



ATHABASCA RIVER VALLEY

COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE VISIONING PROCESS 2011



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Athabasca River Valley Community Landscape Vision Process (CLVP) was an innovative public-input process that applied a community-based approach to increasing understanding of and identifying local landscape values to inform future land-use planning.

Landscape values of focus included:

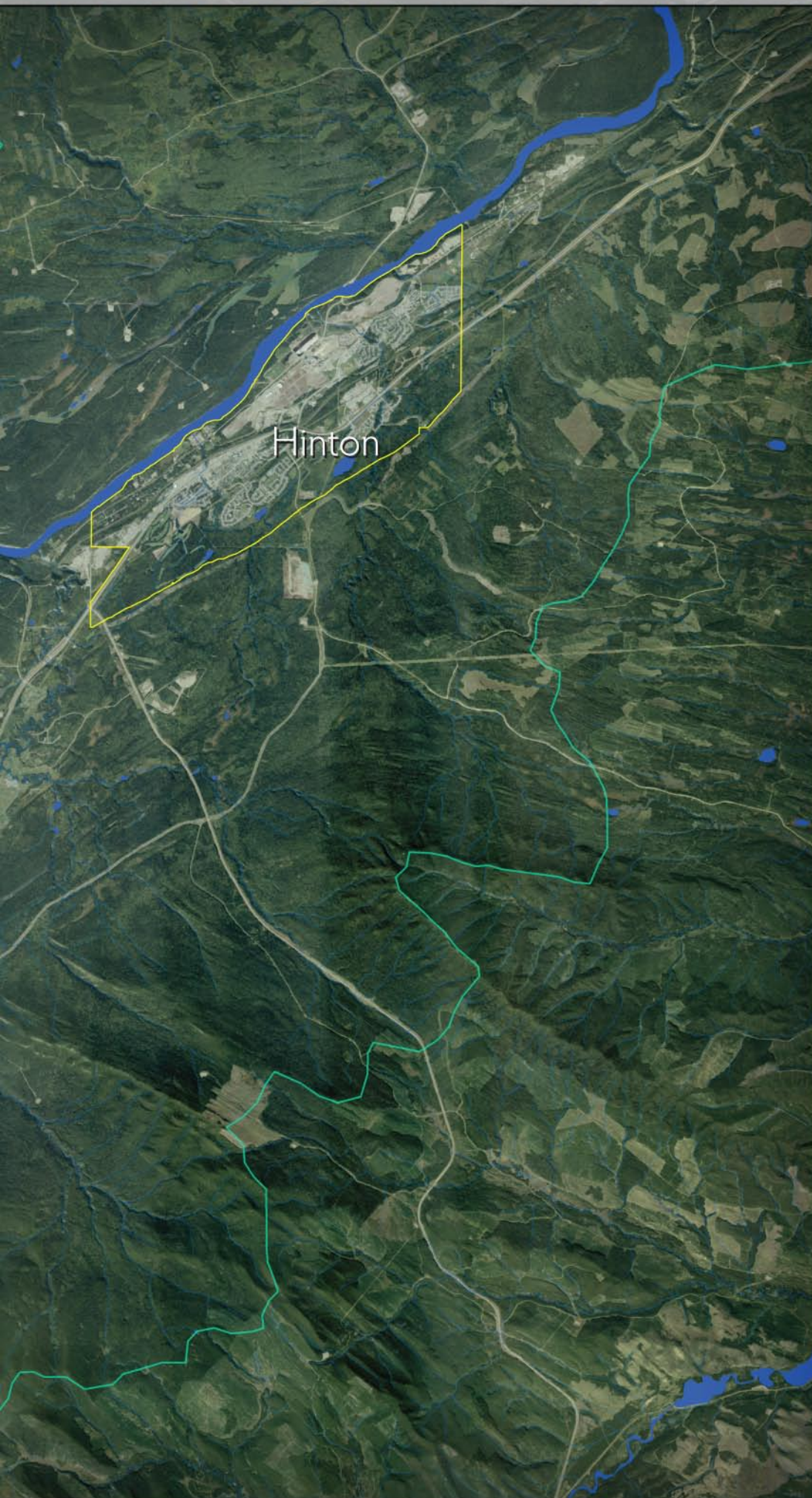
- Future Development
- History and Traditional Use, Aesthetics and Character
- Recreation
- Water
- Wilderness and Wildlife

The CLVP provided broad-based, inclusive public forums for local/regional people to engage in sharing and 'mapping' their vision for future land-use while safeguarding important community values in the Athabasca River Valley area adjacent to Jasper National Park. This information is particularly relevant in informing Alberta's Land Use Framework (Upper Athabasca Regional Plan), local Municipal and Regional Sustainability Plans, and local development, recreation and conservation planning in this area.

