

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

No. 11 September 2004

WELCOME!

Welcome to the last SAPAA Newsletter of 2004! And we hope to see you all to our AGM on October 23rd which is being held nearer to Edmonton for a change. The Strathcona Wilderness Centre is an excellent locale, with a lake and many trails for exploration. So all you local Edmonton Stewards have no excuse for not participating - but that doesn't mean there are excuses for Red Deer and southern Stewards!

We will be having an excellent speaker, who will be able to give us much practical information on 'Enhancing your skills as a Steward' and this will be followed by a round table discussion where members can share experiences and information on their particular projects or problems.

We'd particularly like to welcome any new members who recently joined the Association since receiving the previous newsletter and questionnaire. And to others who may feel we keep bugging them, well, yes, we are bugging you! In its short existence, and as outlined in the following article entitled SAPAA Milestones, the Association has acted on your behalf to ensure that Natural and Protected Areas get the protection they deserve and that they are there for future generations, and that the Volunteer Stewards Program gives clear direction to Stewards to assist in achieving these goals. However, to continue this work we need the participation of all Stewards, both financially and working on board positions.

So, to the other Stewards, just a reminder that your 2004 membership fees are due at the end of October - don't delay! A form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

THE THORNY ISSUE OF INSURANCE

As SAPAA has an Associate Membership with the Federation of Alberta Naturalist, the Association is able to obtain third party liability insurance under the Federation's insurance plan. Until this year, the cost of this insurance was one hundred dollars or one dollar per member, whichever was greater. However, in 2004, the cost of this insurance plan increased to five dollars per member. In light of this dramatic increase, SAPAA board members consulted with Glen Semenchuk, Executive Director of FAN to discuss the reasons for the increase, and if the Association should carry third party liability insurance. His response was a resounding "yes". He explained that in today's climate of litigation, volunteer stewards who are acting as members of the Association are vulnerable, and hence, put themselves at risk of being sued. What third party liability insurance provides is in case of litigation, stewards would have their legal fees covered.

The government does provide individual stewards third party liability insurance under their Risk Management program but does not provide this type of coverage to groups.

FAN is meeting with Community Development, Risk Management and the private insurance industry to find a solution to this problem.

LET'S CELEBRATE ALBERTA'S CENTENNIAL!

What better way to celebrate Alberta's first hundred years than with something, which will still be celebrated in the next hundred years? In other words, let's put back something into conserving the environment that has given us so much richness in the past, not just the economic largesse of non-renewable resources, but the great wealth of geographic and ecological diversity that contributes so much to our physical and spiritual health.

Now is the time to come up with suggestions either for a specific Centennial project for your particular Protected Area, or more generally to request more funding and incentives for conserving and expanding our wild lands, parks and natural areas as a real legacy for the future. But more funding is also required for the necessary government infrastructure for effective management and enforcement, so that Alberta's natural resources are truly admired and enjoyed in the years to come.

In the up-coming provincial election, this is your chance to make sure your MLA hears your voice, and make sure your friends let their opinions be known too. And you can always write to the Finance Minister in response to the Premier's request for advice on use of the funds freed up from debt repayment. So how about it, Stewards? Let's make a difference!

SAPAA MILESTONES

- 1998** Stewards' Conference. Discussions of Government cut-backs and lack of assistance led to Steering Committee being formed.
- 1999** Jan. Letter sent to all Stewards to find interest in forming a Stewards Association (Response 80 / 270)
March Letter sent to all Stewards to write to Klein re: importance of retaining Natural Areas (NAs) under Bill 15, Natural Heritage Act (NHA). They were in danger of being reclassified or dropped.
May Pigeon Lake Stewards' Conference. **SAPAA Inaugural General Meeting.**
Nov. Red Deer. SAPAA General Meeting re formation of SAPAA.
Dec. Newsletter # 1: Suggestions for formulating a Management Plan for individuals' NAs, and networking with those who do have a Management Plan.
- 2000** Jan **Meeting of SAPAA executive with Minister of Environment, Gary Mar, re: Natural Heritage Act and importance of Natural Areas.**
Mar Newsletter # 2. re SAPAA AGM at Dinosaur Provincial Park; report on meeting with Gary Mar. Letters to be sent re NHA and Gary Mar's support v. Steve West who was promoting industrial activities in Parks and Protected Areas (P / PA).
Nov. AGM Red Deer. Bylaws confirmed.
Speakers: Lorna Allen, P/PA - 'How can we make the most of our NAs' ;
Sandra Myers, Stewards Coordinator P/PA - 'Who's who, and who is responsible for what?'
Summaries of talks in N/L # 4 (Useful references!)
Also Stewards presentations of their NAs - Dorothy Dickson, Innisfail NA, and Paul Anderson, Ole Buck Mtn NA.
- Other notes - **NAs were put back into the NHA**, but this died before new election.
Recommendations by MLA Review Committee on Key Issues of NHA ' NA Class should be retained and redefined ...'
- 2001** April Newsletter # 4 Action Alert for letters re re-organisation of P/PA from Dept of Env. to Community Development. Note on Nature Observation projects for Stewards.
July **SAPAA registered under the Societies Act.**

