

Sturgeon River Plains Bison Management Plan Workshop
Tuesday, December 6, 2011
Big River Community Centre
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Present

Robin Fremont-Facilitator

Coordinating Committee

Seth Cherry – Prince Albert National Park

- Norm Stolle
- Jeff Weir
- Joanne Reimer

Rob Tether- Ministry of Environment

- Glenn Honig
- Al Hyrinkew

Gord Vaadeland – Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards

- Angela Vaadeland
- Kelly Paul

Advisory Committee

Dan Baber- Saskatchewan Crop Insurance

Allan Folden- RM Shellbrook

Darren Kennedy- RM Big River

Brad Dahl- Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation

Ivan Beaulac- RM Canwood

Cliff Buettner- Prince Albert Grand Council

Becky Gillespie- Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards

Volker Schmid- Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards

Guests

Ed Kowal- Ministry of Environment

Chuck Lees- Ministry of Environment

Mike Gollop- Ministry of Environment

Keith Aune- Wildlife Conservation Society

Greg Wilson- Canadian Wildlife Service

Kari Amick- University of Saskatchewan

Doug Clark- University of Saskatchewan

Meeting Started: 10:07am

1. Welcome, introductions, review agenda, communications guidelines, housekeeping.
(Robin Fremont- Facilitator)
2. Review and approve minutes from previous workshop- October 4, 2011
3. Presentations:

Current Compensation Programs offered be Saskatchewan Crop Insurance

(Dan Baber, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance)[PDF file of this presentation placed on the Bison Stewards website]

- Questions/Answers/Comments
 - So from August to September will SCIC be coming out every day to look at bison damage? *Response:* What we do is come out when the producer first calls and reports the damage, we figure out what crop is there at that time, then come back at the end of the season the bison are on private land and do another calculation.
 - Are there any future considerations of compensating grain bags damaged from wildlife and birds? *Response:* It has been brought up but grain bags are thought of as an infrastructure. Once grain has been harvested it is the producer's responsibility to protect it.
 - Do you get a lot of complaints of fence damage caused by bison? *Response:* We have had some complaints, but because we don't cover damaged fences we don't get a whole lot.
 - If a vet is called to look at an animal for a suspected predator attack does SCIC still have to come and asses if it was a predator attack? *Response:* If the vet says it was a predator kill or attack and the vet has to put the animal down we will take the vet's word for it but we still need something in writing and still have to come out to do the claim.
 - Does SCIC meet annually to discuss new requests? *Response:* Yes, every year the programs are reviewed by federal and provincial representatives. And anything we hear in field we pass onto them and they review it. Infrastructure comes up very often, we even put a written proposal in for infrastructure but it was sent back because they didn't want to get into infrastructure.
 - Our group will be coming up with ideas and options for compensation pertaining to some bison issues, what format would be the best to follow for the process? *Response:* Submit a letter to SCIC itself with suggestions and proposals and we will submit it farther up the line.
 - If sending a letter and conveying concerns focusing on bison, there is more fence damage than crop damage. Should that be the angle to take or should we focus on different listings bison have or could have from say SARA, COSEWIC, etc? *Response:* The more you put in the letter the better it might have more leverage that way. Give us all the information you have.

- Do we need to make sure SCIC has the right information on bison? I'm asking because we submitted a proposal to the Ministry and they responded saying it was not their issue but a federal one. *Response:* No they know what is happening and some of the past history. You should not have to worry.
- Were bison covered by this program in 2006? *Response:* Yes, since 2006. The bison were treated like a commercial bison herd at first but after looking at what this herd is they fell into the wildlife category.
- Can you talk more about fencing, like what is covered for fencing? *Response:* For stacked forage, market gardens, sod farms, etc, the program provides compensation for fence material but there has to have been a considerable amount of damage first. Also, costumers have to show that they tried other deterrents and if they did not work we will compensate fence materials up to\$ 4000-\$5000 for a forage fence.
- Bison are crossing at certain fords on the Sturgeon River, which is well documented. Near those fords are agriculture lands that experience a lot of bison damage which adds up to significant costs to the program. If we explain the logic maybe we could get some funds? *Response:* It is possible we could sure try.
- What is your opinion on the thoughts higher up about some issues we are talking about here? *Response:* My superiors said they would pay loss of production but they said they cannot go that far for infrastructure.
- Are there any examples of species covered by endangered species act? I guess bison are the one with the most potential, do you have sense on how corporation would look at that? *Response:* I'm not sure how they would look at that.
- The Gopher program comes after June 20 until harvest and producers have a choice to be compensated for damage or take those acres out of production for the season and be paid for it but they must be a paying customer for this.

Programs and Services available from Ministry of Environment

(Mike Gallop, Ministry of Environment)[PDF file of this presentation placed on the Bison Stewards website]

- Questions/Answers/Comments
- No questions

Landowner Survey Data 2005-2010 (Gord Vaadeland, SRPBS) &

Farm Stewardship Program (Angela Vaadeland) [PDF file of this presentation placed on the Bison Stewards website]

- Questions/Answers/Comments
- I look from a central European prospective on this and I think the bison are a privilege and if the right tools are used you can set some principals and let people see how unique it is here.