The CLVP was an eight-month community engagement process that combined large public forums where public input was gathered using a deliberative dialogue approach; with smaller group meetings of the CLVP Working Group to analyze the input data from the forums and strategize about next steps. In total, 190 local people were involved in the project over its time span of 8 months, including 432 person hours in the Working Group, and 475 person hours in the community forums. The project was led and managed by a local coordinator, with Working Group meetings and community forums facilitated by an independent, experienced facilitator.







The CLVP Public Input Forums involved many group discussions around large maps of the defined landscape area. The maps were generated in high resolution (81.56 MB) satellite imagery that allowed the public to easily recognize and orient to key local landscape features. Mapping exercises were conducted to gather critical information within the key landscape value themes of the CLVP. The key themes are: Water; Recreation; History; and Aesthetics, Character and Traditional Use.

A Geographic Information System professional was engaged to transfer all spatial public notations and comments from the mapping exercises, and generate completed maps showing public values, important places, and key areas of interest or concern. All public input was noted on the maps, with no revisions, additions or deletions.

When mapping is completed through an open public process such as the CLVP, the result provides a more inclusive view of what the public views as having value in the defined landscape area. The CLVP used a collective mapping process as a tool to help sort, record and analyze information about important public values related to the defined landscape.

Three final CLVP Geographic Information System maps were generated to provide spatial representation of all public input. These three maps show local public values for Recreation; History, Traditional Use, Aesthetics and Character; and Wilderness and Wildlife. Specific points and Polygons (lines or loops) reference key values, places, and uses within the defined CLVP landscape area.

ATHABASCA RIVER VALLEY
MAP



WATER, WILDLIFE AND WILDERNESS

WATER

1. A comprehensive water and watershed inventory.
2. A Water/Watershed Management Plan.
3. The Water/Watershed Management Plan be integrated into the Upper Athabasca Regional Plan (Alberta Land Use Framework) with policy and regulatory support and enforcement capabilities.

WILDLIFE AND WILDERNESS

1. A comprehensive management plan for wildlife focusing on: wildlife habitat and movement corridors, public recreation access, riparian corridors.
2. Management attention to conserve areas of special concern, focusing on: random camping and access management, public education and stewardship, enforcement, and disaster planning.
3. A local, collaborative Landscape Stewardship Initiative to further preserve local wilderness and wildlife values.



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

1. Low impact development principles and practices are a priority.
2. New commercial, light industrial and residential development be limited to areas with existing development approval or in existing town-sites:
 - high impact development within the boundaries of the Town of Hinton;
 - low impact development limited to the approved 9 Yellowhead Corridor nodes;
 - development of the proposed nodes (Overlander, Entrance and Brule Corridor) should not be considered.
3. Criteria for new development in areas with existing approvals will recognize, protect and enhance community and landscape values.
4. The public to private land conversion process be transparent, accessible and communicate appropriate information to the public.
5. Resource extraction industrial development be assessed and practiced in a way that recognizes, protects and enhances landscape and community values.
6. Allocating public land for resource management is preferred to zoning private land.



HISTORY, AESTHETICS, CHARACTER AND TRADITIONAL USE

1. Areas/sites of historical importance be recognized and protected.
2. Areas/sites of traditional use be identified and maintained.
3. The character and aesthetics of the area be protected – specifically rural/mountain feel, peace and quiet, and natural beauty.
4. Existing traditional land use agreements be allowed to continue to their full term, and their renewal given priority for future land use.
5. A local volunteer stewardship group be established to share information, seek solutions to issues, and initiate stewardship activities.



RECREATION

1. A comprehensive trail inventory is needed for the area.
2. A designated trail system for multiple recreation use is needed.
3. 'Share the trail' user protocols and educational materials are encouraged.
4. Effective management of random camping is strongly suggested.
5. Effective management of the Brule Sand Dunes area to reduce recreation impacts and protect ecological values is required.
6. High impact recreation facilities, such as golf courses, are not appropriate recreation uses.

