



Wapiti Corridor Planning Society

10001 84 Avenue Clairmont, AB T0H 0W0
Tel. 780-513-3950 email: wcps@wapiticorridor.ca
Web site: www.wapiticorridor.ca

Stakeholder Engagement Session Report

Non-Motorized Trail Users

Evergreen TEC Centre April 26, 2010

Introduction

The Wapiti River Valley corridor, which extends from Pipestone Creek to the Smoky River, is a beautiful natural area used for recreational, agricultural, industrial, educational and ecological purposes. With the growth in population, this area is seeing increasing activity; therefore it is important that the local community and resource users (stakeholders) take steps to ensure that the best decisions are made about how the area is used, now and in the future, to ensure the safety, security and benefit for everyone.

The Wapiti Corridor Planning Society (WCPS) is creating- through an open, transparent and inclusive process- a vision and multi-use land use plan for the Wapiti River Valley corridor that accommodates, protects, and balances the current and future needs of the area and its people. As such the WCPS is working with stakeholders to cooperatively develop a set of recommendations and implementation actions to guide the use and development of the Wapiti River Valley corridor. The ultimate goal is to develop a multi-use plan that meets the needs of all land users.

On April 26, 2010 the WCPS hosted a stakeholder engagement session with non-motorized trail users of the Wapiti River Valley. The Society invited representatives from organized walking, running, cycling, horseback riding groups and others to a session aimed at contributing to the development of the multi-use plan for the Wapiti River Valley corridor. During the session a map with current state of knowledge about Non-Motorized Trails was used to validate and document new information. The session focused on uses of the area; the concerns users have over how the area is used; and their vision for the future of the area.

The session started at 06:45 p.m. and ended at 09:50 p.m.

In Attendance:

Bob Scott	Camp Wapiti
Christine Schlieff	Board Trustee; Wapiti Peace School
Colin Hansen	Wapiti Nordic Ski
Dan Wong	Walkers and Runners Club; WCPS, City of Grand Prairie
David Pochailo	Public Lands Officer; SRD
Diana Krahn	Horseback Riders
Glenn Bielech	South Pine Valley Resident
Jeremy Landon	Director of Camp Wapiti
Jim Smith	President; WCPS
Ken Langstaff	Evergreen Park Board; WCPS
Lesley VanDemark	Councillor, MD Greenview; WCPS
Lauranie Howatt	Treasurer, WCPS; Wapiti Dunes Development Society (WDDS)
Nan Swanston	Wapiti Dunes Development Society (WDDS); Resident
Steve Magusin	GP Wheeler Cycling
Wade Bloomer	Wapiti Dunes Development Society (WDDS); WCPS
John Simpson	Planning Department, County of Grande Prairie #1
Barry Hunter	Planning Consultant to WCPS
Carlos Salinas	Planning Consultant to WCPS

1. Concerns and Challenges

- Trail system is being depleted by development taking place.
- Competing interests and compatibility of uses.
- Safety issues for all different users (tailing ponds, accidents among trail users, especially between non-motorized and motorized users).
- Damage of habitat and terrain by driving off the trails (forming 2-quad trails, 3-quad trails).
- Disposal of garbage on trails by other trail users (waste, littering).
- Fire hazards, uncontrolled fires.
- Enforcement related actions that should be happening more often in particular with trucks in the river or similar situations. There is legislation that covers that but there is no enforcement (lack or insufficient enforcement actions).
- Illegal discharge of firearms.
- General vandalism (breaking down of cabins, burning of stolen cars, etc).
- Destruction and widening of trails by ATV users.
- Difficulties to police the area and to monitor permits for trail users.
- There is a total lack of signage in the area, so people do not know what rules and regulations apply to the use of the trails and the area in general; this contributes to the public lack of awareness.

