

Hiker's Voice

Alberta Hiking Association Newsletter

September 2018

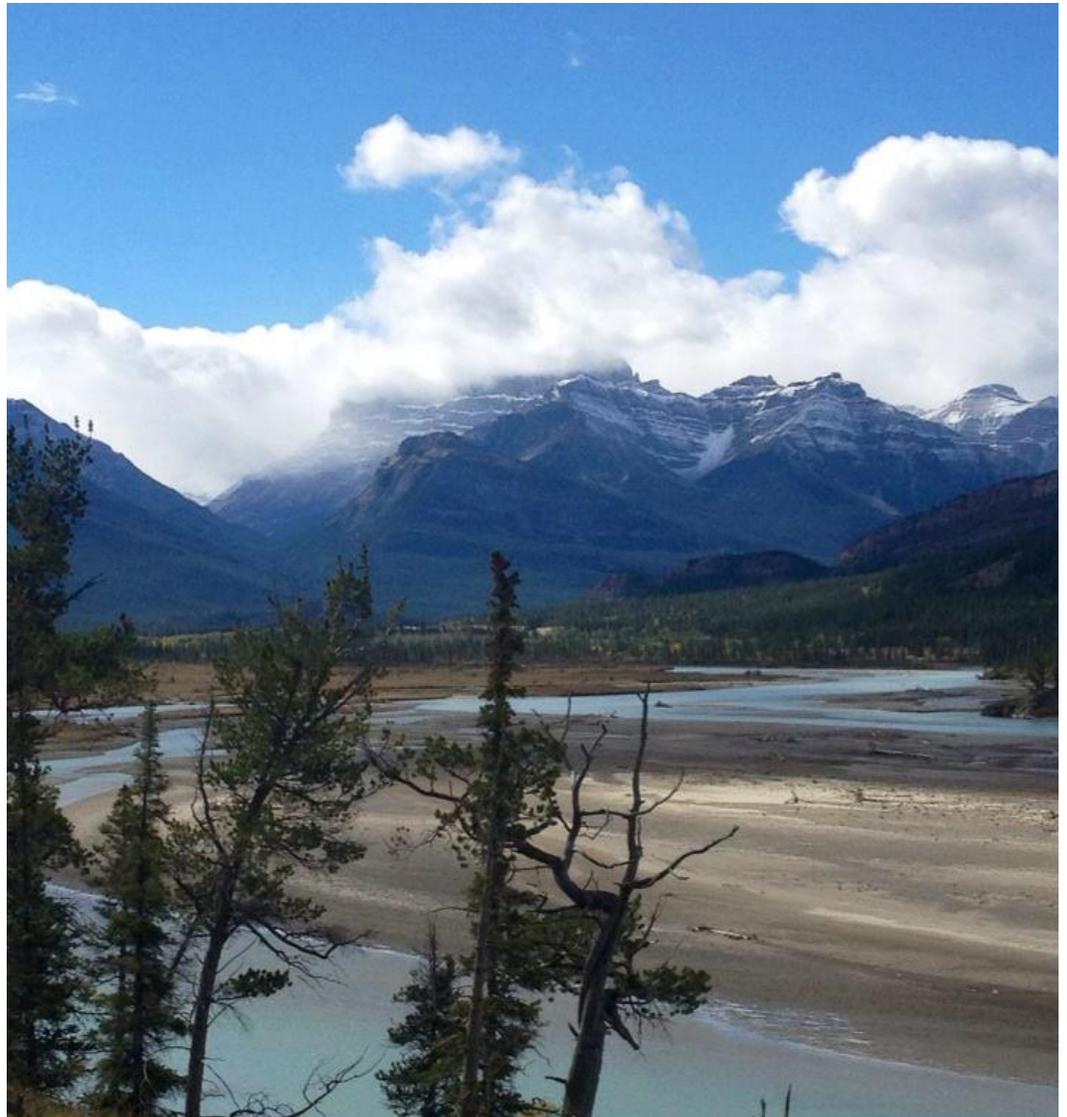
*"Nature always wears
the colours of the
spirit"*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

AHA autumn update

As the trees begin to turn, so do thoughts to winter. AHA hopes that everyone had a wonderful summer hiking season as we look forward to ski touring and snowshoeing!

(Photo credit: Skadi Wilderness Adventures)



AHA at Trails Fest 2018

The fourth annual Trails Fest organized by the Friends of Kananaskis Country was held at the Canmore Nordic Centre on June 10, 2018.