DETERMINED BY PUBLIC INPUT AND THE LOCAL WORKING GROUP



RECOMMENDATIONS

RATIONALE

1. A comprehensive water and watershed inventory is required for the defined landscape region.

1a. A watershed and water resources inventory for the defined landscape area is required to provide a foundation for integrated land and water management. The water/watershed inventory will include:

- quality and quantity of surface and ground water (including aquifers);
- area covered by riparian zones for all water courses and bodies in the defined landscape area;
- health and intactness of riparian zones in the defined landscape area;
- rate of recharge of aquifers;
- projected rate of water resources extraction in relation to level of human disturbance and use (e.g. rural water wells, industrial and residential development, community water use);
- current and projected rate of actual and potential contamination of water resources in relation to human impacts;
- rate of surface and groundwater retention/loss in relation to changes in forest/vegetative cover;
- projections for sustainable water quality and quantity, and human use in reference to climate change scenarios and adaptation to future unknown impacts.



THEME: WATER

2. A Watershed Management Plan should be completed for the defined landscape area premised on Alberta's Water For Life Strategy goals:

- Safe, secure drinking water
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems; and
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

2. Water quality and quantity is foundational to ecosystem and human community health and sustainability. Rationale in support of a Watershed Management Plan for the defined area (and the entire Athabasca Watershed) is demonstrated by the following reports and initiatives:

2a. The Alberta Government's Water For Life Strategy is premised on three foundational goals that will be met through knowledge and research, partnership contribution, water conservation and watershed stewardship. Partnerships include municipalities, stewardship groups, non-government organizations, First Nations and Métis, industry, and government at all levels.

2b. Water Matters Report: "Blueprint for Source Water Protection" states that in order to secure water resources, both measurements and targets must be established for different types of indicators:

- Physical – "On the ground" physical landscape conditions that support the biological processes essential to abundant and clean source waters.
- Social – Private and public processes that secure the source water requirements of Albertans in perpetuity.
- Economic – Economic decisions that acknowledge the full value of source water for ecological goods and services.

2c. The 2006 report "An impending water crisis in Canada's western prairie provinces" states:

"...climate warming and human modifications to catchments have already significantly reduced the flows of major rivers of the Western Prairie Provinces (WPP) during the summer months, when human demand and in-stream flow needs are greatest. We predict that in the near future climate warming, via its effects on glaciers, snow-packs, and evaporation, will combine with cyclic drought and rapidly increasing human activity in the WPP to cause a crisis in water quantity and quality with far-reaching implications." (Schindler, Donahue, 2006).

A Watershed Management Plan is therefore critical to addressing the cumulative impacts of climate change and human disturbance in the Athabasca Watershed.

3. The Athabasca Watershed Management Plan should be integrated into the Upper Athabasca Regional Plan (Alberta Land Use Framework) with policy and regulatory support and enforcement capabilities.

3. A Water Management Plan for the defined landscape area will provide a regional contribution to the greater Athabasca State of the Watershed Report and subsequent Athabasca Watershed Management Plan, as these are key long term goals of the newly formed Athabasca Watershed Council - WPAC (Watershed Planning and Advisory Council).



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A comprehensive management plan for wildlife is required to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of wildlife values in the defined landscape area. This should include:

- Recognition of wildlife habitat and movement corridors that extend throughout the defined landscape area;
- Focused management attention to safeguard wildlife values at the Jasper National Park boundary and adjacent foothills, Brule Lake east and west corridors, Brule Lake Sand Dunes, Athabasca River corridor, Solomon Mountain and the Gap trail area, and the Solomon Valley north to the Rock-Solomon Wildland Park.
- Management and designation of public recreation access on roads and trails; timing of access during the year; management of specific modes of access (OHV, 4x4, horseback, mountain biking) and camping intensity.
- Protection of riparian corridors for wildlife movement along the Athabasca River and major tributaries safeguards that safeguard not only wildlife values, but aquatic life and ecosystems.

RATIONALE

1a. Increasing importance of critical wildlife habitat and movement corridors and growing impacts from public access and use in those areas requires a comprehensive management plan to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of wildlife values in the defined landscape area.

1b. Management and designation of public access contributes to conservation of wildlife values, particularly in wildlife movement corridors and areas such as ungulate calving grounds.

