



# Wapiti Corridor Planning Group

## Public Meeting

November 25, 2008 at 7:00pm – The TEC Centre at Evergreen Park: Meeting Room 3

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Approximately eighty people, representing residents, lease holders, recreation & community groups, industry, and government, attended the meeting hosted by the Wapiti Corridor Planning Groups Steering Committee and led by one of its Co-Chairman, Jim Smith, on November 25, 2008.

### **Introduction:**

Jim Smith introduced the group, 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 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 November 25, 2008 was held as a way to inform the public of the initiative, 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.

**City of Grande Prairie Involvement:** (Dan Wong – Alderman)

The Wapiti Corridor is important to the residents of the City as it is one of the primary recreation areas in the region. Regional cooperation in the planning process is important; any plan for this area affects the City just as much as the County and the MD. A letter from the group should be sent to the City asking for aldermanic representation.

**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.

**Sustainable Resource Development:** (Dave Pochailo – Public Lands Officer)

A large portion of the land identified in this area is Crownland, and SRD is responsible for managing this land. There are a number of interests registered against the Crownland, but just because there are interests does not mean these lands cannot be included in this process; it means that the individuals with these interests need to be involved in the process.

**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”

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**Discussion:**

Does this tie in directly or indirectly to the “Land Use Framework”?

*The “Land Use Framework” is a long term program not due to be in place until 2012. Therefore, because it is in its infancy and a currently a set of broader guidelines for the management of land, air, water, and social economic issues, stakeholder recommendations can influence the details of the program.*

Can the “Special Places” program impede this process?

*The “Special Places” program was in place during the last study and has since been completed. Thirteen parks have been expanded under the program. The province is willing to look at other plans, and being stakeholder driven only strengthens the plans.*

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

*The areas are similar in size.*

Attendees were given time to express their thoughts by posting them on flip charts and filling out questionnaires. These are not meant to be complete representations of stakeholders, issues, and process, but are open to additions.

#### Flipchart 1 – Stakeholders

- Residents
- OHV Users
  - Snowmobilers
  - Quaders
  - Motocross
    - GP Motocross Association
- River Boaters
  - River Rats Club
- Children’s Camps
  - Camp Wapiti
  - Pine Ridge Camp
  - Scouts
- Cross Country Skiers
  - Wapiti Nodic Striders
- Runners & Hikers
- Lease Holders
  - Recreational
  - Grazing
  - Oil & Gas
- Oil Companies
- Aggregate Suppliers
- Forestry
  - Weyerhaeuser
  - Canfor
  - Ainsworth
- Those who access the roads
- Government
  - City of Grande Prairie
  - County of Grande Prairie
  - MD of Greenview
- First Nations
- Archery Clubs
- Bow Hunters
- Environmental Groups
  - Peace Parkland Naturalists
  - Wapiti Dunes Development Society
- Developers
- Skiers
- Horseback Riders
- PARDS
- Utility Companies
  - Aquatera
  - ATCO Electric
- Pipeline Companies
- Evergreen Park
- Railway
- Trappers
- Wapiti Gun Club

#### Flipchart 2 – Issues

- Need for cooperation between user groups
- Concern about recreational uses being cut off
- Need for trail systems for hikers, runners
- OHV destroying trails, sloughs & wet areas
- Fires

- Gravel pits converted to a useful state following their depletion
- Identify sensitive land
- Pine Beetle infestation / control work
- Wildlife concerns
- Garbage
- Abandoned & burned cars
- Vandalism
- Educate Youth (Nature Deficit)
- OHV industry is important to this area
- Strict OHV regulation will affect tourism
- Existing uses & infrastructure need to be protected

#### Flipchart 3 – Process

- Pick up where previous plans left off
- Designate specific trail systems for specific uses
- Tourism
- Look at other plans
- Hold regular meetings
- Apply for grants
- Defined boundaries for specific reasons
- Enforcement

#### **Meetings:**

It was suggested that meetings for affected stakeholders should be held quarterly, unless the timeline for completing the plan becomes shorter.

#### **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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