



Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group 2009 Annual Report

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Introduction

In 2008 the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group's (GSMG) first Annual Report examined the basis for creating the GSMG itself. In addition, it presented information about the Group's initial startup in areas such as self-unification, team charter building, and internal procedural and structural developments. However, the GSMG 2008 Annual Report also documented the Group's early orientation towards addressing two issues in the Ghost Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ) that were deemed especially pressing: Trails and Camping.

A year later the GSMG 2009 Annual Report can expand on the results of that early orientation by including progress summaries from the GSMG Trails and Camping Sub-Committees. It also includes a detailed six-year "original-recommendations-and-their-report-cards" review from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). The Report concludes with an oil and gas industry perspective from the GSMG Petro-Canada representative.

Like any enterprise whose activities are determined and directed by a governing body of core principles — be it a constitution or, in this case, a charter — the achievements of the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group can be measured by conformance to one of its core principles where, in the GSMG Team Charter, it is stated:

“The Group members shall be proactive and forward thinking in the identification of issues, problems and opportunities that may impact the Ghost (FLUZ).”

It is believed the contents of the GSMG 2009 Annual Report will demonstrate measurable achievements of that principle.

(Photos by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development)

Message from the Chair

As the GSMG second annual report is distributed I'd like to take a moment to reflect on where we are. The GSMG is comprised of a very diverse group of users representing the vast majority of interests in the region. Their commitment to work together for the common good of the Ghost Access Management Plan (GAMP) as well as for the groups they represent is amazing.

In the past many people have thought that a group of this nature would not be able to succeed and yet, as we finish our second year of activity, we are continuing to make progress. "Progress" is an interesting word as it relates to this kind of endeavor. To say that we are in uncharted territory is an understatement! Our work continues to be challenging as there are no prior templates for us to follow. The Group is constantly creating from scratch as we move forward. I am extremely proud of the members of the GSMG. Developing the Group's role and activities has tested each and every member, and yet, time and time again, their resilience and commitment to the larger vision of our mandate shines through.

In the pages of this Annual Report you will find updates that are brief and yet represent a monumental amount of work. The report of the Trails Sub-Committee is a great case in point. Massive amounts of work have been undertaken in a variety of areas. As you read through the GSMG 2009 Annual Report, recognize that it is a work-in-progress. As a group we are determined to continue moving forward to see our vision realized.

"The Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group is an assembly of committed stakeholders of the Ghost-Waiparous FLUZ that will deliberate and recommend GAMP implementation decisions that ensure reasonable area access by all users while using its best efforts to ensure that the character of the region is maintained."

The amount of work that needs to be done is daunting and yet, in the twenty-five years that I have been involved in land use issues in this region, I have never been more optimistic! The opportunity to develop a world class recreational region that is safe, sustainable, built on a commitment of co-operation, and provides meaningful opportunities for year-round OHV use in the Ghost FLUZ is now within reach.

Sincerely,
Les Bon-Bernard, Chairperson
Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group

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GSMG Trails Sub-Committee: Progress and Challenges

A summary of GSMG Trails Sub-Committee achievements during the past year include:

- Created a GSMG Project Submission Evaluation Form. The form will serve as an evaluation tool to compare and contrast proposed trail project criteria and values with GSMG's own existing trail criteria and values.
- Participated in the first Sustainable Trail Design Training Course in June 2008. NOHVCC trail designer Steve Uhles facilitated the course; additional assistance was provided by local government experts.
- Conducted Sustainable Trail Design Training on May 1 - 3, 2009.
- Assembled the Trail Survey Team; Calvin Everitt selected as the chairperson.
- Developed Level 1 and Level 2 Trail Survey Worksheets and related Data Dictionaries to establish consistent methods for evaluating trail conditions.
- Researched and identified specific Trail Inventory and Condition Assessment activities to be conducted during 2009/2010. Volunteers are being trained to undertake these activities.
- Signed data sharing agreements with SRD to allow the Trails Sub-Committee and the Trail Survey Team access to government data.
- Designed and issued identification placards to Trail Inventory and Condition Assessment workers.



