

Adapting for the Future to Survive in an Evolving World

Reimagining the Reservoir (Coronach SK)



Presentation Outline

- The RtR Team
- The Background
- The Issues
- The Vision, Goals, & Objectives
- The Constraints, Strengths, & Opportunities
- What We Did (Master Plan, Implementation, etc)
- What We Learned
- The Future
- Questions / Open Discussion



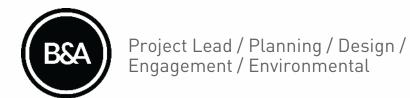


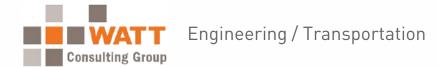
The Reimagining the Reservoir (RtR) Team











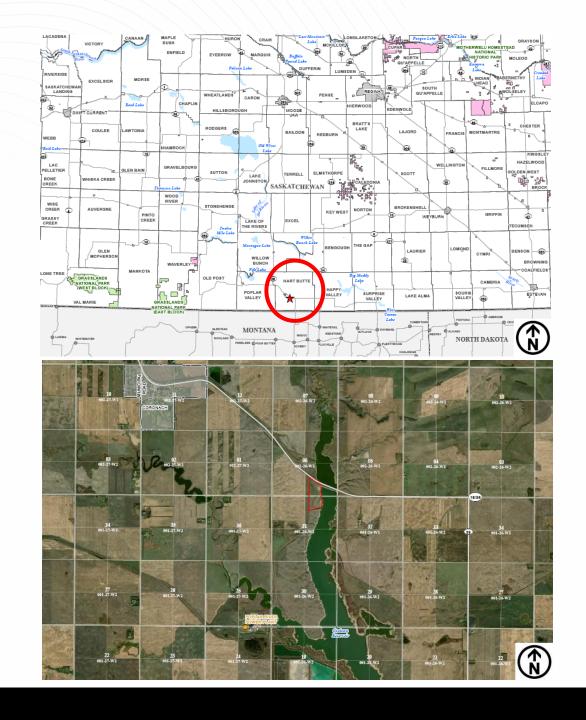
)-(HUME CONSULTING CORPORATION Economic / Marketing





The Background

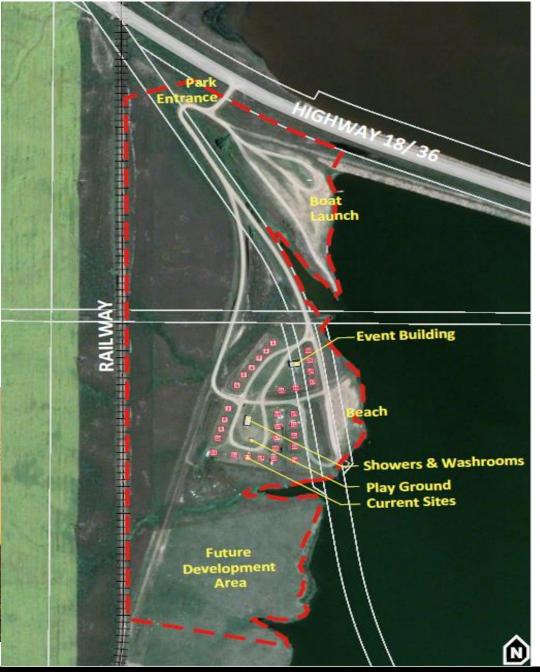
- <u>Location</u>: Southern Saskatchewan, ~200km south of Regina, just north of US border, east of Grasslands National Park.
- Within RM of Hart Butte (252 people), ~6km SE of Town of Coronach (643 people).
- Existing "Poplar River Community Park" bounded by Cookson Reservoir ("The Dam") on E, Highway 18/36 on N, Railway on W.
- ~50ac of land owned by and leased from SaskPower on 25-year lease until 2029.
- Contains boat launch, beach, event building, showers / washrooms, playground, 30 campsites, minimal trees.
- RFP issued October 2020 requesting assistance "to prepare a master plan and economic analysis for potential resort development." Budget: \$100,000. Steering Committee created. B&A team did work throughout 2021.
- Numerous studies / reports done previously:
- Business Retention Survey
- Economic Transition Project reports
- Coronach Market Snapshot and Branding Survey



The Issues

- Coal mine and powerplant, main employer in the region supporting ~300 local jobs, closing by 2030.
- Mostly rural, relatively smaller population not in proximity to major population centres.
- Limited money available.
- Need to deal with myriad of regulations and requirements surrounding The Dam.
- Understanding these realities, how will Coronach and the surrounding region survive, dive, and thrive into the future?





The Vision

Reimagining the Reservoir: making "The Dam" a more desirable, successful, and fun place to stay and play.

