

“THE GILPIN GRASSLANDS SAGA”

http://www.boundaryalliance.org/ba_002.htm

Barry Brandow's Update, May 2010

The Gilpin file remains active and there are three recent events all connected worth reporting.

The most recent is a mud slide into Gilpin Creek. The steep slopes either side of the creek in this area have been badly eroded because of the cow for at least seven years. The cause of the slide was a placement of a water trough which is in the Gilpin Grassland Park by range staff 30 feet from the edge of the drop off.

The slide (see pictures following) is approximately 180 feet long, 20 feet wide at the top, larger at the bottom and 4 feet deep. Both sides of the creek have literally been scoured 3 to 4 feet high for 100 yards and at 600 yards there is still significant sediment in the creek bed.

Range staff is going to blow this off as an honest mistake not worthy of censure, after all if the water had been drained away from the slope the slide would not have happened. I take exception to the consistent cavalier attitude of our hired help who have consistently used every trick in the book to deny the obvious environmental deficit caused by cows and I have submitted a formal complaint to the Forest Practices Board.

In an attempt to educate as many interested citizens as possible I organized a meeting Feb. 23rd 45 people attended and Freedom of Information letters were used to show how quickly one of the province's finest wildlife/grassland initiatives came to nothing; the purchase of the 1470 acre Boothman Ranch August 1972 primarily because of its wildlife values.

Pertinent sound bytes from 4 decades of letters were put on screen and the original letters were placed around the room for those wanting validation. I also had plenty of pictures organized by watersheds showing the damage caused by the cow in the Gilpin Grassland Park.

The summary reports describing both the purchase and rationale for the purchase by Biologists, Jack Bone and Ray Demarchi and the minutes from the first meeting in which Fish & Wildlife invited range to participate in the management of the 4 District Lots totaling 1470 acres in October 1972 stipulated conditions expected from range staff.

None of the conditions were ever accepted by range once the cows were re-introduced five years after the ranch purchase: good integrated management was to be demonstrated; lead management of the private land purchase was to be Fish & Wildlife staff and the primary management within the newly created Grand Forks Environmental Management (similar to the boundaries of the proposed wildlife management area) was to be wildlife.

When the Overton/Moody Coordinated Resource Management Plan was adopted as the preferred management vehicle in 1978 the rationale for the ranch purchase and agreements to re-introduce cows on the purchased property were lost. The ultimate insult was that range staff chaired the meetings and the voice from Fish & Wildlife was lost by virtue of being 100 miles away and always having limited staff and budget.

Coordinated Resource Management mandated consensus in management decisions so any criticism of range management just became a long bitter fight described as such in Don Gayton's Review of the Gilpin Grasslands March 2003.

It is truly an absurdity to believe you can have cows on crown land in the dry interior of our province without a significant environmental deficit. There are only three options available to those who put no premium on integrity or citizenship and are steadfast in denying the obvious. You ignore the problem and if critics persist you deny and if the heat doesn't go away you bold face lie ie. the prestigious grazing award given to the Gilpin rancher Nov. 2006.

The recent slide was all a function of same old. The area was one of a number of sites where crude cow fencing (see pictures following) and water development was done in the summer/fall 2009 all in response to field trips and well distributed pictures criticizing range management. There was no attempt to co-ordinate this initiative with other stakeholders even though it

was called Coordinated Resource Management, there was no plan to recognize wildlife values and there was no restoration.

Range Specialist, Doug Fraser's recommendations for management of Gilpin Creek in 2007 were totally ignored.

I have asked MLA, John Slater to come to Grand Forks and look at the slide and also meet members of a small committee that when up to speed on information will sit down and talk to all stakeholders about the future management of the Gilpin Grasslands.

The first objective of the committee which I am hoping will be well represented with our local politicians, is seeking support for an equitable solution for the removal of the cow from the Gilpin Grassland Park and the letters I have referred to are a significant part of the argument!

Barry Brandow.

See pictures following of slide and fencing.