

# LOWER PEACE REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Town of High Level Office  
High Level, AB

Monday, January 30, 2017 at 4:00pm

## AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Adoption of the Minutes Page 3
4. Committee Name Change Discussion
5. Terms of Reference Discussion Page 7
6. Information Sharing Updates and Discussion
7. Moving Forward – Direction/Actions Discussion
8. ASB 2017 Emergent Resolution Page 13
9. Next Meeting Date
10. Adjournment



# LOWER PEACE REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Town of High Level Office  
High Level, AB

Tuesday, December 20, 2016 at 4:00pm

**PRESENT:** Lisa Wardley Chair, Deputy Reeve, Mackenzie County  
Crystal McAteer Vice Chair, Mayor, Town of High Level  
Jacquie Bateman Councillor, Mackenzie County  
Linda Halibisky Councillor, County of Northern Lights  
Eric Jorgensen Councillor, Mackenzie County  
Mike Morgan Councillor, Town of High Level  
Terry Ungarian Councillor, County of Northern Lights

**REGRETS:** Wally Olorenshaw Mayor, Town of Rainbow Lake  
Leigh Bateman Councillor, Town of Rainbow Lake  
Chris Mitchell Councillor, Town of Rainbow Lake

**ADMINISTRATION:** Adam Clarkson CAO, Town of High Level  
Ashley Bulmer Director of Development and IT Services,  
Town of High Level  
Dan Fletcher CAO, Town of Rainbow Lake  
Hayley Gavin Planner, Mackenzie County  
Byron Peters Director of Planning and Development,  
Mackenzie County

**ALSO PRESENT:** MP Arnold Viersen  
Jason

## MOTION

### **1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:16p.m.

### **2. Adoption of Agenda**

**16-12-001**

**MOVED** by Mike Morgan

That the agenda be adopted with the addition of the following items:

4. a) Species at Risk Advisory Committee discussion.

**CARRIED**

### **3. Adoption of Minutes**

16-12-002

**MOVED** by Terry Ungarian

That the minutes of the November 30, 2016 Tri-Council SARA Meeting be adopted as presented.

**CARRIED**

### **4. Delegation: MP Arnold Viersen**

16-12-003

**MOVED** by Eric Jorgenson

- a) Provided information on working relationship with MP Bob Sopuck of Northern Manitoba.
- b) Received our asks/statements:
  - i) Socio-economic impact assessment is to be completed before range plans are implemented.
  - ii) We have plenty of protected lands/parks - What can we do to improve our current protected lands?
  - iii) Extend our timeline at least regarding emergency protection orders; we need more time to get this right.
- c) Suggests that we partner with Whitecourt's group (Ray Hilts).
- d) Suggests that we pursue the COSEWIC angle.

**CARRIED**

### **5. Other Discussions**

16-12-004

**MOVED** by the Vice Chair

- a) Terms of Reference:
  - i) Revise the Terms of reference as discussed and re-circulate prior to the next meeting.
  - ii) Each Municipality shall take the revised Terms of Reference to their Councils prior to the next meeting.
- b) Committee Name:
  - i) Discuss a possible name change for the committee at the next meeting.

**6. Next Meeting Date**

**16-12-005**

**MOVED** by the Chair

❖ January 30, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. in High Level

**CARRIED**

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

**16-12-006**

**MOVED**.by Mike Morgan

That the Lower Peace Regional Committee Meeting  
be adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

**CARRIED**

These minutes were adopted this 30<sup>th</sup> day of January,  
2017.

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Lisa Wardley, Chair



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### LOWER PEACE REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

#### **Background:**

The Lower Peace Region of Alberta encompasses high economic development value in a variety of natural resource sectors. Notwithstanding this, the region is requested to carry the highest burden of environmental protection of any other region within Alberta.