1c. Management action that focuses on local issues is important for integration into larger landscape concerns and land management initiatives. These larger initiatives include the Alberta Land Use Framework - Upper Athabasca Regional Plan (UARP) and the newly formed Athabasca Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC). Both the UARP and the Athabasca WPAC will be addressing cumulative impacts on land and water resources. The LUF Upper Athabasca Regional Plan will be initiated in 2011-12. An Athabasca State of the Watershed Report will be initiated in 2010-11 as a foundation for a comprehensive Athabasca Watershed Management Plan.



THEME: WILDERNESS & WILDLIFE

2. Wilderness values require management attention to conserve and protect in areas of special concern. Management action requires:

- addressing the growing issue of random camping and creating a plan to designate general areas for random camping;
- access management;
- public education and local stewardship engagement for wildlife and wilderness conservation practices;
- enforcement of regulations;
- planning for and mitigating disaster occurrences (e.g. train wreck/spill of toxic substances);
- implementing Fire Smart for all communities and rural residential subdivisions.

3. Encourage and support a local Landscape Stewardship Initiative to further preserve local wilderness and wildlife values. This stewardship initiative would be a collaborative effort involving landscape user groups/individuals, institutions, industry and government. The stewardship Initiative would address:

- awareness and education about growing impacts on wilderness, fish and wildlife values;
- discussion and action on access management and compliance to address wildlife and wilderness conservation;
- stewardship project priorities and action plans to address impacts on wilderness and wildlife values;
- collaborative stewardship work to address wilderness and wildlife issues;
- ongoing dialogue and integration of local knowledge, science and traditional knowledge.

2a. Wilderness values in the defined landscape area are increasingly impacted by human development and use of the landscape. Wilderness values include:

- a unique mixture of montane/boreal forest ecosystems;
- wildlife, including large carnivores (e.g. grizzly bears, black bears, wolves and cougar);
- plant diversity and rare plants;
- species at risk and/or of concern (e.g. long-toed salamanders, grizzly bears);
- environmentally significant areas as representative of unique or rare wilderness values

2b. Wilderness values have been proven to provide important 'natural assets' that substantially contribute to local community economies and quality of life values. Retention of these values will help contribute to economic diversification and mitigating the boom and bust cycle of resource extraction based economies.

2c. Coal Branch Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan (CBIRMP), Government of Alberta policy document for land use zoning, designated the area southeast of Brule Lake to Highway 16 as a 'Critical Wildlife' zone.

- Compatible uses in a Critical Wildlife zone are: non-motorized recreation; fishing; hunting.
- Permitted uses in a Critical Wildlife zone (may be compatible with the intent of a land use zone under certain circumstances and under special conditions and controls where necessary) are: scientific study; trapping; non-motorized trails; transportation and utility corridors; primitive camping; OHV activity; grazing, energy/coal/mineral exploration and development; and serviced camping.
- Uses not permitted in Critical Wildlife zone (uses that are not compatible with the intent or capabilities of land use zone) are commercial development; industrial development; residential subdivisions; and cultivation.

2d. The Alberta Land Use Framework and the newly formed Athabasca Watershed Planning and Advisory Council will be addressing cumulative impacts and creating a Regional Plan and a Watershed Management Plan that will help to address cumulative effects issues and impacts on wilderness and wildlife values.

3a. Local recreation and service groups independently work on behalf of local community and landscape values. A collaborative effort by all interested groups and individuals, with support (e.g. information) from Foothills Research Institute, Government of Alberta and industry would provide a broad base of understanding of issues facing the local landscape. Local stewardship initiative would determine issue priorities and create work plans to address these issues thereby contributing to the preservation of landscape, wilderness and wildlife values.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Within the defined landscape area, low impact development principles and practices are a priority.

RATIONALE

1a. Low Impact Development:

- concentrates land-use/ecological footprint;
- reduces water consumption and impacts to the watershed;
- reduces negative impact on wildlife;
- reduces impact on natural aesthetics;
- accommodates growth and the "experience" of the landscape without compromising the values that brought people to the area in the first place.



THEME

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

2. New commercial, light industrial and residential development should be limited to areas with existing development approval or in existing town-sites:

- high impact development should be concentrated within the boundaries of the Town of Hinton;
- low impact development in the defined landscape area should be limited to the approved 9 Yellowhead Corridor nodes;
- Final approval and development of the three proposed nodes (Overlander, Entrance and Brule Corridor) should not be considered.

