about ninety days to get approval. Society status will create an arm's length organization from the County, MD, and City and allow for applications for grants. As part of the society structure, volunteers will be needed to fill the executive and board of director's positions.

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

Discussion:

What affect does setting the boundary as top of bank have on subdivisions along this area?
The top of bank as a boundary is only preliminary. If developers or residents want their subdivisions incorporated into the boundary, they could be. As for public land along subdivisions, we are trying to determine what is the best use.

The plan is to be long-term, is there a vision for the area twenty or forty years from now?
There is no definitive plan yet. We want people that use the area to let us know where they think the best area for each use would be. Then we will sort through the many ideas and determine the best arrangements. The intent of this project is not to turn the entire river valley into a provincial park. There may however be a few provincial parks or provincial recreation areas within the boundary. We want to determine the best use for the land asset, allowing us enjoy this resource fifty years from now.

In comparison to size, is the area covered from Pipestone to the Smoky similar to the area covered by the Eagle Point-Blue Rapids Plan?

The areas are similar in size. The Eagle Point-Blue Rapids Plan is approximately 40km.

How will the plan accommodate for increased traffic flow on local roads?

If the final plan results in increased traffic flow, infrastructure funding would likely be considered.

Has Weyerhaeuser's Forest Management Unit (FMA) been addressed, and does it limit the development of recreational areas?

We will have to discuss this matter with SRD and Weyerhaeuser. Findings to be provided at a later date.

Could the society be used to lobby all user groups in their applications for funding?

For the time being, the society is being created to manage the development of the Wapiti Corridor Plan. Once this process has been completed, the role of the society may transform into a management role. The first step is to get the plan in place.

What can be done with the old gravel pits?

Once gravel pits have been depleted, they should undergo reclamation. The Dunes Golf Course used to be a sand pit. Other options for reclaimed pits could include campgrounds, trail networks, etc. It is important to not discourage the current industrial uses in the area, but once industry is finished with an area, it is time to determine the next best use.

Is there any plans to expand O'Brien Provincial Park?

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation will be holding five open houses at the end of March, beginning of April to gather information for a regional management plan. Dates and times can be found on the Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation webpage. These open houses are for existing parks within an hour from the City of Grande Prairie and not the Wapiti Corridor Plan.

Is there a formal ATV Club?

There was an ATV Club about 10 years ago, however it may have dissolved. In determining the groups that need to be involved, there may not always be a formal group but a bunch of individuals that participate in an activity. These individuals will have to be engaged in the process as well.

Attendees were given time to indicate areas on maps that they utilize for various purposes in the river valley.

Meetings:

To continue with the tentative public meeting schedule of quarterly meetings, the next meeting should be in June and then September. Meeting dates to be determined.

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:



Wapiti Corridor Planning Group
c/o County of Grande Prairie
10001—84th Avenue
Clairmont, AB T0H 0W0
Phone: 780-513-3950 Fax: 780-539-7686
E-mail: wapiticorridor@countygp.ab.ca