Current and proposed Provincial policy and strategies requires the Lower Peace Region to subsidize economic activity in other regions; to allow, both, the Federal and Provincial governments to achieve conservation targets for the natural environment. Cumulatively, multiple conservation initiatives and species at risk recovery strategies have the ability to negatively impact the rural communities of the Lower Peace Region.

We, the local tenants of the Lower Peace Region have collaborated; in an attempt to secure smart economic growth, a sustained quality of life, and well-balanced environmental protection for our future generations. Through the use of optimal adaptive management, transparent stakeholder engagement, and effective environmental stewardship; we endeavour to achieve this purpose.

#### **Purpose:**

To collectively provide and share information, ideas and resources; relating to the continued and future prosperity of the Lower Peace Region. Instill effective regional adaptive management and transparency which allows all stakeholders to play a vital role in shaping our collective future. Develop tangible solutions founded upon an evidence-based approach, to ensure a balance of smart economic growth, a sustained quality of life, and an enhanced natural environment; for all of our businesses, communities and wildlife.

#### **Responsibilities:**

To ensure that any impending species recovery or conservation initiative, that has the ability to implicate the smart growth of the Lower Peace Region; is prefaced with a thorough regional socio-economic impact analysis.

To proactively work with all other levels of Government including the First Nations; to create well-balanced working groups with key stakeholders, relevant to impending conservation areas and species recovery.

Emphasizing that, the Lower Peace Region currently encompasses a vast amount of protected lands. Impending species recovery and conservation initiatives should aim to enhance the value of these areas for species at risk recovery and biodiversity, rather than seeking to protect unjustifiable additional areas of land.

**Structure:**

Two councillors and an alternate appointed by each of the founding municipalities.

Alternates may attend all meetings.

Founding municipalities consist of:

- County of Northern Lights
- Mackenzie County
- Town of High Level
- Town of Rainbow Lake

Mackenzie County is the administrative lead for the committee, with administrative support from each of the founding municipalities.

The administrative lead will prepare and provide the agenda for all meetings.

Meetings are open to the public as per Section 197 and Section 198 of the Municipal Government Act.

Meetings may, in part, be closed to the public if matters to be addressed are recognized under; Section 197(2) of the Municipal Government Act, and/or Division 2 – Part 1 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The committee shall pursue grant opportunities to fund any larger projects, with Mackenzie County as the grant sponsor and/or lead.

**Quorum and Costs:**

Decisions shall be reached by consensus, consisting of two appointed members from each of the founding municipalities. Alternates shall not be considered for consensus unless standing in for an appointed member.

Meetings shall be hosted by the Town of High Level, at the Town of High Level Office, and meeting costs will be shared by the founding municipalities.

Each Municipality and other delegates are expected to cover the costs of their members. Additional costs, such as those derived from committee motions, will be subject to additional discussion and approval from each of the founding municipalities.

All decisions reached by consensus; which are within the scope of the Terms of Reference are binding upon all municipalities.

**Communication:**

An electronic data sharing forum will be created and maintained, with access for all of the committee members, and meetings will be scheduled quarterly, or as required by the Chair.



## CARIBOU RANGE PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEES

### First Nations Engagement

Committee Members: Crystal McAteer  
Eric Jorgensen  
Leigh Bateman

Purpose: To engage all local Indigenous communities in a manner that is clearly represented as transparent engagement, rather than consultation.

Key Considerations: To determine what each community would consider as acceptable land use management.

To learn how each community plans to sustain/become economically and socially viable over the longer-term.

To determine what role each community is willing to play in ensuring the long-term enhancement and existence of our boreal ecosystems.

### Federal and Provincial Government Engagement

Committee Members: Crystal McAteer      Eric Jorgensen  
Lisa Wardley                                  Chris Mitchell  
Terry Ungarian                                Mike Morgan

Purpose: To engage the Federal and Provincial governments on matters within their jurisdiction; including action under the Species at Risk Act, cumulative effects of multiple recovery strategies and environmental initiatives, and [their] implementation in response to legislation.