3. The criteria for new development in areas with existing approvals will need to recognize, protect and enhance community and landscape values (ie: water, recreation, history, traditional use, aesthetics and wilderness and wildlife).

4. The process that converts public land to private ownership must be transparent, accessible and communicate appropriate information to the public.

5. Resource extraction industrial development should be assessed and practiced in such a manner as to recognize, protect and enhance landscape and community values (ie: water, recreation, wildlife, history, traditional use, aesthetics, future development)

2a. Development in approved areas should be concentrated rather than dispersed (urban sprawl).

Concentrated development provides:

- efficient use of infrastructure (e.g. water use and treatment, access, support services);
- accommodates wildlife values (e.g. essential movement corridors and critical habitat);
- Mitigation of taxes - lower costs/less costs.

3a. Retention of natural values and assets preserves amenities that offer high quality of life values, (eg. aesthetics, recreation opportunities, traditional use) and supports local economic diversification.

4a. An open and transparent process that addresses conversion of public land to private requires the following:

- building public understanding on how, when, where and why conversion of public land to private occurs;
- public input to the proposed conversion of public land to private ownership;
- integration of public input and local landscape values into the decision-making process;
- private project viability should be demonstrated prior to land conversion (e.g. use of performance cash bond with timelines and conditions).

5a. Resource extraction will continue to be an important part of the regional and provincial economy, and in order to contribute to sustainability will need to better address protection and enhancement of community and landscape values and opportunities for economic diversification.

5b. The Alberta Land Use Framework regional planning process will be addressing cumulative effects and the need to safeguard ecological health and community well-being.



RECOMMENDATIONS

RATIONALE

1. Areas and sites of historical importance must be recognized and protected in relation to other landscape values, uses and development.

- Some historical sites could be designated as tourist attractions and managed for long term access and protection.
- Areas of long term historical use (50+ years) should be identified and managed such that other land uses allow for continuation of that historical use (e.g. to maintain the viability of the Brule Community Pasture for its historical use of supporting horse grazing, restrict use of that area for random camping and other high impact practices).

1a. Historical sites are important as they help to build awareness and appreciation of local history in both local people and visitors to the area.

1b. Historical sites provide economic value by drawing both local and international visitors to the area. The types of tourism that educate and connect visitors to the natural and cultural assets of an area, comprise the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. (e.g. ecotourism, geo-tourism.)

1c. Long term historical uses have provided a substantial input to the area's economy for the better part of a century (e.g. the horseback outfitting industry has historically used trails throughout the defined landscape area).



THEME: HISTORY, AESTHETICS, CHARACTER, & TRADITIONAL USE

2. Areas and sites of traditional use must be identified and maintained in relation to other landscape values, uses and development.

- The character and integrity of traditional use areas can be impacted detrimentally by large scale and inappropriate development, therefore such development should be focused in areas of existing approvals so as to protect areas with important traditional use values.
- Recreation uses can be compatible with traditional uses if managed effectively (e.g. user protocols, signage and education, regulations and enforcement).

3. The character and aesthetics of the area must be protected and revived – specifically the key elements of rural/mountain feel, peace and quiet, and natural beauty – in order to maintain the unique identity of this place.

- Other landscape values and uses, such as recreation and development activities, should be managed and/or limited in a way that reduces impacts to the above key elements.

4. Existing traditional land use agreements (e.g. leases, licenses, permits) should be allowed to continue for their identified purpose, to their full term; and their renewal should be given priority for future land use.

5. A local volunteer landscape stewardship initiative could be established, involving a range of interested parties, to share information about landscape values and uses, seek solutions to issues, and initiate stewardship activities in the defined landscape area.

2a. Traditional uses contribute to defining the historical, cultural and aesthetic identity of the area.

2b. Traditional uses have value in educating the public about the cultural significance and land stewardship of the area.

2c. Local people have a strong interest in maintaining their heritage and culture, which includes long term (50+ years) traditional uses of the land.

2d. Traditional uses, such as the sustainable harvesting of natural resources (furs, game, berries), contribute to the area's economy and lifestyle.

3a. People are drawn to this area to live, visit and recreate in part due to the character and aesthetics of the area. Maintaining these natural and cultural assets provides value to the local economy (e.g. tourism, real estate) as well as to the quality of life of local residents.