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Although the GSMG Trails Sub-Committee has not yet made tangible changes or improvements to the trail network in the Ghost-Waiparous region, its ability to plan and prepare for those initiatives has now grown dramatically. In particular, substantial progress has been made in creating an integrated system of documents, criteria, processes and procedures related to trail work. That means the Sub-Committee now has the administrative means to objectively evaluate trail project proposals and then plan and oversee those projects.

However, finding consistent funding sources for such undertakings is still a major challenge. While modest funds for the recent training courses were provided from local off-highway-vehicle clubs and SRD, other financial resources – such as the three thousand dollars required to obtain an *ArcView* software license for data sharing with SRD – are currently beyond the reach of GSMG. Nevertheless, efforts to investigate and secure consistent funding continue.



GSMG Camping Sub-Committee: Overview and Directions

The GSMG Camping Sub-Committee contains a broad cross-section of Ghost-Waiparous region user groups, and all Sub-Committee representatives are members of the greater GSMG. The Camping Sub-Committee operates under the authority of the GSMG, and recommendations made from the Sub-Committee are first reviewed at the GSMG level before being forwarded to SRD for final decisions.

The Sub-Committee was established to look at the issue of camping in the area covered by the Ghost Access Management Plan (GAMP). Camping is closely linked to other recreational uses in the area and it was felt that camping needed to be reviewed in relationship to the other uses. As well, camping in the region needs to be studied with respect to the four primary GAMP objectives. Those objectives include:

- Ensure public safety
- Ensure sustainability of natural resources
- Minimize conflicts between recreational OHV users and other users, and
- Provide a range of opportunities for summer and winter recreational off-highway-vehicle use

The GSMG Camping Sub-Committee is currently determining the relationships between camping and other recreational uses in the Ghost-Waiparous region, and is also compiling information on user activity types and concentrations. Once this information is gathered and analyzed, a strategy will be developed to ensure that camping activities are located in areas that enhance the experience of all users while at the same time ensuring those activities occur in a safe, environmentally sustainable manner. The Sub-Committee is thus concurrently reviewing the impact of camping activities on the four primary GAMP objectives.

GSMG Camping Sub-Committee members include:

- Les Bon-Bernard
- Gerald Hewitt
- Michael Lickers
- Siggy Pechout
- Diane Smathers
- Mark Tannas

In addition, SRD representative Roger Meyer assists this Sub-Committee by providing liaison with, and support from, SRD itself.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development: Recommendations and Report Cards

This SRD section of the GSMG 2009 Annual Report encompasses a six-year period, from 2003 to the present, which summarizes the initial recommendations received by the original Ghost-Waiparous Advisory Group in 2003. Each of those recommendations is then followed by a “report card” of its outcome or current status. The recommendations and report cards are grouped in four categories: (1) Education, (2) Enforcement, (3) Engineering, and (4) Maintenance/Monitoring (Evaluation). Note: Some contents in this section have been edited for brevity; full text versions are available from SRD if desired.

(1) Recommendations Concerning Education

(a) Recommendation: Brochures, Posters and Maps

Produce brochures, posters and maps that show motorized recreational use of roads and trails based on vehicle type and season, including those trails having restrictions (e.g. fisheries, wildlife, or ground conditions). Supporting ethics information, linked to SRD's *Respect the Land* program, should address: interactions between motorized and non-motorized users; personal safety considerations; random camping guidelines; natural resource management.

(a) Report Card: Brochures, Posters and Maps

The first version of the Ghost Forest Land Use Zone (Ghost FLUZ) brochure was issued in May 2006. The *Designated Trail System*, shown on the brochure map, identified intersections and vehicle classification signs. User feedback resulted in additional arrows and intersection numbers on the second version. The third and latest version of the brochure has been further updated and is currently posted at all kiosk locations.

(b) Recommendation: Distribute the Information

Distribute the brochures, posters, and maps to the public through SRD and other provincial offices. Electronic versions should also be available on the Ghost-Waiparous Access Management Plan (GAMP) website.

(b) Report Card: Distribute the Information

Distribution of the information was completed in 2006. Regular updates are being provided. (See Website)

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(c) Recommendation: Website

Use the GAMP website as a source of information on trail conditions and resource management issues relating to access in the Ghost FLUZ.