Key Considerations: Engage the Government of Alberta at the political level; to seek a written commitment to working with the key stakeholders of Northwestern Alberta in the development of all future land-use planning documents.

Engage the Government of Alberta at the bureaucratic level; with a view to ensure our collective voice is heard, and to ensure our participation in all future land-use planning processes.

Engage the Federal government to reiterate to the Government of Alberta that;

- There is flexibility in meeting their October 2017 timeline for Caribou Range Plans;
- To name all the municipalities of the Lower Peace Region as key stakeholders, which are required to be engaged;

- To mandatorily bring all key stakeholders together for the development of interjurisdictional Caribou Range Plans.

**Industry Engagement Oil & Gas and Forestry**

Committee Members: Lisa Wardley                      Eric Jorgensen  
                                  Leigh Bateman                      Terry Ungarian  
                                  Jacquie Bateman                      Crystal McAteer

Purpose:                      To engage all the oil, gas and forestry companies actively operating within the Lower Peace Region; to encourage transparent communication, with a view to informing [them] on the potential implications of Caribou Range Planning, and to gain a full understanding of their key concerns.

Key Considerations: To encourage all the companies to work collectively with all other stakeholders; communicating that effective collaboration is our only option in securing future investment, economic growth, and practical Caribou Range Plans.

Inform the companies on the factual processes and considerations of Caribou Range Planning, and to highlight all the crucial unknowns and/or uncertainties relating to potential implications.

To gain a complete understanding of the land and infrastructure required by the companies; to enable [their] sustained long-term smart economic growth, within and surrounding the Caribou ranges.

**Community, Agriculture, and Service Industry Engagement**

Committee Members: Eric Jorgensen                      Jacquie Bateman  
                                  Terry Ungarian                      Leigh Bateman  
                                     Crystal McAteer

Purpose:                      To ensure appropriate information is provided publicly to all members of our communities, and to work with our agriculture, hunting/trapping and small business sectors; to ensure their concerns are fully considered by the Committee, and any relevant willingness to contribute is thoroughly considered.

Key Considerations: To encourage all the sectors to work collectively with all other stakeholders; communicating that effective collaboration is our only option in securing future investment, economic growth, a sustained quality of life, and practical Caribou Range Plans.

Inform all sectors on the factual processes and considerations of Caribou Range Planning, and to highlight all the crucial unknowns and/or uncertainties relating to potential implications.

To ensure all relevant concerns are brought to the Committee's attention, if necessary, to reassure concerned sectors that future consideration will be given; in an attempt to mitigate the implications of these concerns in future Caribou Range Plans.

Any relevant willingness to contribute towards the Committee's fundamental purpose and responsibilities should be thoroughly considered.

## **SUB-COMMITTEE'S OVERALL DIRECTION**

### **Process:**

Every Sub-Committee, through their administrative support, will report back to the administrative lead with information acquired from all meetings, in a very timely manner. The administrative lead will be responsible for processing all information, and providing strategic recommendations to the Committee.

### **Responsibilities:**

Every Sub-Committee must ensure that administrative support is present for all meetings.

### **Strategic Direction:**

Every Sub-Committee should ensure that all meetings are guided by the applicable key considerations; this will allow for information and findings acquired at meetings to contribute towards the Committee's fundamental purpose and responsibilities. Thus allows for any commitment and/or willingness to contribute by stakeholders, including the Federal and Provincial governments; provides essential support to the Committee's outputs.



## **Eradication of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis prevalent in bison within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park**

**WHEREAS:** Nationally, wood bison are listed as *Threatened* under Schedule 1 of the Federal Species at Risk Act, and designated as of *Special Concern* by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). In Alberta, only free-roaming wood bison that occur within Alberta's Wood Bison Protection Area (West of Highway 35, North of the Chinchaga River and Keg River Metis Settlement) are considered endangered wildlife; and as such are recognized and protected under Alberta's Wildlife Act.