3b. A commitment to maintaining the character and aesthetic qualities of the area for the long term can help to build a sense of confidence in local people and businesses regarding their financial and social investment in the community.

4a. Change of status of traditional land use agreements can create financial hardship and difficulties for local people and small-scale traditional industries in the area.

5a. This model has proven successful in other Rocky Mountain communities (e.g. Jasper, Canmore) as a way of engaging local stakeholders in creating plans and educating fellow citizens about land stewardship and appropriate use.

5b. Volunteer efforts can become the catalyst for generating creative 'locally driven' solutions and funding opportunities; and for securing further government agency support (e.g. Crowsnest Pass).



RECOMMENDATIONS

RATIONALE

1. A comprehensive trail inventory for the defined landscape area should be developed to identify the number, quality and uses of existing recreation trails.

- 1a. An inventory provides a valuable initial information base for recreation trail planning and management with regards to the number and quality of area trails, the types of use, and trail conditions. This information can inform recreation groups, government planners, industry and developers about area recreation values that are important to maintain for local and visitor use.
- 1b. An inventory can provide a better understanding of overlaps in trail usage between types of users, potential user conflicts, and gaps in types of trails available for the spectrum of recreation uses and abilities.
- 1c. Proper trail stewardship requires an understanding of trail use impacts on wildlife habitat, riparian areas, ecologically sensitive areas, and historical/cultural values. An inventory can inform the development of appropriate stewardship and regulatory initiatives throughout the landscape area.

2. A designated trail system should be created in the defined landscape area that is designed and managed for multiple recreation use (full range of recreation users).

- 2a. Designating a specific recreation trail system has the effect of focusing use in appropriate areas, while steering use away from others. High use area trails can be built and maintained to the necessary standard, which minimizes the need for maintenance.
- 2b. A trail system that is designated for multiple recreation use has a smaller footprint than numerous individual trail systems in an area, which lessens the impacts on the natural landscape. However, it may be the case in a multi-use system that single use trails are designed in certain locations that are better suited to a limited usage.
- 2c. Multiple use trail systems encourage co-existence amongst recreation user groups. This provides opportunities for cooperative stewardship or trail maintenance initiatives, and co-planning efforts.
- 2d. A designated trail system requires proper signage and maps, which can help keep recreation users safe on the trails, and can highlight areas of ecological or cultural sensitivity to avoid.
- 2e. A designated and managed trail system provides opportunities for creating user pay strategies for recreation users (e.g. day, multi-day or annual fees), as a way of recovering costs of ongoing trail maintenance.

3. To encourage understanding and respect between recreation users, establish 'share the trail' user protocols and educational materials highlighting the needs and concerns of the different recreation groups.

- 3a. Increased understanding between recreation user groups of the impacts and needs of certain uses, can lead to reduced conflicts between trail users.
- 3b. Trail etiquette protocols that are developed co-operatively between recreation user groups can be a powerful education and self-management tool.
- 3c. Recreation groups that are well organized (e.g. ATV users) can develop group training programs for trail safety, etiquette and stewardship that can be tied to licensing requirements.



THEME:

RECREATION

4. Random camping is a significant issue in the defined landscape area and requires effective management. Three suggested ways:

- Random camping should not be allowed in the Brule Community Pasture.
- Random camping by ATV users can be managed in part by designating and developing 'organized random camping' areas immediately adjacent to key ATV trailheads that would allow vehicles in the camping area.
- Develop designated camping areas for equestrian use.

5. The area of the Brule Sand Dunes is a hotspot issue involving high recreation, ecological and water values, and impacts on the community of Brule. This area must be effectively managed to reduce the impacts of ATV use, and protect the significant ecological and water values of the area.

Three suggested ways:

- Establish an 'organized random camping' site on the Northeast or East side of Brule Lake for ATV users (as per 4b) in a way that does not adversely affect Brule or other rural residential communities.
- Implement noise reduction control of ATV machines.
- Through engagement of recreation users and other stakeholders, determine ways to manage ATV use in the FLUZ area (SE of Brule Lake) to protect the significant ecological values in this region.

6. High impact recreation facilities, such as golf courses, are not appropriate recreation uses in the defined landscape area.