- This Vision recognized that "The Dam" (AKA "The Reservoir" AKA "Poplar River Community Park" (PRCP)) was already an existing, popular amenity to many people in the local area, but that improvements could be made.
- Part of a multipronged approach.



The Goals

- Enhance and expand the existing campground to attract more visitors to the site and surrounding area.
- Make "The Dam" a more well-known, attractive, cohesive, vibrant, fun, and successful site.
- Improve signage and explore connections within "The Dam" and to Coronach.
- Take full advantage of and promote the water for various activities.
- Assist in making Coronach and the RM a tourism destination for the region.
- Collaborate and involve key stakeholders and community members throughout the process.



The Objectives

- Determine and provide the necessary infrastructure to support enhancements, including water, sanitary, power, etc.
- Explore opportunities for year-round accommodation and use.
- Explore opportunities for the currently vacant portions of the site.
- Create a more visitor and user-friendly site through improved services, amenities, and wayfinding.
- Include more trees within the site.
- Explore the opportunity to create a marina with rental options.



The Constraints

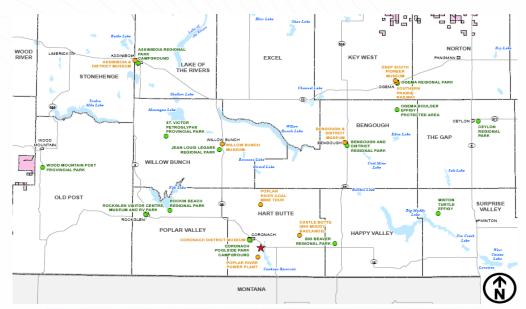
- Location: 2+ hour drive to Regina, the closest major population centre. No other major cities nearby.
- Constrained by railway, highway, and water.
- Limited visibility from highway.
- Undulating topography limit usage of some areas.
- A rocky shoreline with poorly maintained beach area.
- Substandard gravel roads, RV pads, and boat launch.
- Minimal trees meaning a lack of shade and wind protection. Windy and other poor conditions = difficult for trees to grow.
- Limited water, sanitary, and electrical services onsite.
- Limited activities and amenities.
- Limited funding.
- Development limitations due to lease obligations with SaskPower.



The Strengths

- Location: beautiful setting on the water in the greater "Big Muddy" area.
- Close to town (Coronach) amenities, several other well-established tourist sites, and the US.
- Good regional access by way of (newly repaved) Highway 18.
- Numerous recreational opportunities provided by the reservoir.
- Good facilities currently provided on-site washrooms, showers, new playground, etc.
- Significant amount of land available for improvements and future expansion.
- An engaged, knowledgeable, and committed Steering Committee / community.
- SaskPower and other stakeholders willing to work with PRCP.







The Opportunities

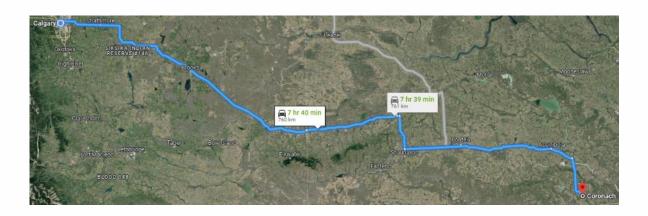
- Expand & improve RV sites, including water, septic, & electricity.
- Individual & group camping for both RVers & tenters.
- Cabins.
- Plant more trees for shade & shelter.
- Better beach, boat launch, & water access.
- Enhanced signage.
- Additional recreational facilities / activities, including walking / biking trails, dog park, etc.
- Seasonal concession, laundry, & other on-site amenities.
- Expand into currently undeveloped lands "blank slate."
- Take advantage of topography.
- Work with surrounding recreational areas & government agencies (money).
- Long-term: railcar shuttle along existing rail lines (when no longer in use), minigolf, events stage / amphitheatre.





What We Did

- The Master Plan
- Engagement
- Economic / Marketing Assessment
- Servicing & Transportation
- Environmental Assessment
- Implementation / Phasing / Next Steps
- Two site visits (one 7.5hr drive from Calgary, one flight to Regina)
- Project coordination / management





The Master Plan

Highlights:

- Improved entranceway / signage
- Improved / adjusted roadways: 7m wide
- Additional pathways
- Improved landscaping including shelter trees along west side
- Enhanced boat launch area
- Adjustments and expansions to existing campground area
- Plans for future development area on south side
- Plans for unused lands on west side