(c) Report Card: Website

The GAMP website has been updated to provide information on trail conditions and resource management issues in the Ghost FLUZ. New versions of the brochure are also available on the website. In addition, in 2009 the brochure map was made available for downloading to a Garmin GPS unit. That means the region's users have real time knowledge of their location in relation to the designated trail network.

(d) Recommendation: Information Kiosks

Install information kiosks at key locations in the planning area (e.g., primary access points, staging areas, etc.). The kiosks should provide up-to-date information on designated trails, trail conditions, rules and regulations, and resource management issues in the Ghost FLUZ, adjacent provincial protected areas, and Banff National Park.

(d) Report Card: Information Kiosks

The installation of information kiosks at key locations was completed by May 2006, and similar kiosks are now in place at the Airstrip and Fallen Timber Provincial Recreation Areas. By spring 2009 a Waiparous PRA kiosk with brochure and *Respect the Land* information will also be in place.



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(e) Recommendation: Signs

1. Post signs at major entry points to the Ghost FLUZ which state the region is being managed by GAMP and accompanying FLUZ regulations.
2. The signs should be strategically placed throughout the Ghost FLUZ, and should indicate whether a road or trail is available for motorized recreational access while identifying the type of motorized recreational use permitted on each road or trail.
3. Post signs that identify areas available for motorized random camping (on-highway vehicles) at sites deemed appropriate for that purpose. These areas, like trails, may be subject to seasonal restrictions or closures depending upon impacts to the site and surrounding area due to overuse or misuse. Areas that are not specifically signed would not be available for motorized random camping.

(e) Report Card: Signs

1. Entrance signs were installed in May 2006 and upgraded in 2007. The signs indicate: users are *Entering the Ghost Forest Land Use Zone*; a *Designated Trail System* is in place; maps and information are available at the kiosks.
2. Strategic placement of signs was completed by May 2006. Ongoing maintenance and upgrading is being performed by volunteers and SRD.
3. The recommendation for motorized random camping signage has been referred to the GSMG Camping Sub-Committee. Meanwhile signage has been posted to show where random camping is not allowed in the Provincial Recreation, Camp Chamisol and Camp Howard areas.

(f) Recommendation: Partnership Opportunities

Establish education and awareness linkages between SRD and local governments, agencies, and user groups, to broaden the message of responsible use and how each group has a role to play in the successful implementation of GAMP. A primary goal is to establish a Ghost-Waiparous Operational Access Plan Stewardship Monitoring Group within three months of the Plan's formal acceptance. A terms-of-reference will be developed in consultation with the group. Final decisions will be rendered by SRD after consideration of the group's advice and input. The group will consist of a broad cross-section of area stakeholders and will act as a conduit back to various sectors to both disseminate information and to bring comments back to the group for further consideration.

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(f) Report Card: Partnership Opportunities

In September 2006 SRD invited more than thirty different groups to the formative meeting of the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group (GSMG). On April 18, 2007, twenty of those groups signed the GSMG "Team Charter." There are currently three active sub-committees of the GSMG: the Trails Sub-Committee, the Camping Sub-Committee and the Communication Sub-Committee. There is an additional committee made up of trained volunteers who do inventory, condition assessment and sustainable trail development work. To date GSMG has received one project submission, from the Climbers Access Society of Alberta. (That submission was used as the first test for the Trails Sub-Committee's project review process.) GSMG subsequently processed and applied recommendations to the submission before forwarding it to SRD for a final decision. This submission review process will be used for future project proposals.

(g) Recommendation: *Respect the Land*

1. Continue *Respect the Land* displays at local trade shows.
2. Continue with long weekend *Respect the Land* media releases.

(g) Report Card: *Respect the Land*

1. SRD continues to use *Respect the Land* displays at the Calgary Motorcycle Show and the Calgary Outdoor Adventure Show. We were not able to attend the Calgary Snowmobile Show this year.
2. The message theme for long weekends has been, *Where You Are Living for the Weekend*. Its goal was to improve camping etiquette on public land and, after the May and September 2008 long weekends, SRD field staff felt the message theme contributed towards achieving that goal.