- Areas under reclamation are shortly after destroyed by invasion by ATVs, quads, monster trucks and other off road vehicles.
- There is a total lack of respect to some other people's stuff and property and public resources. Linked to this is no fear of damage to the environment or for safety matters because enforcement in the area is completely weak.
- Land use conflicts between non-motorized users.
 - Back country horse riding and motorized riders: incompatible
 - Cross country skiing and horse riding: compatible
 - Running and biking: compatible

2. Land Use Priorities and Strategies

- It was suggested to relocate the Gun Club away from residential or other user areas for safety reasons. The relocation would require negotiation between the GoA and club executive members (This issue may not materialize soon since the club premises are on Provincial Government lands which are leased on a long-term basis).
- Control/ police or limit the access of motorized off-road vehicles in certain areas (by issue of permits to ATVs to access certain areas), and setting speed limits for ATVs especially in residential areas.
- Lobby with the County and other government offices to raise the fines for certain issues, in particular to reduce accidents caused by improper riding, for causing wild fires, etc.
- A good portion of the present problems in the area has to be addressed through enforcement. For example, when vehicles were fined down by the river for not being registered, the area was quiet and free of vehicles in the following weeks.
- Rather than plan and manage for the entire "50 by 50 area," which is a huge task (50 year plan for a 50 mile corridor), a phase-in approach could be used and an initial focus of the plan could be in a core area of the river valley, i.e. between Resources Road and Highway 40. The other main area to focus on is from the CN Railway Bridge (CANFOR Bridge) to Nite Hawk Recreation Area on both sides of the river. This type of phased planning approach may make it easier for the plan to be approved by government.
- Make ATV retailers and manufacturers accountable for the machines they are selling that are destroying the land. It could be by contributing money to maintain the trails used by quad riders). The money generated from permits could be used for cleaning up the area or be put in a bank account to be used for activities agreed upon in the plan to maintain and manage the area.
- As part of the plan education strategy, include visits by school kids to the dune area to create awareness among the young about how fragile that environment is and how it can be damaged by various off-road users.

- Trails are there from the time of our forefathers; we just clean and maintain the trails.
- Labels/signage of trails which include information regarding right of passage (for example for mountain bike and horseback riders).
- Trails can be colour code labelled (with ribbons) according to users to create more order in the use of trails and reduce accidents among users.
- There should be designated user areas including location and time of use.
- The Wapiti River is a dangerous river for swimmers and tubers, but there is a huge amount of swimmers due to easy access to the river. There is also a conflict of use with motorized boats. So there should be designated areas for swimmers as well.

3. Management Areas

- Recreational Areas:
 - The Green belt is the strip of trees along the top of and down the river bank. Below it there are gravel pits that some would like to see as an organized combination of non-motorized recreation area (golf courses, little lakes, campgrounds,etc.) and some residential development. It was recommended that no industrial development takes place on the river bench below the green belt.
- Protected Areas:
 - The entire dune area may be closed during the fire season to prevent fires, until we devise a better strategy to reduce fires caused by users. In other words, when fire bans are active, there is to be no motorized use in the dunes. In order for this to work however, jurisdiction in that area must be clearly defined and enforcement carried out.
 - It is important to consider some areas for protection, not only for recreation purposes.

4. Organized Groups Missions and Codes of Conduct

- The County of GP has some bylaws and a number of peace officers who patrol the County. There are bylaws to restrict the use of ATVs in certain areas and for no-shooting zones.
- The non-motorized user organizations have mission statements and codes of conduct where consideration is given to the sharing of trails with other users. In addition, the trails are considered to be for public use.

5. Long Term Goals and Vision

- An area managed under agreements, addressing peoples' needs, getting the most of what people want, moving forward with a little less chaos.
- Maintaining the environment while giving access to all users- but in designated areas.
- Horseback trail system to be expanded.

- Areas preserved for hikers and horseback riders, and other areas designated for motorized users to prevent damage of habitat.
- The trails and area between Resources Road and Highway 40 to the river free from motorized use.
- Greater enforcement of existing rules and regulations.