4a. The Brule Community Pasture is permitted by the Brule Grazing Association for growing grass for winter pasturing of horses. Random camping impacts the pasture by leaving garbage and glass which can endanger horses; and by hindering the growth of forage plants.

4b. The creation of designated 'organized random camping' areas would minimize impact on the broader landscape and focus camping away from riparian zones. These areas could utilize existing graveled areas and/or use of established roads, with camping allowed a set distance off the road (e.g. 75 meters, to reduce overall impact on vegetation).

4c. Developing designated equestrian camping areas adjacent to good horseback riding trailheads would provide more safe and appropriate facilities for this user group. Equestrian users have specific camping needs that include water and corrals.

5a. Multiple landscape values exist in conflict in this area, including:

- A high level of use by ATV recreation users (a well known area for visitors and locals alike) as a challenging recreation playground.
- Both Provincial and Rocky Mountain Region Environmentally Significant Areas designation covers the Brule Lake - Athabasca River Valley and Brule Sand Dunes area.
- Under the Coal Branch Integrated Resource Management Plan zone - the area southeast of Brule Lake to Highway 16 is classified as a 'Critical Wildlife' zone.
- Under the Coal Branch Integrated Resource Management Plan - Brule Lake Resource Management Area guideline states: "Land and resource activities will be subject to site-specific guidelines regarding location, intensity and season of operation so as to minimize impacts on both water resources and sensitive eolian areas." ('eolian' refers to the sand dunes ecology).
- The community of Brule lies directly across the lake, within visual and hearing range, and is affected by noise and parties of ATV/recreation users.

5b. Designating an 'organized random camping' area NE of Brule Lake could draw random campers away from the fragile lakeshore. Space in the camping area could be limited to manage numbers of people in the area.

5c. Noise control mechanisms for ATV machines can reduce noise impacts on the Brule community and other recreation users.

5d. The important ecological values of this area are adversely impacted by the overuse of recreational vehicles and by random camping, therefore limits may need to be placed on recreation use in the area. Stakeholders who can speak to the different values and uses in this area could be brought together to contribute to solutions for management.

6a. Golf course facilities can create demands for water and land that adversely impact this limited landscape resulting in fragmentation of and increased activity in wildlife corridors and environmentally significant areas; water allocation requirements; limited access for other land use activities; and disturbance of views.

INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL PEOPLE

The Community Landscape Visioning Process involved local residents and stakeholders living in Hinton, Brule and the surrounding rural area. Open public forums allowed people of all ages and occupations to provide their views on what landscape values they felt were important to retain, enhance or protect. The CLVP also involved the creation of a CLVP Working Group – a diverse group of local people who contributed their perspectives in a facilitated workshop process to consider all public input, and create recommendations and supporting rationale for key landscape values.

CLVP WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

1. Jerome Cranston
2. Leya Duschuymmer
3. Garth Griffiths
4. Ken Groat
5. Maureen Harper
6. Warren Kehr
7. Cindy LeClerq
8. Jon Little
9. Abigail Lummis
10. John Lummis
11. Gordon Murison
12. Paula Nolan
13. Wald Olson
14. Denis Robson
15. Rene Roy
16. Hilary Shannon
17. Paget Stewart
18. Laura Vinson
19. Website: Perry Hayward



BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The Athabasca River Valley - Community Landscape Vision Process (CLVP) was initiated by local citizens in December 2007 to address the need of local people to articulate and share their views about important values in this defined landscape. The Athabasca River Valley area extends from the community of Hinton, Alberta to the Jasper National Park Boundary, and includes both the Highway 16 and Brule Road corridors and adjacent foothills.

This local landscape is rich in history of aboriginal people, early explorers and fur traders, and more recently, a community founded on resource extraction industry, specifically coal mining and forestry. Tourism and recreation have also been a part of the local economy, supported by close proximity to Jasper National Park, William A. Switzer Provincial Park, and the Rock-Solomon Wildland Park.

Land use planning for the development of tourism and recreation was addressed in the late 1990s with the creation of nine recreation development nodes along the Yellowhead Corridor. In 2007, three additional nodes for recreation and tourism development were proposed for the area. Significant concern was raised by the public in response to the addition of the three proposed nodes and potential impacts on local landscape values. The CLVP was initiated to provide local citizens an opportunity for input to inform local and regional planning processes, such as the Yellowhead Corridor development nodes, recreation planning, and other development and conservation initiatives in the area.