- Aug. **Meeting with Minister of Dept. of Community Development, Gene Zwozdesky, Deputy and Assistant Deputy Ministers, re: communications and organisation for Stewards and their Natural or Protected Areas.**
- Oct. AGM Red Deer. **Speakers: ADM John Kristensen - ‘Connections and Communications for Effective Stewardship’;** John Rintoul, ANHIC, - ‘How Stewards can provide valuable information’. Summaries of talks in N/L # 6.
Also Stewards presentations of their NAs - Hubert Taube, NW Bruderheim, and Aaron and Elise Bowersock, Yamnuska.
- 2002** Mar. Newsletter # 6. Stewards Conference at Cypress Hills. Notice of Field trip to Coyote Lake NA.
- Oct. AGM Red Deer. **Topic: OHVs.** Speakers: Wayne Holland, SRD, - ‘Public Lands Specialist perspective on OHV Impacts in NAs’; Keri Barringer, Env. Law Centre, - ‘Legal status of Volunteer Stewards and their Protected Areas’; Calvin Rakach, OHVA, - ‘Can Stewards work with OHV users?’ Summaries of talks in N/L # 8.
- 2003** Mar. Newsletter # 8 Appointment of Ted Ritzer, Interpretive Services Coordinator, and **Review of Volunteer Steward program.**
Notice of Field Trips to NW Bruderheim and Whitehorse Wildland Park.
- June **Members of Exec. met with P/PA administrators,** June Markwart, Ted Ritzer and Sandra Myers, particularly about **relations with staff and review of Volunteer Stewards Program (VSP) and Manual**
- Sept. Newsletter # 9. Report on June meeting with P/PA staff. Also Stewards Conference at Hinton in April, particularly on **unresolved sessions on ‘Insurance and Legal Assistance’, and ‘Use of P/PA and OHV use’.**
- Oct. AGM Red Deer. **Discussion of Draft vs Manual, its lack of definition and restrictions on Stewards.**
Topic: **Stewards Advocacy role?** Speakers: Glen Semenchuk, FAN, - ‘Is Advocacy the way to deal with Government?’; Nigel Douglas, AWA - ‘Steward or Advocate , or both?’ Summaries of talks in Newsletter # 10.
- Dec. **Exec. met with June Markwart and Sandra Myers re: purpose of NAs and the position of Stewards, how SAPAA can work as partners with Govt. in a positive advocacy role, according to P/PA mandate, while observing ‘due process’.**
- 2004** Feb. John W. appointed to Stewards Core Group on VS Program and Manual Review.
- April Newsletter #10. Report on meetings with staff members.
Notice of Field Trips to JJ Collett, Clifford E.Lee and Whitehorse Wildland Park.

2004 FIELD TRIPS

(Submitted by Alison Dinwoodie)

J.J.COLLETT NATURAL AREA. 27 June 2004.

Six members enjoyed a day at the J.J. Collett Natural Area, led by Sylvia Glass with able assistance from Eileen Ford. This natural area is an interesting mix of shrublands, aspen stands, meadows, wetlands, and stabilised sand dunes. We had not gone far before we found low milkweed (*Asclepias ovaliflora*) in flower, but no monarch butterflies, which had been reported previously. Another rare plant, American water-horehound, (*Lycopus americanus*) was also observed, but was not yet in flower. These are only a couple of the interesting species to be found at the J.J. Collett, and more time was spent looking for some rare lichens and fungus. It’s not only plant life there that is interesting - Adam had a busy time chasing butterflies with his net, which were too numerous to mention. Where would we be able to enjoy all the diversity of species in Alberta, if it was not for our few precious Natural Areas and other protected Special Places? And of course, the dedicated Stewards who are essential to ensure their survival!

CLIFFORD E. LEE NATURE SANCTUARY AND NATURAL AREA 24 July 2004

Nine people came to explore this popular Nature Sanctuary near Edmonton and the smaller Natural Area across the road. Margaret Reine showed us around. In spite of the recent (heavy!) rains, the lake was showing the effects of too many years of dry weather, and the boardwalk was high and dry, but there was some consolation, as some plants were growing nearby in areas normally underwater, such as mealy primrose and fringed gentian. Whether it was the low water levels or the very hot day, there were not many water birds to be seen, which are one of the main features of this reserve, and no yellow-headed blackbirds, its signature logo bird. More disturbing information was the increasing threat of nearby acreage development, and persistent vandalism, including the deliberate sawing off of the thick steel pipe supporting a donation box. Stewards can only do so much, but it is their constant vigilance in tracking adjacent activities that prevents further encroachments and deterioration of these otherwise unprotected areas.

WHITEHORSE WILDLAND PARK - WHITEHORSE CREEK. 31 July - 2 Aug.

Access to the Wildland Park has been difficult this summer because of the on-going heavy construction of the Haul road up the McLeod valley to the Cheviot Coal Mine. The road was open to the public during long weekends, but only under escort and only for 4WD vehicles. After a flat tire at the Cardinal Divide in July, at 5p.m., in a strange vehicle, with no traffic and miles from anywhere, it was decided for the August long weekend a backpacking trip up Whitehorse Creek to the falls at the head of the valley, approximately 12 km, would be a better idea. Hikers and horse riders have used this trail for many years. OHVs were excluded under the Access Management Plan and subsequent Park designation, and it shows - the trail is still in very reasonable condition, unlike the Cardinal Headwaters trail, which was totally eroded by OHVs in a lesser period of time. This is the only way to go to manage our protected areas, with Stewards taking an active part in the Management Plans. Some cyclists and horse riders encountered on the trail agreed that they had been pushed out of too many areas by OHVs so all the more need to retain some areas for non-motorised recreationalists. My main botanical observation was how many blue plants there seemed to be later in the summer - larkspur, monkshood, mertensia, and slender blue beardtongue in profusion. A beautiful valley, well worth the hike!

P.S. from the Executive:

I know we've asked you before, but if anyone has any editorial or newsletter skills, we'd love to hear from you. Contact John Woitenko, 780-459-0475, or email: jwoitenko@compusmart.ab.ca.