

**Sturgeon River Plains Bison Management Plan Workshop**  
**Thursday January 27, 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

Gord Vaadeland – Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards

- Angela Vaadeland
- Kelly Paul

**Advisory Committee**

Dan Baber- Saskatchewan Crop Insurance

Brad Dahl- Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation

Ivan Beaulac- RM Canwood

Becky Gillespie- Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards

Larry Gabruch- NCC

**Meeting Started: 10:09am**

1. Welcome, introductions, review agenda, communications guidelines, housekeeping.  
(Robin Fremont- Facilitator)
2. Review and approve minutes from previous meeting

### 3. Update on management plan writing

- Reviewed Habitat Section

### 4. Landowner Matrix

#### Comments:

- I would like to see more explanation on the points from the matrix when they are added into the plan. (Norm Stolle)  
*Response:* This matrix is a tool to gather all of the ideas and opinions from the advisory committee, once filled out and accepted we will incorporate it into the plan with more explanation. (Rob Tether)

### Lunch Break

### 5. Presentations:

#### **Research on Wildlife and Tourism (Tim Oulette, Tourism Saskatchewan)**

- *This was a verbal presentation with no formal report; therefore, important points of this presentation are listed below with the referenced reports cited.*

A third of Canadians participated in wildlife viewing over a 2 year time period, and it is the second most popular outdoor activity for people that travel somewhere for pleasure. (Lang Research Inc. 2007) Viewing wildlife is something people want to do!

Breaking wildlife viewing activities down, 22.8% visited a nature park (which includes national and provincial parks), 10.4% were looking for a land-based viewing experience. (Lang Research Inc. 2007)

"Nature Lovers are defined as overnight pleasure travelers who take trips outside their own province or state in order to engage in at least two of the following activities:

- Kayaking/canoeing in fresh water
- Land-based animal viewing
- Bird watching
- Wildflowers/flora viewing
- Lake/riverside resort
- Remote/wilderness lodge/outpost
- Cycling
- Photography

- Viewing northern lights
  - Horseback riding"
- (Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. 2009)

Nature Lovers represent 6% of the total tourist market, but that translates to about 618,000 potential tourists. This number is expected to grow by 9% by 2025. Wildlife viewers are more likely to be from Western Canada. (Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. 2009)

### **Challenges**

Saskatchewan is the least desirable place destination for Nature Lovers looking for horseback riding, fresh water paddling and photography opportunities, while viewing wildlife accounts for 25% of Nature Lovers coming to Saskatchewan. (Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. 2009)

4 in 10 Canadians have regular access to a cottage and are less likely to seek outdoor activities outside of their immediate region. Conversely, 1 in 5 Canadian Nature Lovers own some sort of RV, so as long as a site is accessible for vehicles and camping, 20% of the nature loving population is a target. (Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. 2009)

### **References**

Lang Research Inc. 2007. Canadian Travel Market. Wildlife Viewing While on Trips of One or More Nights - A Profile Report.

Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. 2009. Nature Lovers An Outdoor Activity Market Option for Saskatchewan.

- Questions/Answers/Comments

### **Living & Working with Bison**

**(Tim O'Donoghue, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce)** [PDF file of this presentation placed on the Bison Stewards website]

- Questions/Answers/Comments
  - You mentioned the bison there were interbred with plains bison, were they not plains bison to start with? *Response:* There is some confusion there, some called them woods bison but other historians in the area said they were mountain bison. I suspect they were the same thing but I'm not sure. Sorry I am not much help with that question, I can ask for clarification and get the answer to Gord or Angela for you.
  - What keeps the population in check in terms of exploding? *Response:* There are two different answers, here in Jackson Hole the herd has been growing and in the elk refuge there is a hunt to bring the herd numbers down. But that is a big question on management in the elk refuge. In the back of the refuge there is less grazing so they are the first to get pellets, in the main area there is more grazing so there are no major issues yet.

There are competing interests on where the herd should be in terms of numbers; of course hunters have different ideas than say the biologists. Biologists would like to see the feeding go away, but the tourist would like to see more bison. So there are challenges for that issue.

- 97% of the area there is federal land, so how much interaction is there with bison and private land owners? *Response:* Very minimal because there is a lot of federal land and the bison tend to stay on it. We have fencing around the town and to the highway which prevents interaction with private land owners there, but there are conflicts with ranchers and the Yellow Stone herd. The approach there is to corral the bison that left the park, test the bison for TB, slaughter the positive ones, then ship the negative bison to a reservation north of Montana where they want to have bison for cultural purposes.
- What about crown lands and grazing leases? They would be heavily grazed in the summer by the bison, are cattle allowed to range on those lands? Is there a lot of bison cattle interaction in Jackson Hole? *Response:* There are not many ranchers in the area, there is only 3 left now because we have shifted to tourism. There is one family that does have a permit to graze cattle northeast of Grand Teton which is the only place there might be interaction. But here bison take precedence over cattle. And I know the rancher has decreased their cattle herd for economic reasons and this is something the family has to deal with because it is inside the national park.
- Tim asked what types of issues we are experiencing here with the bison and cattle ranchers. Angela explained our situation.
- Tim asked if there have been issues here with Brucellosis. Seth answered
- Tim asked are there any plans about vaccinating the bison? Seth answered
- I can give you contact information to a key person who you could speak to and who is involved with day to day bison stuff. They could answer more of your questions better than I. But I am also willing to be a resource to you for any questions you may have as well.

## 6. Plan for next workshop

- Topic:
  - Last section - Social Economic and Cultural Importance, leaning toward focusing on more cultural importance
  - This meeting will be the last information workshop, then we will reconvene once we have the plan written
  - We need to focus more on the short term plan to make sure we have a sustainable herd. If we don't have a herd in the next two

years we don't have to worry about the economical and cultural importance stuff. (Brad Dahl)

- We do need to have a grasp on how to have the people's buy in on why it is important to conserve the bison. This is why we do need to talk about economics and tourism. But yes we do need to bring the focus back to in term plans as well. (Norm Stolle)
- Gord proposed to have the morning of next meeting for the cultural importance because we do need that aspect for the governments to buy into the plan. Then the afternoon can be focused on short term plans to ensure the sustainability of the herd. Everyone accepted Gord's proposal for next meeting.

- Date : Tuesday, March 13, 2012
- Time: 10:00am
- Location: Big River Community Hall

Meeting Ended - 3:22pm