

Information Gathering Session Summary Report



Background

Since early on in 2008, the Eagle Point – Blue Rapids Parks Council (Parks Council) has been compiling information from stakeholders, public interest groups, member organizations and the general public to develop the Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area Draft Management Plan. *O2 Planning and Design* was engaged in late 2009 to compile, organize and enhance the Draft Management Plan.

To further the Parks Council's commitment to engage the public in this community-based park planning initiative, public feedback on the Draft Management Strategies (from the Draft Management Plan) was a first step in a comprehensive public consultation process. Once the Draft Management Strategies were approved by the Parks Council for public feedback, they were released on February 16, 2010 and formed the basis for the Information Gathering Session held throughout the remainder of February and March 2010.

The Information Gathering Session was organized to allow as many interested parties as possible to bring suggestions and offer advice on the ongoing process of developing a *'sustainable balance of diverse recreational opportunities and environmental protection for all to enjoy in Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area.'*

The Information Gathering Session was advertised on the Parks Council's website as well as through local and regional media, in both radio and print. The following outlines how the media was incorporated for the Information Gathering Session:




- EPBR Website (www.epbrparksCouncil.org)
 - Stakeholder email
 - Schedule of upcoming events
 - Information Gathering Session documents (preliminary draft strategies, context and questionnaires)
 - News articles and promotional material
- Published Articles
 - Western Review – Feature Articles
 - January 26, 2010 – ‘EPBR looking for public input’
 - Upcoming events, office location
 - March 9, 2010 – ‘Clock ticking on latest feedback opportunity’
 - Deadline reminder, planning process, upcoming events
 - March 23, 2010 – ‘Group looks for support, process moving forward’

- Society for the Responsible Management of the North Saskatchewan River Valley; presentation to town, planning process, contact information
 - Western Review – Letters to the Editor (external)
 - February 9, 2010 – ‘Chance for public input applauded’
 - Encouragement for participation
 - March 30, 2010 – ‘Society has questions’
 - Communication process
 - Grande Alberta’s Economic Region
 - April Newsletter (pending)
 - Information Gathering Session-process summary
- Radio Broadcasts
 - 92.9 FM – BWC
 - January 14, 2010
 - News story covering Information Gathering Session process and events
 - March 8, 2010
 - live interview featuring Public Forums
 - 790 – CFCW
 - March 1 – 10, 2010 – advertizing campaign
- Drayton Valley Electronic Sign
 - Public Forum promotion and contact information

The following printed materials were developed and released by the Parks Council, intended for Information Gathering Session promotion:

- Submitted and Published articles
 - Western Review
 - January 12, 2010 – Information Gathering Session promotion, planning process, contact information
 - March 30, 2010 – deadline reminder, summary of events, next steps
 - April 13, 2010 – feedback appreciated, next steps



**Eagle Point-Blue Rapids
Parks Council**

Join us throughout
February and March
for a series of

**INFORMATION
GATHERING SESSIONS.**

The Parks Council is providing an
additional opportunity for all Albertans

**TO REVIEW AND
PROVIDE FEEDBACK
ON THE DRAFT
MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIES**

currently developing for the
Eagle Point Provincial Park and
Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area.

Download or pick up your
information package,
including specific
times and dates.

**STARTING
FEBRUARY 16, 2010.**

www.epbrparksCouncil.org

Box 7355 | 5132 50 Street | Drayton Valley | Alberta | T7A 0J6
Tel – 780.898.PARK (7275) | Email – admin@epbrparksCouncil.org

- Brazeau County News
 - January/February 2010 – Information Gathering Session promotion, planning process, contact information
 - March/April 2010 (pending)
- Advertisements
 - Western Review (1/4 page)
 - February 2 and 23, 2010
 - Breton Booster (1/2 page)
 - January 27 and February 3, 2010
 - Community Voice (1/2 page; Zones 2,3)
 - February 2, 2010



Methodology

The Draft Management Strategies were accompanied by the necessary instructions on how to complete the questionnaire as well as background information regarding the next steps in the management planning process. Together with the Information Gathering Session schedule of events, these information packages were made available online and in the Parks Council's office during the entire process. Over the course of the Information Gathering Session, the Parks Council enabled the following methods for feedback collection:

- Extended Office Hours
 - Until 8pm two evenings per week throughout February and March
 - The Parks Council office provided the public with a variety of opportunities to stop into the office and review the poster board display. The display included a number of large format prints to show the Information Gathering Session schedule of events, the planning process, the history of the Parks Council and its current funding partners.
 - A number of maps were also on display to assist with the explanation and to facilitate explanation through interactive activities.
- Traveling Information Gathering Session

- The office display was taken to both Buck Creek and Rocky Rapids as a way to increase awareness in the surrounding communities. Each display component has been collected and archived, and is attached as an appendix item.
- Public Forums
 - Held in Drayton Valley as a ‘walk through’ of the Draft Management Strategies. The public forums used a facilitator to stimulate conversation around the Draft Management Strategies, while the Parks Council staff kept a complete record of questions, comments and concerns. The facilitator’s report is attached as an appendix item.
- Working Sessions
 - Held with industry and governmental partners in order to gather feedback and reiterate partnership opportunities.

Analysis



Input was collected and assimilated via Survey Monkey, an online data collection system. Each questionnaire was entered as a separate form. The information collected at each additional avenue (three public forums, three working sessions) was given a separate questionnaire and was then entered into the system.