**WHEREAS:** The inability of Alberta to formally protect all other free-roaming wood bison (East of Highway 35, North, Northeast and Southeast of Fort Vermilion) under the Provincial Wildlife Act leaves; these animals vulnerable to year-round unregulated hunting, successful hunters at risk of harvesting wildlife with Zoonotic diseases, and other wildlife and livestock at risk of contracting the diseases.

**WHEREAS:** The recently released draft Federal Recovery Strategy for the Wood Bison (2016) states the greatest threat to wood bison recovery is the prevalence of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis.

**WHEREAS:** At the end of October 2016, at least thirty ranches in Southeastern Alberta were put under quarantine after the discovery of a single case of bovine tuberculosis. Thus leaving producers unable to sell their animals and fearful that their income for the year may evaporate.

**WHEREAS:** On January 5, 2017 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) released a statement confirming that 50 premises are currently under quarantine and movement controls, affecting approximately 26,000 cattle, with an additional 10,000 cattle set to be tested and destroyed at 18 of those properties.

**WHEREAS:** Mackenzie County is located within direct proximity of Wood Buffalo National Park; thus the risk of diseased free-roaming wood bison transmitting bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis to domestic livestock is of immediate concern to all local beef producers.

**WHEREAS:** The Government of Alberta (GOA) continues an annual regulated hunt of the disease-free Hay-Zama local population; designed to contain this disease-free herd to the Wood Bison Protection Area, with the goal of maintaining a population size of 400 – 600 animals.

**WHEREAS:** A population survey conducted in February 2016, found 625 wood bison belonging to the Hay-Zama herd; sufficient enough to continue the hunt and increase license numbers. As such, the GOA has issued 250 Aboriginal licenses and 125 non-Aboriginal licenses provincially for the 2016/17 Hay-Zama wood bison hunting season.

**WHEREAS:** Any wood bison sighted travelling West of Wood Buffalo National Park, towards the Wood Bison Protection Area; is presumed diseased and therefore destroyed as a precautionary measure, in order to maintain the disease-free status of Alberta's only verified disease-free local population

**WHEREAS:** The Alberta First Nations Food Security Strategy, released January 2015, found that efforts to increase northern Aboriginal food security; fundamentally include the restoration and increase of sovereignty over local food systems, improved access to local food, including hunting of culturally traditional wildlife such as buffalo.

**WHEREAS:** In 1990, a Federal Environment Assessment Panel recommended completely eradicating all bison from Wood Buffalo National Park, followed by restocking with disease-free animals.

**WHEREAS:** In 2016, Environment and Climate Change Canada acknowledge that, at present, the only effective tool to successfully eradicate the threat of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis from within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park is by depopulation.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** Alberta’s Agricultural Service Boards request that Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, and Parks Canada; to support the depopulation of diseased wood bison as the only effective tool to successfully eradicate the threat of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis from within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park.

**AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT** Alberta’s Agricultural Service Boards urge Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, and Parks Canada; to develop an effective measureable plan to successfully eradicate all diseased bison from within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park. In order to prevent further disease outbreaks Province-wide; that would inevitably have adverse effects for the National, Provincial and local domestic cattle and beef industries.

Sponsored by: **Mackenzie County Agricultural Service Board**

Moved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Seconded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Carried by: \_\_\_\_\_

Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: Federal and Provincial

## **BACKGROUND:**

In a pre-European West (pre-1700), plains bison dominated grassland habitat across the vast regions of North America. The bison were a fundamental species driving prairie and northern forest peripheral ecosystems. They were also a spiritual and cultural foundation for Indigenous peoples throughout central North America. However, in a frontier West (approximately 1750 – 1875), bison became regarded as a major obstacle to settlement; an untapped source of commercial opportunity, and a challenge to modern civilization.

