

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association (SAPAA) NEWSLETTER NO. 20, September 2008

UPCOMING EVENT

SAPAA Annual General Meeting Saturday, 18 October 2008

Join us on October 18th at Reed's Tea Room, Fort Edmonton Park, Edmonton for our annual SAPAA get-together (see the attached sheet for the full program and map of the park).



Reed's Bazaar and Tea Shop (1905) had the tea room and store on the lower floor and 10 offices (architects, physicians, a tailor) on the upper floor.

This year's meeting includes 2 presentations, our AGM, and a short field trip before we head home in the afternoon.

We are fortunate to have **Doug Marvin**, Head of Stewardship Services, Alberta Parks Division, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, who will present a summary of the new Parks Stewardship Initiative, and will outline the proposed new direction for Alberta Parks. Doug is interested in an open discussion on stewardship, and will answer any questions that may arise, so be sure to come and share your ideas. If you have points to raise, and particularly if you can't attend, please send questions to Alison Dinwoodie adinwoodie@shaw.ca or call her at 780-437-7183 with your suggestions.

Also joining us will be **Kevin Timoney**, of Treeline Ecological Research. Kevin will talk about the ways in which protected areas in Alberta are suffering the impacts of non-conforming uses, encroachment, delisting, political and development pressures, and cross-boundary effects. In his presentation, he will use real-world examples to illustrate some of the grave threats to Alberta's protected areas. He will also discuss what we can expect in the future if government continues to fail in its responsibilities to protect ecosystem integrity.

These are **challenging and exciting times** for those of us who are interested in Alberta's protected areas. We see increasing pressure on public lands from industry, and an exponential increase in motorized vehicle use. All of this is happening in the context of proposed changes to the purpose and vision of parks and protected areas. Come to the meeting to be informed on these and other issues. By sharing our ideas and experiences, we may find new ways to meet new challenges. If there ever was a time to get involved, it is now!



A few members enjoy an end-of-day walk at Kerry Wood Nature Centre in Red Deer, after our 2007 meeting

Main SAPAA contacts:

Alison Dinwoodie, 437-7183, adinwoodie@shaw.ca;
John Woitenko (780) 459-0475

STEWARDS CONFERENCE, GRANDE PRAIRIE 12-14 Sept. 2008

A new initiative this year for the Stewards Conference was the introduction of a bus to help people get to the rather distant location of Grande Prairie. Some 47 people from Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton areas had a very comfortable journey there, arriving late on Friday afternoon, fresh and ready to go. After dinner at the Grande Prairie Inn, vans took us to the Grande Prairie Museum and Heritage Centre. There were excellent exhibits on GP's history from the pre-dinosaur days to more recent events. Dinosaurs are playing an increasing role in GP's visitor attractions, with recent local discoveries. We heard more about that later.

Participants received a copy of the recently released Draft Parks Planning Framework, an unexpected addition to the Conference discussions. In fact, it was so recent that the Parks staff had only just received it themselves, and were not able to tell us much about it. See later article! The report stimulated a lot of discussion, not on the program!

On Saturday morning, **Joyce Gould**, Science Program Coordinator with Parks, focused on the need for and value of comprehensive scientific inventories of the diversity of species in our Parks. Her recent trip to Willmore highlighted the need to get all biological disciplines involved, and to stimulate inter-disciplinary discussions which can help to provide scientific rationale for Parks management decisions.

The next speaker was **Scott Jones**, Manager, Planning and Science Section in Parks. Scott emphasized the need to engage Albertans in providing feed-back to Parks, and he also provided us with useful website info.. For example, at www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks go to Public Consultation to find the most recent announcements, current management plans etc. Scott urged everyone to provide comments using the on-line feed-back form. He assured us that they look at the relevance of the messages received, not just the number, so flooding them with circular petitions is not necessarily productive. You can also sign up to receive updates as they become available. Another section, Managing Alberta's Parks, shows the Parks Vision, Goals etc. The Alberta Government home page directory, www.gov.ab.ca/home/directory.cfm, provides contact information for Government staff, including phone, fax, email and office address.

The second morning session was thrown a bit off centre by the new Draft Parks Planning Framework. Lots of discussion ensued, highlighting the general unease felt by many Stewards and staff.

Many things that were supposed to be in the Draft, are not there. We were encouraged to write letters to the Minister, MLAs, etc. to voice our concerns.



Darren Tanke at Pipestone Ck. Museum

The afternoon had 3 field trips: Saskatoon Island Provincial Park, Historic Dunvegan and Pipestone Paleontology. We heard more about Pipestone at the evening banquet, where the speaker was palaeontologist, Darren Tanke. Darren had excavated many *Pachyrhinosaurus* fossils from the local Pipestone Creek Bonebed and is publishing a monograph on the subject. Sunday morning, Margot Hervieux took our group to the Kleskun Hills, after which we all enjoyed a relaxing bus ride home.