As in previous years the Alberta Hiking Association had an exhibit showcasing its objectives and aims. Manning the AHA exhibit was Murray Fierheller – Chairman of AHA, Jane Drummond – AHA member representing Terra Firma Nordegg Hiking Club and Colin Graver – AHA Membership Chair representing Second Sixties Outdoor Club. The three were kept busy with people keen to know about the AHA and its objectives and aims.

AHA aims to:

- act as an advocate at Provincial and Regional levels for walking, hiking and snowshoeing interests.
- advance the development and maintenance of well-built hiking trails and to encourage trail building initiatives in Alberta.
- promote responsible, minimal impact hiking that respects the natural environment and to encourage others through our example.
- increase awareness about the benefits to health and local economies of walking, hiking and snowshoeing.

AHA was among more than thirty club, groups, organizations and retailers showcasing what they do to create successful multi-use trail activities.

After a free hotdog lunch, over forty folks took part in Trail Running, Orienteering, Mountain Biking, Map Reading, Plogging and an Experiential Bear Encounter Hike.



Your Forest Podcast

Millions of people every year take to the mountains and surrounding forest to take in our planet's beautiful scenery, flora and fauna. These experiences often give people pause and allow us to rethink our place in this world. Matthew Kristoff has created 'Your Forest Podcast' to provide interesting and relevant content on diverse topics around environmental issues in a way people find refreshing and easy to listen to.

David Wasserman, a long-time member and past Chair of the Alberta Hiking Association, joined Matthew to discuss hiking and what it has done for his life and how it could improve the lives of others.

Topics discussed include: Nature appreciation, Yellowstone wolf introduction, Bear jams, Alberta Hiking Association, ATVs in parks, Irresponsible users, Confluence visiting, Clear cuts, Wildfire, Trans Canada Trail, and much more.

To listen to David and Matthew please check out the link below:

<https://yourforestpodcast.com/episode-1/2018/9/11/45-hiking-with-david-wasserman>

AHA Member Profile

A new section of the Hiker's Voice will profile our member clubs. This newsletter features our newest member Terra Firma Nordegg (TFN). AHA had a quick chat with TFN to find out more about the club, its interests and mandate.

1. Why was TFN created?

We created TFN for three reasons. First, Nordegg, an emerging trail Mecca, needs active hiking/walking programming. Second, the walkers in Nordegg are a mix of full and part time residents, Clearwater County enthusiasts, local indigenous people, and urban weekend warriors. These constituents need opportunities to interact and build community. Third, the Nordegg walking community needs an advocacy vehicle that focuses on the needs of the silent majority of back country users and the environment where they walk.

We have acquired 35 members in 5 months and the number continues to grow each month and each scheduled hike. We also have many young hikers attend with their parents, we would estimate the number of active participants in the high 40s with those "little boots" hiking along with members.

2. What kind of activities does TFN lead?

Terra Firma Nordegg offers hiking + experiences and hiking + education. There is so much to enjoy in our area or learn from it. Some highlights from our last 5 months are:

- Hiking through Historic Nordegg with a local eco-tourism company, Skadi Wilderness Adventures, guiding us deep into Nordegg's rich history.
- Hiking with ESRD representatives on the FireSmart Trail. It was a fascinating hike where we had the opportunity to witness the pilot reforestation of clear cut

areas with aspen. Hikers also had the opportunity to chat with Professor Simon Landhauser of the U of A, an ecologist who specializes in land reclamation -Solstice hike, one of the only times of the year we can START a hike at 7 p.m. :)

4. Can you talk a little about the support you receive from the community/partners?

TFN has created partnerships with businesses that operate in the area. From small family owned businesses to larger corporations we believe it's important to partner for a couple of reasons; 1) funding from these businesses allows us to provide hikes for free and operate our website. This way all activities for our members are gratis and there are no membership fees; 2) It is important to create community and partnering with private business gives us the mechanism to discuss other issues impacting the community such as logging, fire smart programmes etc. A list of our sponsors can be found on our site www.terrafirmanordegg.com We're looking forward to extending these partnerships to other groups as well, like outdoor rec groups and kids clubs. Stay tuned!

5. What are some of the ideas you have for future activities?

We would like to do an annual walk paired with an art experience and winter walks with bonfire lunches. We are committed to running some of the hikes that have been successful so far. Historic Nordegg, Solstice, FireSmart, etc. We are looking at something for Mother's Day as well as we hope to incorporate a yoga element into some hikes as one of our members is undergoing her yoga teacher training (think summit yoga, yes!). Another theme we are working on is our *Ground Truths Series* where we hike with a focus on the natural world that surrounds us. We are looking into topics such as water quality/headwaters, wildlife, wild harvesting/mushroom hunting, trees/plant communities, etc.