*Phase 1***Preparation**

Public Awareness/Communications
development and outreach

CLVP Public Information and
Working Group Organizational Meeting

*Phase 2***Exploring Our Community
Landscape Values**

CLVP Working Group "Information
Gathering, Process and Strategy" Workshop

First Open Public Input Forum:
"Our Community Landscape –
Inventory of Local Values and Uses"
(Global Café public mapping and Input Forum)

*Phase 3***Creating Our Landscape Vision**

CLVP Working Group Workshop:
"Analysis of Landscape Values and Uses"
(Development of preliminary themes and
GIS map layers based on public input)

Second Open Public Forum:
"Mapping and Designing Our
Community Landscape Vision"

CLVP Working Group Sessions
(development of landscape recommendations
and GIS map layers based on public input)

*Phase 4***Completion of Our
Community Landscape Vision**

Third Open Public Forum:
"Preliminary Final Report, Maps and
Recommendations of Our
Community Landscape Vision"

CLVP Working Group – final revisions

Public and Media Release:
Our Community Landscape Vision Final Report



PROCESS DESIGN

The Athabasca River Valley – Community Landscape Vision Process provided an opportunity for local citizens and stakeholders to contribute their voice to land use planning in the study area, through an inclusive, broad-based and transparent process. The process contained a strong educational component, so that community discussions were deepened and informed by available studies, policy documents and plans from government agencies and non-profit or community organizations. In this way the design of the process integrated local knowledge and expertise with science-based studies, and current and future development plans to produce the final set of recommendations.

Important preliminary work for the CLVP included building community awareness and understanding of the project. In December 2007 approximately 40 people attended an Open House meeting in the hamlet of Brule to complete a preliminary needs assessment for the proposed CLVP project. A second Open House was subsequently held in March 2008 in the community of Hinton, where 30 people addressed the need for the CLVP project. Discussions with key members of municipal, regional and provincial governments were then completed to both create an understanding of the intent of the CLVP, and gain increased interest and support for the outcome of the process. Municipal and provincial government agencies were encouraged to become involved as the process moved forward, and subsequently provided key information resources, mapping materials and observation at community forums.

An important component of the process design was the ongoing outreach and communication with community members, leaders and groups, and stakeholders in the area. This was accomplished through local media advertisements and articles, face-to-face meetings, community and interest group networks, and most significantly, word of mouth and personal email distribution. In addition, a CLVP Website was developed as a vehicle to share information about the project and post the results of all public input sessions in an open and transparent manner (www.ourcommunitylandscapevision.ca). Through these means, the process involved a broad range of citizens and stakeholders in the area, including: landowners, town and acreage residents, municipal officials, recreation users of all types, mining and forestry employees, outfitters, business owners, professionals, conservationists, and scientists. The diversity of public participants led to rich discussions that involved clear differences of opinion but also surprising commonality regarding the larger values and concerns about the landscape and its future health and use.

The design of the CLVP was an iterative process that moved between large public forums (typically 50 to 75 people) where public input was gathered using a deliberative dialogue approach; to smaller group meetings of the CLVP Working Group (15-20 people) to analyze the input data from the forums, draft the initial recommendations and rationale based on the public forum input, and strategize about next steps. The project coordinator and facilitator designed and led the working group meetings and public input forums, and provided minor grammatical editing to the CLVP recommendations and rationale as drafted by the working group. In total, 380 local people were involved in the project over its time span of eight months, including 432 person hours in the Working Group, and 380 person hours in the community forums.





SPECIAL NOTE FOR FUTURE LANDSCAPE PLANNING



The Athabasca River Valley – Community Landscape Vision Process provides a robust picture of the myriad values that are considered important by local people to maintain, protect or enhance as a legacy for the future. The recommendations and rationale were developed directly from the public voice of people who live, work, recreate and have an understanding of the multiple values related to this special area. The process utilized good science and extensive public dialogue to suggest concrete direction for future land management decisions, as well as cultural, social, economic and environmental context in support of those decisions.

In view of the process attributes, land use managers will find the CLVP an invaluable tool in future land management planning in this special and highly valued landscape, whether it be for water or watershed resources, wilderness and wildlife values, recreation planning, future development scenarios, or understanding and safeguarding the rich historical, aesthetic, traditional uses and character of the Athabasca River Valley.