Kleskun Hills Natural Area

AWARDS

Congratulations to **Bob Gouin** who received the **Outstanding Individual Steward Award**. Bob has been a Steward of Nestow Natural Area since 1988, and has lost count of the number of bluebird boxes he has built! The **Outstanding Group Steward Award** went to **Glory Hills Junior Forest Wardens** at Kilini Creek N.A., and this year's award for **Steward Service Excellence** went to **Margot Hervieux**, who also helped make the Conference such a success. **Alison Dinwoodie**

STOP THE PRESS!

JUST OUT! DRAFT PARKS PLANNING FRAMEWORK MINISTER ADY SAYS ALBERTANS WANT MORE ACCESS TO PARKS

As recognized stakeholders in the Parks planning process, SAPAA representatives received a copy of a Draft Parks Planning Framework (Aug. 2008) on Sept. 5th, with an invitation to provide comments. We were more than a little surprised to see that the new Vision and Mission Statement bears no resemblance to the one given on the Parks website (<http://www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks/managing/flashindex.asp>), the statement that we and Parks staff had worked on for the last 2-3 years. Now, the whole tone is completely changed, starting with the first paragraph which says that Parks are ‘under-utilized’ and ‘we need to create more access so Albertans can enjoy them’.

What is even more interesting is that at the recent Stewards Conference, held at Grande Prairie on September 12-14, attending Parks staff admitted that they knew little about this latest draft, and in fact had received it about the same time as the rest of us.

Land Use Framework

How did this turn-around happen? The new Parks Framework has to conform to the provincial Land Use Framework, developed by the Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). So Parks would have to first promote **‘livable communities and recreational opportunities’**, second **‘healthy ecosystems and environment’**, and third, **‘sustainable prosperity supported by our land and natural resources’**. I would put the second one first, as without healthy ecosystems you can’t have a very livable community. Finally, Premier Stelmach’s mandate to Parks is that Parks and Recreation Areas must remain **protected yet accessible**.

Revised Vision and Mission Statements

The current Vision Statement reads “*Parks and protected areas are valued as natural landscapes that **preserve the environmental diversity** of the province and **inspire society to enjoy and rediscover our connection with the natural world**”.*

The proposed revision reads “*Albertans work together to create a world-class parks system that welcomes visitors and encourages them to **experience the beauty of nature through (1) recreation, (2) education and (3) environmental management***.” (#s emphasize apparent priorities).

You can experience the beauty of nature as you drive down the Banff-Jasper Highway, but are you really **‘rediscovering our connection with the natural world’**? (current Vision) Similarly, is ‘environmental management’ the same as **‘valuing natural landscapes that preserve environmental diversity** (current Vision)? If you don’t value it, how can you manage it effectively?

Similarly, Parks’ current Mission is “*Parks and protected areas are managed as **a legacy for future generations through leadership, stewardship and research to protect biodiversity and provide environmental, social, and economic benefits***.”

The revision proposes that Parks are to (1) **‘promote healthy, active lifestyles** and (2), **conserve Alberta’s natural heritage**. Conservation comes second, and words like legacy, leadership, stewardship and research are noticeably absent.



Values

Although Parks staff assure us that conservation is still a priority, why isn’t it up front, instead of tacked on at the end? If Parks are valued only for their economic value (e.g. visitor attractions, recreation use), ignoring the intrinsic value of the landscape and its biodiversity and the need to maintain these ecosystems for the future, the landscape could change rapidly. By putting the cart before the horse, we could quickly kill the goose that laid the golden egg - to mix a few metaphors!

Other objectives noticeable by their absence are **sustainability, completion of the Parks system** (a long-standing requirement, ‘which is implied’ but not stated), and an **increase in the land base for more intensive, high-impact recreation activities** outside the parks system. The Draft Parks Planning Framework is too vague, and leaves enough room to drive a whole fleet of SUVs through. More specific direction has to be given. Given discrepancies with the Land Use Framework, SRD must address some of these issues, not just leave it up to Parks.

Recreation

Increased population and fancier recreation toys are putting an enormous pressure on our Parks. One of the major problems is the recent, exponential increase in recreational motorized vehicles. To avoid misunderstandings, Parks needs to refer explicitly to non-motorized and motorized recreation when talking about expanding facilities, trails etc. In the past it was always inferred (and publicity brochures bear this out) that Parks were for non-motorized, low-impact, nature-based activities.