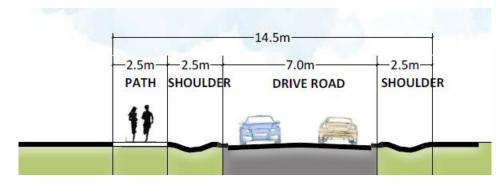


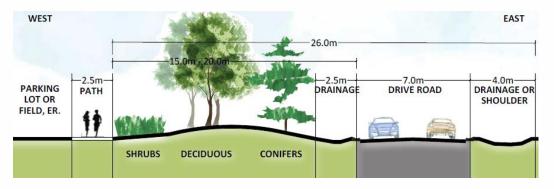
The Master Plan Details



Entrance signage options







Street cross-sections – including shelterbelt along west side

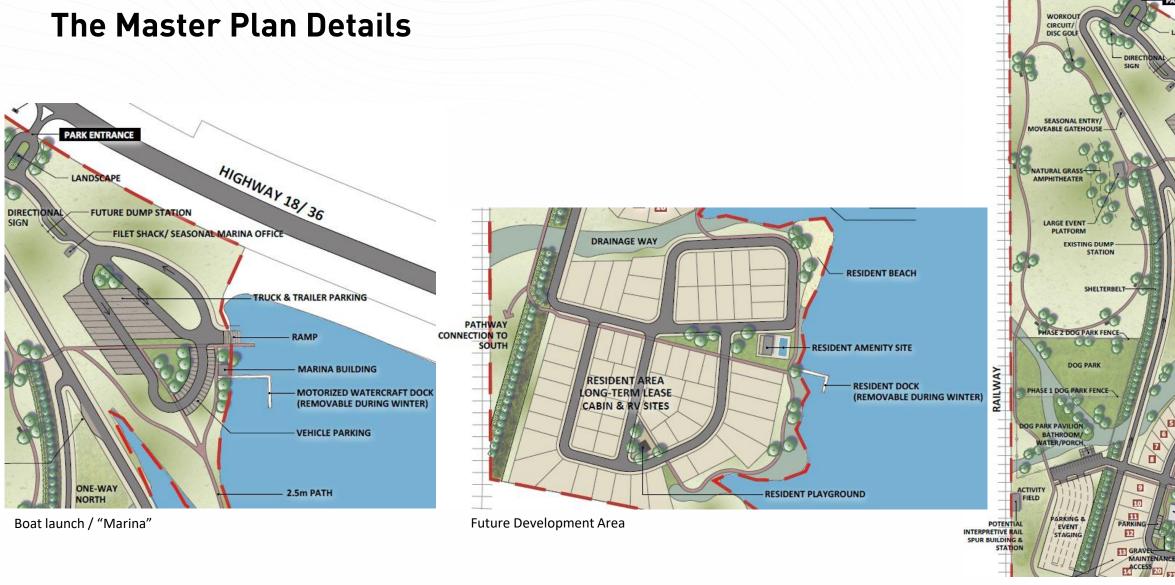
The Master Plan Details



Potential "Village House"



Village Centre



The West Side

PATHWAY CONNECTION TO

Engagement

- Vitally important component of RtR process.
- Engaged with Steering Committee, current park users, landowners, general public, & other stakeholders.
- Phase 1: online survey May-June 2021:
- 56 responses.
- o Identified numerous desired improvements.
- Expressed support for user fees.
- Phase 2: Covid-safe in-person open house at event building on site in late June 2021:
- 40 attendees.
- Presented findings on Master Plan, walking tours, post-event online survey.
- Feedback themes: improved signage, serviced sites, remove paid showers, small store, petting zoo.
- Engagement Summary prepared.

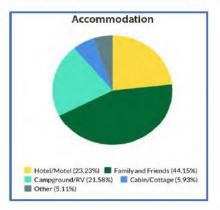


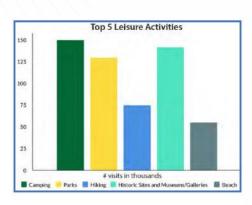




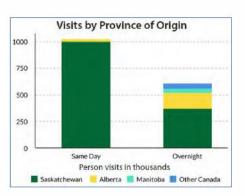
Economic / Marketing Assessment (Hume)

- Assessed key market factors, including regional context, nearby attractions, sources of demand, competition, etc.
- Recommended uses & activities that are most appropriate for PRCP.
- Noted small regional population base in immediate surrounding area with limited growth, but larger nearby population centres should be primary target market.
- Powerplant closure will have significant impact on regional economy.
- Should take advantage of significant area history & established tourist attractions.
- 85% of visitors to this part of SK are other Saskatchewanians.
- Noted numerous fundamental characteristics for a successful PRCP.
- Recommended fundamental site improvements & essential amenities.
- Provided preliminary cost & revenue estimates.
- Outlined probable next steps.