(2) Recommendations Concerning Enforcement

Appropriate regulatory mechanisms would help ensure the long-term success of GAMP and the long-term sustainability of the area's resources and related recreational opportunities. The regulatory approach is recognized as secondary to the educational or co-operative approach toward the management of motorized recreational access. However, there is very strong support for enhanced levels of enforcement in the Ghost-Waiparous area.

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(a) Recommendation: Forest Land Use Zone

Create Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ) under the *Forests Act*, with accompanying Forest Recreation Regulations, to effectively implement a Ghost-Waiparous Operational Access Plan (GAMP). The SRD Lands Division, through the FLUZ and accompanying regulation, will direct motorized recreational access on specified roads and trails in the planning area. The development of such a regulation is considered essential to the success of the access management planning process.

(a) Report Card: Forest Land Use Zone

The Ghost FLUZ was established in May 2006. This enabled the creation of the designated trail system via development of signage, maps and brochures. In 2006/07 two Forest Guardians were hired to patrol the area and enforce the Forest Recreation Regulations during the summer. In 2008 SRD retained one guardian to patrol the Ghost and McLean Creek FLUZs during the winter.

(b) Recommendation: Penalties

Establish and enforce penalties for non-compliance with the Forest Recreation Regulation developed to support the GAMP.

(b) Report Card: Penalties

New regulations, established in the Forest Recreation Regulation, created the Ghost FLUZ along with some specific rules for the area. Penalties were also established that could be enforced through a specified penalty.

(c) Recommendation: Temporary or Permanent Closures

1. A Forest Officer, under the direction of the Area Manager, may temporarily close a road or trail in the event of an emergency (e.g. wildfire, flooding, wildlife, other environmental concern, etc.). A Forest Officer, under the direction of the Area Manager, may also exercise this right in cases where any road or trail is found to be unsafe or impassable, or in the event that a road or trail would be unreasonably damaged as the result of excessively wet, soft, or unstable ground conditions.

2. The Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has the ability to impose fire bans or complete forest closures due to extreme fire hazard or active fire suppression activities that may require such action.

3. The Area Manager should have the authority to open, temporarily or permanently close, or reinstate existing roads and trails for motorized recreational use. It is

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recommended that longer-term or permanent closures and additions to the approved trail network be reviewed with the Ghost-Waiparous Stewardship Monitoring Group prior to implementation.

(c) Report Card: Temporary or Permanent Closures

1. Temporary closures were made to several washed out sections of the Waiparous Valley Road. After a new road was established (through a partnership with volunteers, SRD and Alberta Transportation) the temporary closures were lifted. A temporary closure was also put in place between intersections #121 and #119 to deal with a washed out bridge. After volunteers repaired the bridge the temporary closure was lifted.
2. The Minister's ability to impose fire bans and forest closures is a normal procedure to deal with the threat of fire in the forest through Fire Orders under the Forest and Prairie Protection Act.
3. The Area Manager's authority and GSMG reviews are both ongoing.



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(d) Recommendation: Identify Trails and Designated Areas

1. Allow motorized recreational access only on roads and trails that have been identified and specifically mapped and signed for that purpose.
2. Allow motorized random camping only in areas that are signed for such use.
3. Provide signage for designated OHV trails that become unavailable for motorized recreational access or random camping as a result of approved industrial activities. Provide signage for alternate trails or random camping locations that may be identified and provided by the company engaged in the industrial activity for the duration of their operation. It is recommended that the company advise Lands Division of potential impacts on designated trails during the planning and approval process along with proposed remediation plans once industrial operations have been completed.
4. New access may be developed in the planning area by Industrial/Commercial users through existing review and approval processes. These roads and trails should be evaluated and may be added to the designated trail system by SRD on a temporary or permanent basis after consideration of input from the GSMG. Closures may be used as a tool to deal with public safety issues such as log hauls or rig moves.