Users of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) are now demanding more 'designated trails' in Parks. OHVs are incompatible with most non-motorized uses, and they have much higher impacts, on terrain, wildlife, air quality and noise levels. Consequently, they should have their own separate designated areas. The Provincial Government should provide leadership in directing its Regional Boards to accommodate these users, but not at the expense of Parks. Provincial Recreation Areas (PRAs) may be used as staging areas to trails outside the Parks, and as campgrounds for the larger RVs. Increased OHV use in the Parks requires a corresponding increase in Conservation Officers, to enforce regulations over much wider areas. In these days of tight budgets, Parks would be hard pressed to respond, and access to large areas of previously undisturbed wilderness would go uncontrolled.

Today, Parks are also expected to provide more large, expensive, serviced campsites for huge recreational vehicles, at minimal charge to the users. Private business could deal more effectively with these costly demands, outside the Parks.

Given the tone and content of the Draft Parks Planning Framework, it seems that Alberta Parks are going to see more development to accommodate motorized users, rather than less. Do most Albertans want this?



What to Do??

PLEASE WRITE, as many of you as can, to the Ministers, MLAs, county and municipal officials. They are all involved in the Regional Plans, and need to hear from as many people as possible. You can find addresses on the Alberta Govt. website, <http://www.gov.ab.ca/home/directory.cfm>. Letters are most effective, with brief points on one page. Personal experiences make more of an impression. Consider addressing some of the following points. The new Framework needs to state clearly that:

- The primary objective for Parks is to maintain the ecological integrity of each region for future generations to enjoy.
- Recreation and access should be accommodated, only if activities are sustainable, low impact, and promote healthy lifestyles, (i.e. non-motorized).
- Any changes to the Parks system must be laid out clearly with legally defined, permitted activities in each category. For example, Wilderness Areas, Wildland Parks and Willmore must retain their current level of permitted activities. Designated trails for OHVs in Wildland Parks do not conform with the intent of the Wildland designation, and should be phased out and not increased. Hunting by 'traditional' means' (with horses) would continue.
- Opportunities can be made available for all Albertans at some level, but it is obvious that all Parks cannot be all things to all people.
- The Park system must be completed as promised, and the Province must provide the leadership to direct the Regions to implement this. Natural Areas, including those currently under a PNT designation, must also be included in the plan, and given more legal protection.
- Any public lands that are made available for high-impact recreation activities, like motorized recreation, should be outside the Parks. Other public lands already have many hardened trails and roads from forestry and energy explorations, which are more suitable for sustained OHV use.
- Clear public information and education are essential to enable more people to enjoy our wonderful Parks system in a responsible manner, while maintaining the parks' intrinsic value.

The Draft Parks Planning Framework requires considerable modification. We need a framework designed to provide a legacy for future generations, not one for increasing impacts that diminish this valuable resource. All generations need to enjoy and rediscover our connection with the natural world.

Alison Dinwoodie

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, October 18, 2008

at 9:30 A.M.

**at Reed's Tea Room, Fort Edmonton Park,
Edmonton (see attached map overleaf)**

PROGRAM

- 9:00 a.m. Registration and coffee
- 9:30 a.m. Speaker: **Doug Marvin**, Head of Stewardship Services, Alberta Parks Division,
Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Title: **Alberta Parks Stewardship in the 21st Century - An Action Plan to Inspire Albertans to Value and Care For Alberta Parks**
- 10:15 a.m. Questions and discussion
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break (coffee, etc. provided but bring your own mug if you can)
- 11:00 a.m. Speaker: **Kevin Timoney**, Treeline Ecological Research
Title: **Protected Areas Behind the Oil Curtain**
- 11:45 a.m. Questions and discussion
- 12:00 noon Lunch (Please bring your own lunch, as kitchen facilities are limited)
- 12:30 p.m. **SAPAA Annual General Meeting** (see agenda on reverse)
- 2:00 p.m. Walk in the Park – Ft. Edmonton buildings are closed for the season, but the John Jantzen Nature Centre is open. There is also a pleasant walk along the North Saskatchewan River, or a 3 km hike round the perimeter of the park



STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

Saturday, 18 October 2008, 12:30 p.m..

1. Acceptance of Minutes of previous AGM, 20 October 2007
2. Business arising from the minutes
3. Treasurer's report
4. Current state of new Stewards Initiative, Parks Plan etc.
5. New Executive and future of SAPAA
6. Election of the Board

Current members are:

President – Peter Kershaw
 Vice President – Hubert Taube
 Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Marilyn Shannon
 Recording Secretary – Alison Dinwoodie
 Directors – John Woitenko (FAN Representative)
 Rod Olstad
 Tony Blake
 Newsletter Editor – Patsy Cotterill