By the turn of the new century in 1900, the great masses of plains bison had disappeared from the prairies of North America. In 1877, a law to protect the wood bison from hunting was implemented in: Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. However, in the early years of the 1900s a few small groups of bison existed on private land, including the last remaining wild herd of plains bison on protected lands in the Yellowstone area.

Established in 1906 as a wildlife reserve, Elk Island National Park Alberta became the refuge for a herd of plains bison sold to the Dominion of Canada from private hands in Montana. In 1909, once the newly established Buffalo National Park near Wainwright Alberta had been fenced; additional plains bison were once again transported to Canada from the United States.

During the early 1900s, Agriculture Canada, the Federal agency responsible for expanding national opportunities and commercial gains, viewed bison as a commodity; one of which could be enhanced and utilized to produce a larger, faster-growing meat animal for use on marginal pasture lands with other domestic livestock.

Thus, cross-breeding experiments commenced, and while these experiments failed largely due to in-fertile male offspring; they reflected a shady concept that wild bison were viewed as a template for commercial modification, to be profited from. Disease soon became a major problem. Bovine tuberculosis discovered in 1917 at Buffalo National Park; reached its most prevalent, peaking at approximately 75 per cent of animals by 1922-23.

Wood Buffalo National Park was established in 1922, to protect the last remaining pure wood bison, estimated to be around 500 individuals; by the late 1920s their numbers grew to around 1500. By 1925, the plains bison within Buffalo National Park had expanded beyond the park's carrying capacity and the decision was made to transfer 6,673 plains bison north into Wood Buffalo National Park.

Officials assumed that the vast distance between the pure wood bison of Wood Buffalo National Park and the newly introduced diseased plains bison from Buffalo National Park, would be sufficient enough to eliminate interbreeding. However, within a relatively few decades, there was clear evidence of both bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis, and interbreeding between the two species in Wood Buffalo National Park; producing yet another strain of hybridization.

Meanwhile 17,013 bison were destroyed in Buffalo National Park between 1926 and 1939; to reduce bison populations, limit the spread of disease and to allow overgrazed areas to regenerate. However, these management efforts were unsuccessful; and disease, combined with poor forage availability, a series of harsh winters, and continued growth of the herd, brought about the closure of the park in 1939.

At 44,807km<sup>2</sup>, Wood Buffalo National Park is Canada's, and one of the world's largest national parks; straggling Alberta's northern border with the Northwest Territories, encompassing the

world's largest free-roaming and self-regulated bison herd and the world's only natural nesting site of the whooping crane. Today, the park supports and protects many unique natural and cultural resources; from diverse boreal ecosystems and rare species, such as the whooping crane, to the traditional activities of Aboriginal peoples.

In 1983, Wood Buffalo National Park became the eighth site in Canada to be granted World Heritage status by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The park also has the longest standing tradition of Aboriginal subsistence use by the people who continue to live, hunt, trap and fish within the park's boundaries.

In 1985, Canada's national cattle population was declared free of bovine brucellosis, and bovine tuberculosis was expected to be eradicated nationally by 1989. However, this expectation did not materialize and today; bovine tuberculosis is a reportable disease under the Federal Health of Animals Act; which continues to threaten Canada's domestic livestock and beef industry.

A 1990 study examined complete or partial remains of 72 bison found dead in and around Wood Buffalo National Park. The results revealed the bison had a combined prevalence of 42 per cent of both bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis. These diseased bison had a broad geographical base; some were found outside the park on at least three natural corridors, connecting to surrounding livestock grazing lands.

These diseases have a deleterious effect on Wood Buffalo's local populations of bison, and pose a health risk to other disease-free bison herds, livestock, and Aboriginal hunters in the surrounding region. In 1990, a Federal Environment Assessment Panel recommended completely eradicating all bison from Wood Buffalo National Park, followed by restocking with disease-free animals.

In 2016, Environment and Climate Change Canada acknowledged that, at present, the only effective tool to successfully eradicate the threat of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis from within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park is by depopulation.