(d) Report Card: Identified Trails and Designated Areas

1. This has been the guiding principle on dealing with enforcement of the designated trail system.
2. The GSMG Camping Sub-committee is developing a strategy based on a "node" camping system; details are in progress.
3. Both Forest Management Agreement holders have made presentations to the GSMG about future plans in the area and how work can be coordinated between the forest companies and the recreational users. All petroleum and natural gas applications are reviewed by the Lands Division field forest officer and, if necessary, are referred to the planning forester to look for future opportunities to improve the designated trail system.
4. In the Burnt Timber Gas Plant area, through a partnership with Husky Oil, a section of trail between intersections #319-287 and 287-245 and from 247-249 and 255 were permanently closed. The trail between intersection #283 and #287 was also closed as it now dead-ended. To replace these sections of trail, Husky established a new sustainable trail starting at intersection #322 and ending at intersection #246. This included building the new trail and establishing a number of bridge crossings.

(3) Recommendations Concerning Engineering

The Engineering category focuses on mitigative, on-site actions needed to implement the GAMP. Site-specific improvements will be aimed toward minimizing the impacts of motorized recreational access on roads and trails. These actions will also help to ensure the sustainability of that recreational use in the planning area. Implementation of the proposed measures will happen as partnerships are developed.

(a) Recommendation: Trail Standards

Develop trail standards for future maintenance and monitoring programs. Similar standards should also be developed for motorized random camping sites. The development of standards has provincial implications and must be considered as part of a broader motorized access strategy for public land.

(a) Report Card: Trail Standards

The GSMG Trails Sub-Committee has developed a set of trail standards based on work from the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) and the Recreation Corridors Review Committee.

(4) Recommendations Concerning Maintenance/Monitoring (Evaluation)

(a) Recommendation: Repairs – Basic

Roads and trails where motorized recreational access is permitted should undergo repairs to sustain use of those roads or trails (e.g. stream crossings, drainage features or surface maintenance).

(a) Report Card: Repairs – Basic

After wind storms and floods during the last three years volunteers have cleared blown-down timber, repaired trail erosion, and repaired or replaced bridges.

(b) Recommendation: Repairs – Environmental

Undertake repairs or improvements in a manner that will respect the natural setting and character of the area while recognizing personal safety concerns for those who recreate within the area.

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(b) Report Card: Repairs – Environmental

Such initiatives are ongoing through volunteer efforts.

(c) Recommendation: Repairs – Public Assistance

Encourage recreational/public interest organizations to voluntarily assist with road and trail repairs.

(c) Report Card: Repairs – Public Assistance

Volunteers have assisted with trail improvements, repairing stream banks, and with retrieving vehicles from waterways.



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(d) Recommendation: Maintenance Plan

Develop a rolling three-year maintenance plan for site-specific repairs related to resource management and public safety priorities. SRD and GSMG should define the plan's format and work requirements (e.g., approvals from other agencies, trail and maintenance standards, granting and fundraising, etc.).

(d) Report Card: Maintenance Plan

The rolling maintenance plan is long-term goal; work is in progress.

(e) Recommendation: Partnerships

Develop an *Adopt-a-Trail* program where approved trails are adopted by user groups.

(e) Report Card: Partnerships

The *Adopt-a-Trail* program has not moved forward yet.

(f) Recommendation: New Trails

User groups wanting additions to the approved OHV trail network should submit formal proposals to SRD and GSMG. Proposal requirements will be defined by GSMG. Approved proposals mean the relevant trails become sponsored by the user group under the "Adopt-a-Trail" program.

(f) Report Card: New Trails

In June 2008 GSMG and SRD co-sponsored a training course on trail inventory, condition assessment, and sustainable trail design. A second course was held in May 2009. Consequently, all trail proposals can now be evaluated by qualified GSMG personnel.

(g) Recommendation: Reclamation

Trails or areas classified as being unavailable for motorized recreational access may be reclaimed in recognition of watershed, fisheries and wildlife management objectives specified in the Ghost River Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan. (That plan relates to erosion, stream sedimentation, wildlife habitat and/or wildlife security concerns, etc.)

(g) Report Card: Reclamation

SRD and GSMG have sponsored bio-engineering training for volunteers. Numerous projects have been completed to date.