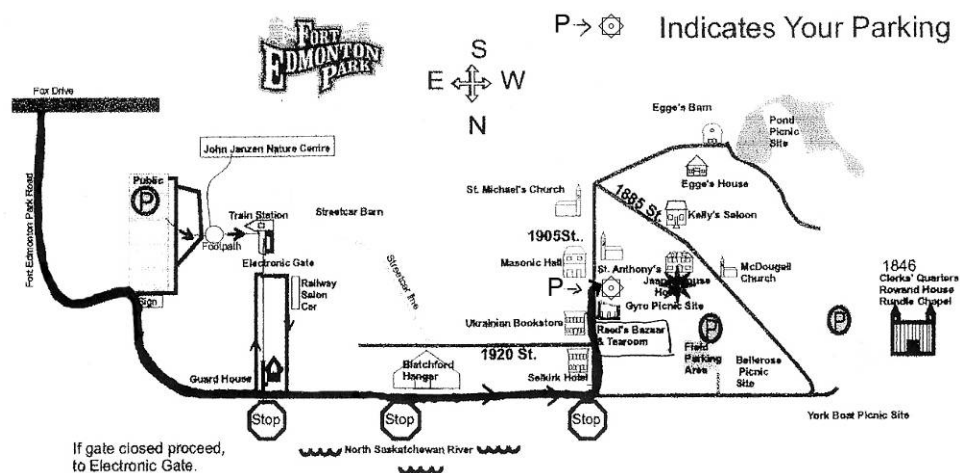
Please come prepared with nominations. Members not present at the meeting may be nominated, provided their willingness to stand has been confirmed prior to the meeting.

The President and Vice-President have served 1 year of their second 2 year terms.

Other members of the Board are elected annually.

7. Any other business

DIRECTIONS: Exit Whitemud Drive onto Fox Drive, turn north (left) at first lights, and follow the road under Quesnell Bridge, past the main parking lot, and sharply right at the sign “Guests for Selkirk Hotel.” Go past the guard house (gate should be open) and take the second left at the Selkirk Hotel. Keep right, past the Fire Hall. Reed's Tea Room & Bazaar is on the right. Use the small, adjacent, gravel parking lot. The map may help.



**Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association
(SAPAA)
Membership Form**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Natural Area: _____ Organization (if any) _____

Mailing Address: _____ City or Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

- Would you like your newsletter emailed? ___ yes ___ no
- Would you be willing to have your name and phone number put on a list that would only be distributed to other SAPAA members? ___ Yes ___ No
- Would you be willing to have your name added to the SAPAA Listserve ? ___ Yes ___ No
(See articles re Listserve in SAPAA Newsletter # 14, Feb. or # 15, Sept. 2006)

Renewing membership ___ New member ___
\$ 15

Membership fee

(Includes FAN insurance fee of \$5)

Donation (Optional)* _____

TOTAL _____

*SAPAA is not a registered Charitable Organization as yet, so receipts for income tax purposes will not be issued.

Please return this form, with total listed above to:

Marilyn Shannon, 5608 – 142 St. Edmonton T6H 4C1

(Make cheques payable to SAPAA)

For membership conditions, please see reverse side of this form.

Issues of importance (old or new – this info would help for future Stewards Conference discussions):

___ Oil / Gas ___ Off Highway Vehicles ___ Vandalism ___ Overuse/Abuse ___ Grazing

___ Other _____

Willing to help with: ___ Newsletter ___ Executive ___ Phoning ___ Speakers ___ Meetings ___ Field Trips

___ Other _____

If you are a new member, please provide the following details about your Stewardship Area:

Natural Area ID #: _____ Approximate size: _____

Location: _____

Brief description of significant natural features (please include a brochure if available): _____

If you require more information,

Phone Alison Dinwoodie (780-437-7183) - email: adinwoodie@shaw.ca
or phone Marilyn Shannon (780-438-8071) or - email: kandms@telus.net

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

Membership in SAPAA is open to anyone who is

- a steward who volunteers their time assisting in the care and management of Alberta's Protected Areas (i.e., lands currently set aside under the Alberta Provincial Parks Act, the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas & Heritage Rangeland Act, and the Willmore Wilderness Act), and
- who is in general agreement with the Purposes of the Association.
- (Definitions, and Bylaws 1.1 and 1.2)

PURPOSES of the Association:

1. To establish a network of Volunteer Stewards to exchange information and expertise and to provide mutual assistance and support.
2. *To promote the preservation, protection and restoration of the ecological integrity of Alberta's Protected Areas.*
3. To promote the use of Alberta's Protected Areas for educational and research purposes, and *for non-intrusive, nature-oriented activities* compatible with each individual site.
4. To identify common issues of concern in Alberta's Protected Areas for the purpose of dealing with them more effectively and comprehensively.
5. To work with appropriate government departments and with other groups and agencies to resolve issues regarding actions and activities that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
6. To represent members of the Association at meetings of stakeholders and in events, issues and situations that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
7. To increase and enhance public awareness of the value of Protected Areas and of the Volunteer Stewards' role in preserving these areas.
8. To support knowledge and skill development for Stewards and supporters of the Association through conferences, workshops, seminars and publications.

Signed: _____

Date: _____