6. Anything else you would like your fellows AHA members to know?

We are loving the positive and creative environment that our club has created. We are always looking for more connections and opportunities to collaborate with other clubs and hikers.

Please, please share our website with all your walking friends. <https://www.terrafirmanordegg.com/>

Outdoor Recreation Channel

The Government of Alberta has launched an online platform to assist the consultation process on specific outdoor projects. This platform will allow the population of baseline data on user experiences, provide stewardship stories and provide a forum for two-way general discussion on land use. The objectives are to increase recreational literacy, standardize the trails in the provide and to reduce unplanned trails to reduce negative environmental impact

To contribute content:

Access the site at www.talkaep.alberta.ca/the-outdoor-recreation-channel :

- Show us where your recreational interests are by putting a pin on our Places map;
- Tell us how you support stewardship and outdoor recreation in your area by writing a comment on our Stewardship Stories;
- Provide feedback on ‘Exceptional Trails’ a Guide to Trail Classification, Design and Construction (The Guide) on Alberta’s Public Land;
- Subscribe to stay informed on updates to the channel

Please contact the GoA if you have questions or to provide feedback at: AEP.OutdoorRecreation@gov.ab.ca

Other Notable Events

- On September 24, 2018, Premier Rachel Notley, Environment and Parks Minister Shannon Phillips and Joe Lougheed (Peter Lougheed’s son) celebrated the 40th anniversary of the creation of Kananaskis Country covering 4,000 square kilometers of mountain terrain on the doorstep of southern Alberta. This celebration recognized the vision of Premier Peter Lougheed and his tireless efforts to create a magnificent landscape and legacy for the people of Alberta to enjoy for generations to come. Murray Fierheller, chair of AHA participated as well as Simon Dyer and Ghulam Jamro, past AHA directors, and member Tony Daffern. There were 250 in attendance. They talked about how Albertan’s value their parks. Prior to 1978 the government did not have an environmental plan for crown land. The creation of Kananaskis Country was to relieve the pressure a growing population was having on the National Parks. The Kananaskis is now the model the government is using for the planning of the new parks like the Castle Provincial Park and Wildland. Premier Notley announced \$12 million in new funding for Kananaskis to be used for infrastructure such as improvements and expanding accommodation at William Watson Lodge. This brings the total commitment to Alberta Parks to \$60 million since the NDP have been in power. She mentioned the Castle and \$700,000 for three new huts and the money spent on restoring the Ha Ling trail. Minister Phillips presented a plaque to the family of Peter Lougheed.



There was no announcement on the Bighorn Provincial Park or Wildland that we had hoped for. Murray had a brief chance to talk to Minister Phillips and had the feeling the announcement will be soon. He also asked her about an official opening of the Ha Ling trail. We had been told that the official reopening was going to be September 4. Minister Phillips apologized that her staff were misinformed on the date the trail reconstruction would be complete. He told her the AHA would love to participate in a hike when they do have the official opening.

- A new report out from the Government Alberta regarding Alberta's Eastern Slopes and the threats to its ecology was recently released. Alberta Environment and Parks has commissioned a series of scientific reviews of ecological responses to human disturbances, including climate change, in three provincial areas of Alberta's eastern slopes. These disturbances include the use of motorized vehicles on trails and roads, forestry, climate change, fire suppression, hunting and fishing, and grazing. You can find the report here: <https://albertaep.wordpress.com/2018/09/07/science-guides-policies-and-actions-in-albertas-eastern-slopes/>

Notes from the AHA Board

Promoting the protection of the Bighorn as a park or wildland: The Edmonton Journal published an op-ed in late June. We also countered a negative protection op-ed in a September edition of the Ponoka News by MLA Ron Orr. Alistair Des Moulins was on the Southern Alberta Recreation Advisory group for the planning of the Castle and the Porcupine Livingstone. He has been asked to be on a committee to discuss the details of putting the plan for Porcupine Livingstone into action. There will likely be several meetings this winter. Don Cockerton has taken the lead to source funding and grants for hiring a part time administrator to deal with issues that the board is falling behind on such this newsletter. Thanks to Marla Zapach for preparing this one. We have also requested stakeholder status with West Fraser to discuss logging and how it affects recreation in the Nordegg Area.