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(h) Recommendation: Monitoring - General

The Ghost-Waiparous Operational Access Plan will require a monitoring program to gauge the effectiveness of recommendations and to support future changes. A monitoring program will also ensure the Plan continues to address the needs for which it was established.

(h) Report Card: Monitoring - General

Raw traffic count data and user surveys have been collected (but not yet analyzed).

(i) Recommendation: Monitoring - Ongoing

Review the Ghost-Waiparous Operational Access Plan three years after its implementation and then at intervals scheduled by SRD and GSMG. Road and trail classifications may be reviewed and altered in response to changing needs and circumstances within the context of the Ghost River Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan.

(i) Report Card: Monitoring - Ongoing

The 2008 GSMG Annual Report was a first step in assessing the Plan implementation.

(j) Recommendation: Monitoring – Gathering Information

Monitor recreational use levels, resource impacts, enforcement actions, and changes in user behavior/attitudes to determine the effectiveness of the Plan.

j) Report Card: Monitoring – Gathering Information

Information gathering is ongoing.

(k) Recommendation: Monitoring - GSMG

GSMG and SRD should evaluate the need for research or baseline data to support the GAMP.

k) Report Card: Monitoring - GSMG

No progress to date.

GSMG Member Petro-Canada: Achievements and Goals

During the past year collaborative input from SRD and Shell Canada Limited, combined with additional support from Petro-Canada mapping resources, resulted in the completion of the first Oil and Gas Infrastructure Overlay on the Ghost FLUZ map. This new overlay identified several oil/gas pipeline infrastructure overlaps with the Ghost-Waiparous trail network. These overlaps were a concern that was made known to user groups, SRD, and the oil and gas operators. Consequently, attempts to address these concerns are now underway.

Consultations with the GSMG Camping Sub-Committee are also underway towards resolving issues between camping user groups and the oil/gas operators in the Ghost-Waiparous region. The long range goal of these consultations is to situate camping areas in places that are satisfactory to both camping user groups and to the oil and gas operators.

The oil/gas representation on the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group is pleased with the progress to date of GSMG, and is optimistic that more progress will continue.

**“ . . . completion of the first Oil and Gas
Infrastructure Overlay . . .**

**Consultations with the GSMG Camping
Sub-Committee are also underway . . .**

**. . . optimistic that more progress will
continue.”**

Summary

On page 4 the Message from the Chair stated, *"As you read through this Annual Report, recognize that it is a work-in-progress."* It follows that an annual report represents not only a work-in-progress in itself, but also a snapshot of the work-in-progress of an ongoing enterprise over time. In that context a series of annual reports can be used to measure the progress of an enterprise by chronologically comparing one snapshot to the next. With the edition of this second (2009) GSMG Annual Report the first chronological comparison can now be made.

When compared to the contents of GSMG's 2008 Annual Report, those of the GSMG 2009 Annual Report show that the Trails Sub-Committee has already progressed far beyond its earlier planning stages and is now intensely engaged in carrying out its role as a GSMG Sub-Committee. So too has the Camping Sub-Committee which, based on its long-range intention to harmonize camping activities within the greater GAMP mandate, has specifically confronted, and is addressing, an issue that was once considered by many to be beyond resolution. Likewise the recent completion of the Oil and Gas Infrastructure Overlay, led by GSMG's Petro-Canada representation and supported by the oil and gas industry at large, has created a fundamental reference point from which related oil and gas industry plans and activities can now be assessed and coordinated. Meanwhile the largest component of this Annual Report, the six-year review provided by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, details scores of achievements arising from the recommendations made by the original Ghost-Waiparous Advisory Group in 2003 – one of the foremost achievements being the actual founding of the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group.

The contents of the GSMG 2009 Annual Report thus not only embody a collection of singular achievements made during the past year but, by virtue of their very inclusion in this Annual Report, also reflect the Group's growing confidence in both its present achievements and future visions. In turn, that confidence indicates GSMG is not only achieving one of the core principles within its own Team Charter - "proactive and forward thinking" - but, as a diverse assembly of stakeholders charged with an enormous and complex set of challenges, has also developed highly progressive and professional traits within its own collective identity. In spite of the challenges it faces, the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group is confident these momentums will continue.