- How does a farmer access the Farm Stewardship Program? *Response:* Contact me (Angela Vaadeland) and I will go to the farmer's house, fill out the paper work, and send it away for them. I'm hired to make it easier for producers to get this funding.
- Does this only pertain to the bison? *Response:* No it is for any type of production, cattle, sheep, bison, hogs, etc. You just have to phone Angela and she will set it up for you.
- So that is a proactive program for the bison problem to improve or build a fence. One of the things brought up at last meeting was the reactive requirements, for example bison come, wreck fences, cows get out, and the farmer has to stop working at getting his crop off, go and put the cows in, and fix the fence. Are there any other programs to help this? *Response:* In 2009, the last year the stewards hazed the bison, the wranglers would go out every day, look for bison, if some were sighted they would encourage them not to be there by moving them back to the park. If the wranglers ran bison through a fence they would fix it for the farmer. Also, included in their job description was if they came across a broke fence they could fix the fence for the farmer whether the farmer was there or not. Unfortunately we had to move away from this program not because it did not work, in fact it did work well, but we had to move away because of liability issues and funding issues. Even though it is an extremely effective project it is very hard to fundraise for. We did have a near miss; no one was too badly hurt but the Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards board members felt that they could not let the program go on because if something should happen the volunteer board members could be held liable.

Lunch Break

4. Group discussion on managing bison/human interactions and developing tools for reducing conflict between landowners, agriculture, and bison.
 - Collectively the group worked on identifying issues needed to be addressed, and then worked on possible solutions through a matrix system.

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>OPTIONS</u>	<u>CONSIDERATIONS/</u> <u>Limitations</u>	<u>Action Required</u>
Bison move onto private land	<p>A)First Nations Hunting,</p> <p>B)Fence on Private Land,</p> <p>C)Fence Park,</p> <p>D)Gently Move Bison back to park,</p> <p>E)Get rid of bison,</p> <p>F)Feed bison in Park and/or out of park,</p> <p>G)Create more habitat in park and/or out of park,</p> <p>H)Land acquisition,</p> <p>I)Introduce Management Licence,</p>	<p>A)Potential of over hunting and outfitting,</p> <p>Requires landowner permission and specifications</p> <p>B)Cost involved,</p> <p>Fencing a quarter vs. border,</p> <p>Fencing based on individual landowners tolerance, Access to the river,</p> <p>Who pays,</p> <p>Limiting other big game from coming across,</p> <p>Who builds and maintains the fence</p> <p>C) Boundary vs. Diversionary fences, Diddo to above,</p> <p>See vision statement of the group</p> <p>D)Cost and liability</p> <p>F)Creating a bait station outside and inside park</p> <p>G)Late summer burns to increase fall residency in the park and provincial forest,</p> <p>Purchase second cut hay crops,</p> <p>Conservation easements</p> <p>I)applies only if population is high enough</p>	<p>A)Sustenance hunting only,</p> <p>Limited to local First Nations,</p> <p>Better education for better hunting decisions,</p> <p>Needs to respect conservation threshold,</p> <p>Landowners being aware of who is hunting how many bison taken,</p> <p>Effective communication between landowners</p> <p>B)Education with regards to available funding programs,</p> <p>Proposals for available funding, Farmers contributing based on industry norms, Lobby for programs,</p> <p>Facilitating strong communication between landowners, Educate farmers about watering options from Farm Stewardship Programs,</p> <p>Wildlife friendly fences, C) Diddo to above</p> <p>D)Explore ideas with other agencies to address issues</p>
Bison damage fences when on private land	<p>A)Fencing crew</p> <p>B)Lobby/receive compensation (both material, labour, and/or provide labour)</p> <p>C)New Fence Technology</p> <p>-stronger fencing</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lay down fencing -electric fencing -virtual fencing D)Easement to divert/corridor -need to assess or map the provincial land to strategize 		
Bison impact potential harvest of second cut hay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A)Purchase second cut hay/long term plan vs. annual B)Options to change crop rotation C)Fair compensation 		
Bison grazing on pasture land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A)Grazing rotation options B)Fair compensation for the grazing benefit/overall operational needs 		
Trampling of hay reducing opportunity for cattle to fall graze.			
Large herd of bison moving onto private land			
Public Safety with free ranging bison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A)Special Permits issued by MOE B)Education 		
Interest in bison ecotourism on private land		A)Public safety, liability	
Bison population drops below minimum acceptable threshold and still wander onto ag land			
Disease transmission between bison and cattle			
Additional work and cost load associated with bison			

Genetic Transfer of Domestic Bison and Cattle			
Civil Conflict Between Landowners Due to Bison			

5. Update on management plan writing (Coordinating Committee Rob Tether and Seth Cherry)

- Get feedback from Advisory Committee on habitat section
 - Advisory Committee will take the draft section back to their organizations to review and we will discuss any changes at next meeting. Advisory Committee members can also send any suggested changes to Angela via email.

6. Plan for next workshop

- Topic:
 - Continue on this topic
 - Coordinating committee will put together some more options for issues in the matrix not discussed today to save time at next meeting
 - Coordinating committee will also organize suggestions from today's meeting
- Date: Friday, January 27, 2012
- Time: 10:00 AM

7. Closing Comments

- Doug Clark- I completed a very similar project in the Yukon which I do have a report on. I think it could be very beneficial to your group so if you ever have any questions for me please don't hesitate to ask.
- Keith Aune- I came today simply to observe. You know there is no easy way to do something like this. I am very impressed how this group works and how far you have come. I suggest when you are near the end you should have a community meeting. Don't hesitate to contact WCS for any questions.
- Greg Wilson- I also came today to observe and I will say good job with your group! I am impressed.

Meeting ended- 4:03PM