

Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards Annual General Meeting

Thursday, May 9, 2013

Ladder Valley Hall

Present: Errol Vaadeland, Angela Vaadeland, Becky Gillespie, Ellie Paul, Kelly Paul, Tina Schaaf, Harold Amundson, Rob Tether, Doug Panter, Isaac Hildebrand, Alfred Molzan, Lyle Molzan, Murray Peterson, Dan Frandsen, Al Hrynkiw, Jerod Merkle, Bethann Merkle, Darryl Amundson, Anna Amundson, Sarah Welter, Joanne Reimer, Lloyd O'Brodovich, Irvin Amundson, Tim Turple, Delores ??

1. **Welcome, Introductions & Agenda:** 7:45 pm by Kelly P.
2. **Minutes from May 10, 2012 AGM:** Read by Angela V. Harold A. moves to accept the minutes as read. 2nd by Lyle M. Carried.
3. **Financial report:** Presented by Gord V. **Attached.** The complete financial report was not available at the time of the AGM, however they will be posted on the SRPBS website. Gord V. moves financial report as presented. Murray 2nd. Carried. Errol moves to opt for a review of the financial statements by Susanne Miller, Lloyd 2nd. Carried.
Funding Report – Presented by Gord V. New lenticular art in works. Received verbal confirmation of approval for \$78,000 in HSP funding for 2013-2014. WWF would like to pilot a collar project that will text bison locations and potentially deploy a fencing “SWAT” team to repair damaged fences. Sasktel may be a partner and funder.
4. **SRPBS Field Technician Report:** Presented by Becky G. Attached. Camera monitoring period was August 28 – November 19, 2012. Images at night were of bison entering private land, while daytime images were of them leaving. GPS'd trails and found 12.546km of trails but more were out there. The longest trail is 1.5km long. 6.8km or 55% of trails are on ag land and over 5km occurred on 2 quarter sections. Landowner survey results – total of 14 landowners were interviewed and summarized. More concern over damaged fences than damaged crops. 3 landowners gave permission for harvesting, but there was concern over trespassing, safety and missing property. Additional concern that written permission was given for someone else's land. Question asked of how this survey compared with previous surveys. Answer – had not compared results as there were several different and additional questions that would make it difficult to compare results. For 2013 field season, going to look at when farmers start haying and monitor when bison start coming out onto private land.
5. **University of Laval Report:** Presented by Jerod M. Will be here all summer looking at range expansion and continuing camera work to estimate population size. Updates on other researchers: Leah Harvey has completed her research. Carolyn Nersessian is working on the results. Marie Siguard will return in the fall.
6. **University of Applied Forest Sciences, Rottenburg:** Presented by Volker Schmid. Has returned to write his undergrad thesis on “Population Ecological Survey of Bison in Saskatchewan, Canada”. Will be in the area until August or September. Chose to write his thesis for an organization that will care about the outcome.
7. **SRPBS Management Plan Coordinator Report:** Presented by Angela V. Management plan is complete and signed by PANP and MoE. Coordinating Committee met to determine the actions that will be addressed in 2013-2014. Prescribed burning, fencing and research will continue during the year. Work to improve compensation programs for farmers will also happen. Question – landowner wants to build a fence to keep bison out of yard, is there some help for that? Answer – yes, can work with the farmer and landowner to ensure a wildlife friendly fence is constructed that will limit bison activity in a yard or land. May be assistance from other programs to help cover more of the fence costs. Gord V. mentioned that a First Nations Elder and youth exchange with Muskeg Lake, Big River and Ahtahkakoop First Nations, as well as Beardy's Okemasis (comment by Sara W.) centred around environmental awareness will occur. It will be a school program and the SRPBS and others have been

invited to speak once a week during the school year. A First Nations/landowner caucus (working with Ryan Brook from University of Saskatchewan) is also in the works. Will bring landowners and hunters together twice a year to open up dialogue.