6. Other Issues

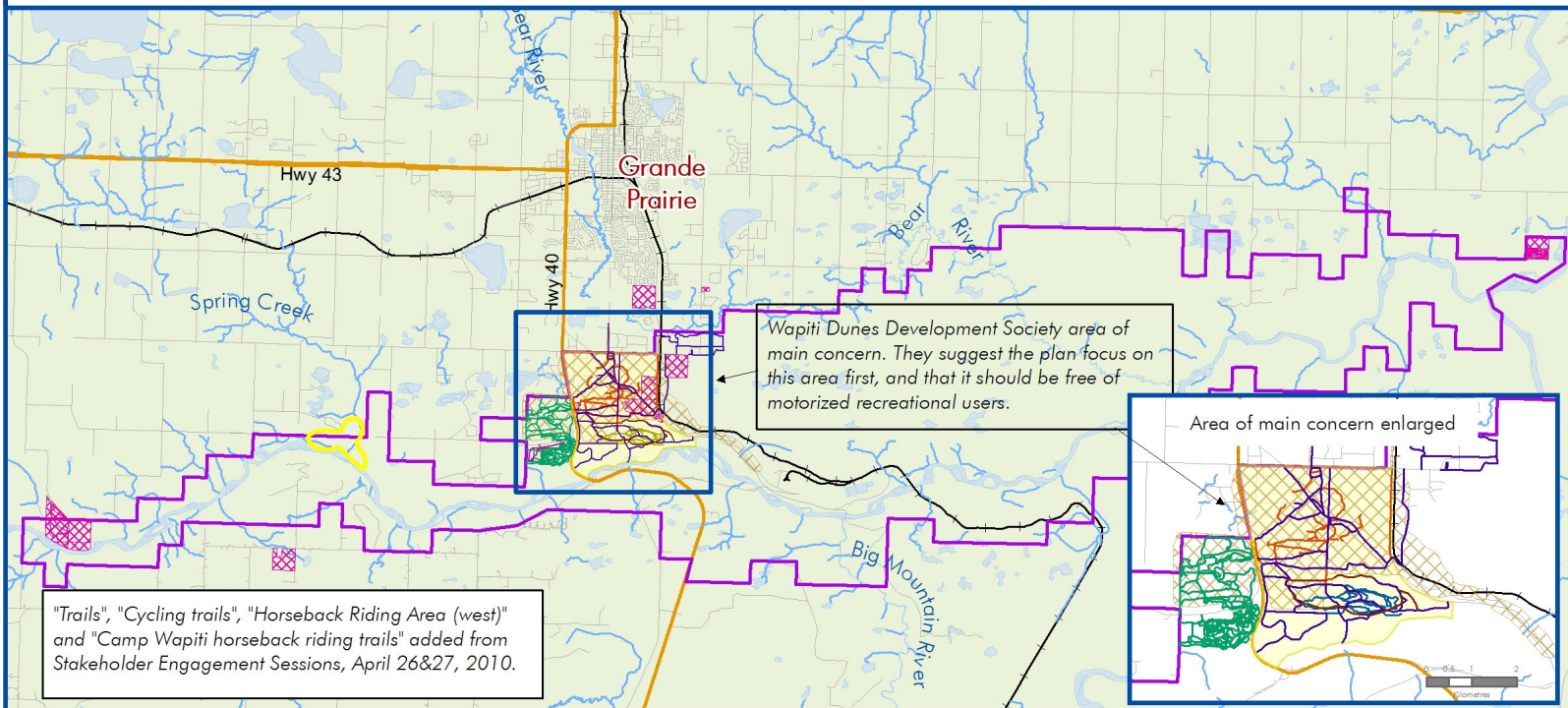
- As good as it could be, there is no guarantee that this plan will be adopted by the GoA. However, this plan will take it into account the land use framework principles and priorities to ensure this plan is compatible with the LUF, and ready for adoption.
- Gravel pits: These have to be depleted before they are required to be reclaimed, but companies keep filling them up again. When does the government address this?
- The swimmers group should be also consulted in an engagement session.
- Information about the Society is available on Facebook and on its website.
- Participants shared information for purposes of the planning (e.g. GPS data, sketches) that are shown on the attached maps.



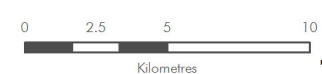


KNOWN INFORMATION FOR NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL USERS

Updated after Stakeholder Engagement Session April 26, 2010



- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Wapiti Corridor Planning Area | Snowshoe trails | Minor Highways |
| Trails | County of Grande Prairie Trails | Primary Highways |
| Cycling trails | Horseback Riding Area (west) | Railway |
| Camp Wapiti horseback riding trails | Land Zoned for Recreation | Rivers and Streams |
| Wapiti Nordic Ski trails | | Lakes and Major Rivers |



This map was created for the Wapiti Corridor Planning Society for use in creating a multi-use plan for the Wapiti Corridor Planning Area. It is for illustrative purposes only.

May 5, 2010