Servicing & Transportation (Watt)

Water:

- 150 PVC watermains
- 275,000L potable water cistern
- 4 fire hydrants
- Provided either by truck, or piped in from Town or powerplant

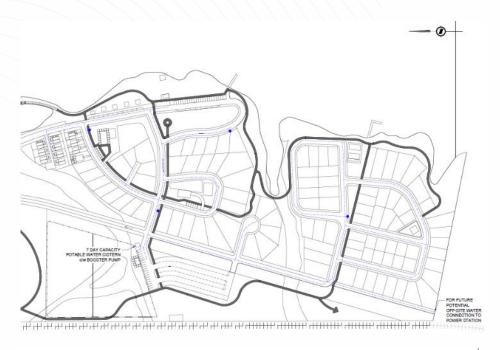
Sanitary:

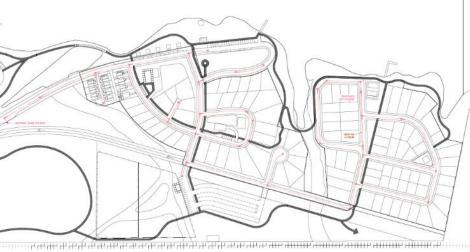
- 150 PVC sanitary mains
- 130,000L holding tank to be pumped out by truck
- Force main & lift station may be required

<u>Transportation</u>:

- Highway access is fine
- Should consider 2nd emergency access
- Traffic control plan / TIA needed

Total cost estimate: \$3.5 – \$8 million





Environmental Assessment

Federal Legislation:

- Migratory Birds Convention Act (MBCA)
- Species at Risk Act (SARA)
- Navigation Protection Act (NPA)
- Fisheries Act

Provincial Legislation:

- Conservation Easements Act (CSA)
- Ecological Reserves Act (ERA)
- Environmental Assessment Act (EAA)
- Environmental Management and Protection Act (EMPA)
- Provincial Lands Act (PLA)
- Wildlife Act
- Water Security Agency (WSA) Act & Regulations



Implementation / Phasing

Phase 1 Immediate Term

(Quick Wins / Low Hanging Fruit)

- Plant shelterbelt & other landscaping
- Add park entry & directional signage
- Add tenting / glamping sites
 & related amenities
- Improve existing RV sites
- Formalize boat launch access & parking area
- Initiate beach improvements
- Add pathways

Phase 2 Medium Term

(Heavy Lifting)

- Remove redundant roadway
- Add additional RV sites
- Add seasonable gatehouse
- Initiate water / sanitary servicing
- Complete roadway upgrades
- Build all-season cabins
- Complete beach improvements
- Complete Village Centre improvements
- Complete boat launch improvements
- Complete off-leash dog park

Phase 3 Longer Term

(Aspirational Big Dreams)

- Develop southern "Residents Area: Long-Term Lease Cabin & RV Sites"
- Complete pathway network
- Complete western area improvements, including workout circuit / disc golf, amphitheatre, large event platform, & parking & event staging area
- Piped potable water supply from Town or powerplant
- Add interpretive rail station building

Next Steps

- Confirm priorities & roles moving forward. Steering Committee should continue to regularly meet.
- Identify potential ongoing risks.
- Work with SaskPower, WSA, & existing PRCP users.
- Ensure coordination between RtR & other ongoing studies / plans.
- Pursue Regional Park status.
- Prepare formal Business Plan.
- Obtain funding sources (government grants).
- Retain services of experts for additional detailed design work.
- Create land use development & design guidelines.
- Create rules & regulations for safe & enjoyable usage.
- Prepare legal contracts & operating agreements.
- Develop a marketing strategy.
- Setup a good-quality website. <u>www.thedam.ca</u>?



What We Learned

- Full commitment to the project is essential: need to go to these areas to truly understand the client / project needs. Connect with people. Work together!
- Need to be optimistic and realistic: what is the potential vs the realities.
- Utilize existing assets that already work don't always need to reinvent wheel / blow it all up.
- One size does not fit all. Coronach is not Calgary.
- Money can be very limited and difficult to obtain.
- Careful with language: words like "exclusive" aren't always well received.
- "When I hear the word exclusive, I hear the guys with the deeper pockets get to be over there and the general guy doesn't get to go over there."
- Tough climate and relatively isolated, but Southern Saskatchewan is beautiful and underrated!



The Future

- Smaller resource-reliant communities will continue to face significant challenges in an evolving world.
- Need to adapt and look to the future tech, renewable energy, etc.
- There will be some pains before the gains.
- Demand for travel / recreation will continue to increase.
- Utilize / enhance existing assets / amenities both within and surrounding the community.
- Use technology websites, social media, etc.
- \$\$\$ needed: various Provincial & Federal funds available (Alberta Community Partnership, Western Economic Diversification Canada / Prairies Economic Development Canada, etc).
- Dream big. Be real. Anything can happen.

After the last coal mine closed, this Alberta hamlet set on becoming a tourist destination