Today, only one small herd of pure disease-free wood bison exists in Elk Island National Park, where they were relocated to in 1965 from Buffalo National Park.

## REFERENCES:

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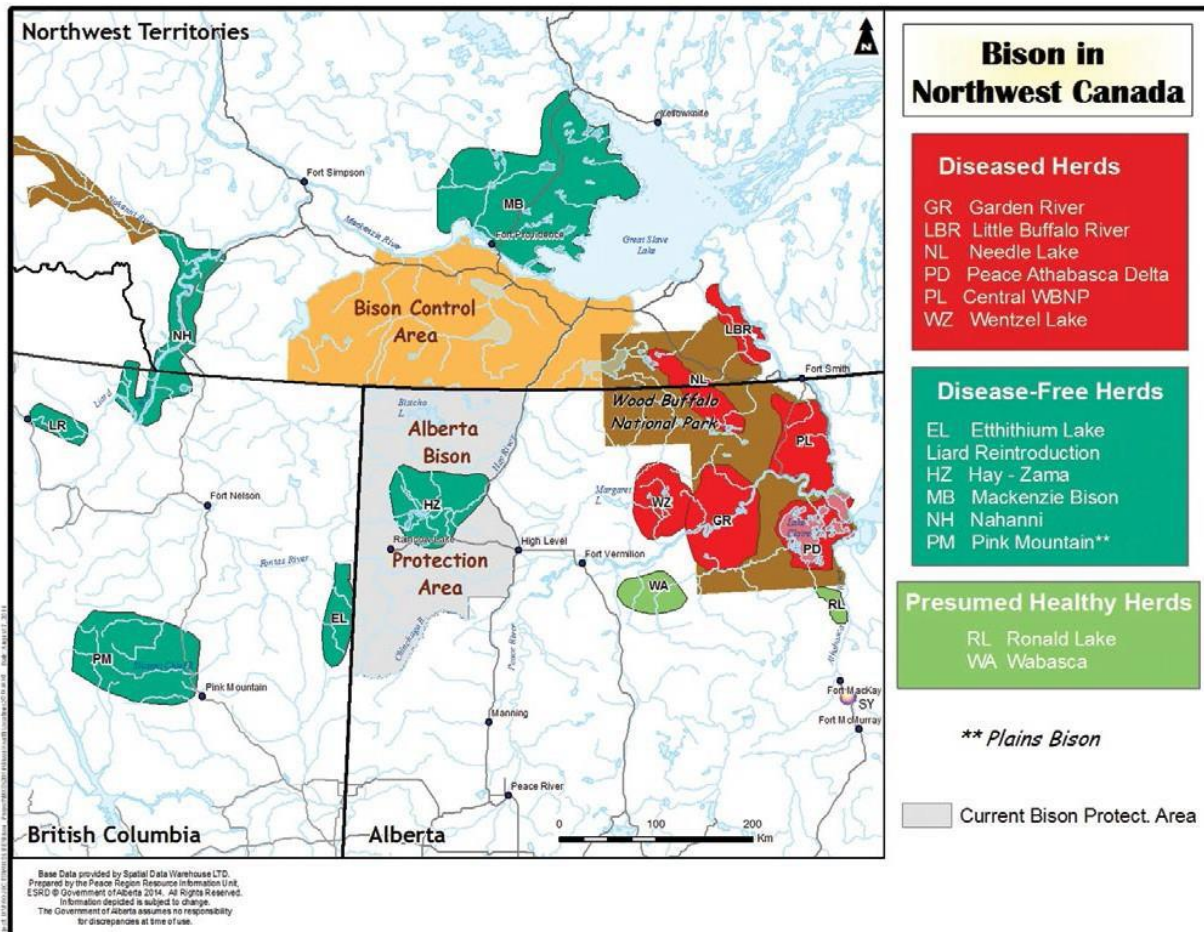


Figure 1: Bison in Northwest Canada - Government of Alberta (2013)