Marked to designate materials originally printed by the Parks Council, most of the submitted questionnaires originated from Parks Council’s office or were distributed by the Parks Council at Buck Creek and Rocky Rapids during the Traveling Information Gathering Session.

Upon entering the office, the public were invited to view the poster board display, and were provided with the opportunity to gain clarification on this Information Gathering Session as well as the overall planning process. Not every participant signed in (only 29 names recorded), however the office staff tallied 75 walk ins, and fielded 173 phone calls between February 16 and March 31, 2010. During the Traveling Information Gathering Session, approximately 30 people were in attendance at Buck Creek (23 signed in) while at Rocky Rapids, 14 attendees signed in.

During the same timeframe, the homepage of Parks Council’s website was visited 1,674 times, where the Information Gathering Session schedule of events was posted. For more information, 226 individual visits were to the Information Gathering Session page, where the necessary documents were available for download. As a result of the concurrent hiring opportunities from the Parks Council, 1,096 visitors continued from the homepage to the employment page.

Feedback received from the completed questionnaires varied in completion levels, from topic specific feedback to overall analysis of the Draft Management Strategies. During the course of the Information Gathering Session, the Parks Council received a total of 151 questionnaires.

The externally facilitated public forums were focused on solution development which allowed for constructive comments and provided an opportunity to walk through the document by topic, objective and strategy levels. Attendance varied between 8 to 16 participants at each session, while 6 people attended all three sessions. Questions for the purpose of clarification were responded to by either Parks Council members or staff. Each working session identified specific requirements, allowing for a reconfirmation of existing partnerships and the discovery of potential opportunities.



Summarised Findings

The majority of comments concentrated on three key issues. The document itself was noted as being cumbersome and intensive. Support for additional, more detailed (and tangible) planning was indicated and some expressed concerns around the short time limits for filling in the survey. The following indicated the general concerns found within each section.

Research, Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Respondents commented on the importance of inventories and assessments, stating the need for baseline research prior to any development and clear definitions around accountability, standards and enforcement. Carrying capacity of the land, cumulative impacts and remediation were the main themes identified as concerns. Some respondents suggested the Parks Council compile a centralized database, listing completed and forthcoming studies. Others made note of documents that should be cross referenced in the management plan for Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area.

Community Engagement and Ongoing Public Involvement

Respondents expressed their support for increased communications to and from the Parks Council, specifically open meetings. Opinions typically supported developing educational and promotional materials to help increase local tourism, economic development and family oriented recreational opportunities. Some stakeholders suggested development and

implementation of a conflict resolution strategy, a process for appeals as well as methodology for future gap identification and analysis.

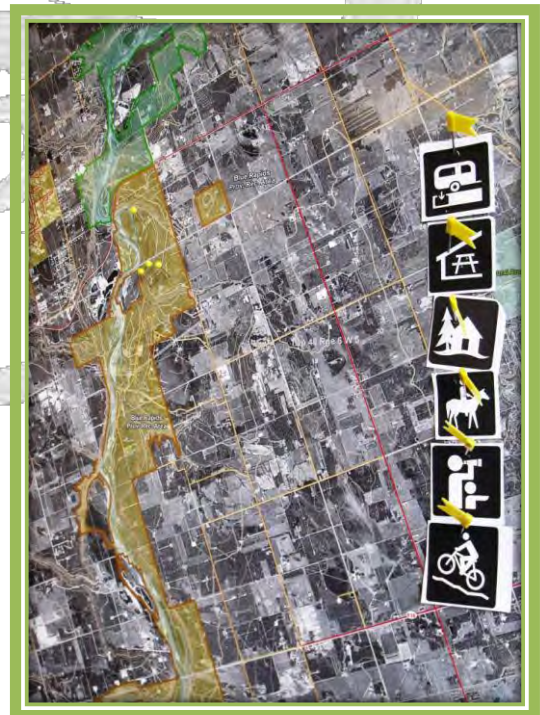
Recreation Opportunities

Although there were differing opinions on specific recreational opportunities there was general support for managed recreation within this park system. On one end of the spectrum, respondents indicated that impact from noise, increased traffic flow and landscape concerns outweigh the benefits of specific recreation facilities (ie. jet boating, extreme use trails, motocross facility). On the other end, respondents communicated the benefits of economic development, facility management as well as safety and access controls. Support varied for hunting within the boundaries of Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area from 'year round', to 'not supported' based on concentration of activities within the land base.

Specific Questions Raised

The following issues were raised throughout the Information Gathering Session, requesting the Parks Council look at:

- continued engagement with Aboriginal peoples (First Nations and Métis) in park planning and management
- traditional and contemporary land uses and activities
- eco-tourism and sustainability
- infrastructure and associated water usage
- effects of noise pollution on humans and wildlife
- seasonal wildlife sensitivities and human infringement
- educational and curriculum linked planning
- waste management and illegal dumping
- end use planning, enhancements and partnerships with industry
- standards and best practices
- industrial operation requirements and liabilities
- reclamation stewardship initiatives
- Parks Council's role in communications, recommendations and responsibilities
- long term planning, funding and management objectives



Next Steps

Working collaboratively with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, the Parks Council is currently reviewing all submitted feedback, and revising the draft management strategies accordingly. Once this has been completed, the draft management plan will be available for public consultation once again. This formal public consultation opportunity is scheduled for the summer of 2010.

The Parks Council will also be presenting the information contained within the preliminary Facility Concept Plans, during the spring of 2010. This will show the more detailed facility plans proposed within the Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area.

Appendix

- Information Gathering Session documentation
- Media Coverage
- Facilitator's report
- Survey summary report