8. **Ministry of Environment Report:** Given by Al H. And Rob T. James Fraser is Al's new partner. There is reduced whitetail and maybe moose populations due to harsh winter. Big game draw opens May 13 and closes June 12. Must gain access through the MoE's website (www.environment.sk.ca). Will need a HAL ID# to purchase hunting and angling licenses and all must be purchased online. For Zone 53, quotas for moose remain the same. The late regular elk season has been eliminated.
9. **Coffee**
10. **Parks Canada Prescribed Burning Update:** Presented by Glenn R. Good regeneration in the April 2012 burn. Burned lots of young aspens. In September 2012, 27 ha were burned on the north half of Long Meadow. It was a higher risk burn and not as much consumption, so the burn was patchy. But still satisfied with the results even though it was late in the season. The results of the April 2012 burn were that there was an increase in time spent in the burn in May and June, still some effect in July, but not carried through into August – October. On May 9, 2013 burned Snare Lake (20-30ha) and Walrod Meadows (15-20ha). The meadow was still quite wet and not as much wind as needed. It was safe to implement and little holdover. Question – Is Indian Meadow on the radar? Answer – it is in the plan, but delayed because Canada Thistle control is going on. There was a 3rd burn in Sugar Creek in 2012. Control lines on Wastrum Flats and trying to kill the forest with hotter fires. In the Southend Burn Plan, Mallard to Fox Creek to Elk Trail will follow the fescue grasslands plan but only burn twice. Approximately 2700ha. Question – will randomness be built into the 40-yr cycle? Answer – try to mimic wildfires as close as possible, but prescribed burns are not as effective so they will burn the small meadows a few times then move to a random in 40-yr cycle. Comment – discuss value of nutritive value of thistle. Bison graze thistle and with the long tap roots, this helps draw up minerals from the soil that bison need. Question – has climate change been considered when developing the fire plans?
11. **SRPBS Executive Director Report:** Funding update given during financial report.
12. Lloyd O. moves that Article 3, Subsection 4 be changed to read not less than 3 and not more than 9. Minimum of 6 directors residing in the R.M.s of Canwood, Big River and Shellbrook. Doug 2nd. Discussion. 4 in favour, 3 opposed. Carried. Vote recalled because not all eligible members voted. 6 in favour, 4 opposed, 1 abstain. Carried. Errol V. moves to amend the changed bylaw to read a majority of directors must reside in R.M.s of Canwood, Big River and Shellbrook. Alfred M. 2nd. Carried.
13. **Election of Board Positions:**
Lloyd O. nominates Kelly P. Accepted.
Harold A. nominates Alfred M. Accepted.
Kelly P. nominates Lyle M. Accepted.
Errol V. nominates Murray P. Accepted.
Lloyd O. nominates Dan F. Accepted.
Harold A. calls for motion to cease nominations. 2nd Doug P. Carried.
Comments – need for better management of directors that are absent more than present at meetings.
14. **Question Period.** Errol V. asks Seth C. Some locals are curious why there is still concern about in-breeding when the Sturgeon River herd came from 6-8 animals. Seth C. Answers that if there is a bottleneck over a long period of time, 200-500 years, then in-breeding will cause genetic problems in the herd. Dan F. researched the early herd and estimated that it is more likely that the Sturgeon River herd came from 10-15 animals. Based on documented sightings in the early days, it is not possible for a group of 6-8 animals to cover the area that sightings would suggest. More likely 2 small groups totaling 10-15 were in the area. Seth C. Genetic results indicate the initial herd were very diverse. Some research in in-breeding indicates that some species are somewhat resistant to the effects of in-breeding. Volker S. asks where the genetic variability work is at. Seth C. answers that the preliminary results show that the genetic variability is similar to Elk Island National Park and Pink Mountain herds, though a little lower. The numbers are still ok though. This suggests that the original herd was not a family herd.
Kelly P. Welcome to the returning and new board members. Thank you to Lloyd O. for his service as a director.
15. **Meeting adjourned at 10:38 pm**