

WildSafeBC New Denver and Area K 2014 Annual Report

Prepared by Bree Lillies, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



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Executive Summary:

This season saw the expansion of the WildSafeBC New Denver program to include RDCK Area K, Arrow Lakes. The program was delivered throughout the area by Community Coordinator, Bree Lillies.

Attractant management with regards to bears was still the primary focus of the program. These efforts within New Denver are being recognized as we move towards obtaining Bear Smart status from the Provincial Government in 2015.

This report will discuss the delivery of the WildSafeBC New Denver and Area K program for the 2014 season. It will highlight the program successes and challenges and provide insight into how the program has concentrated its efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

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Program Highlights

The highlights of this year's program include the expansion to reach Area K as well as New Denver's application to the Ministry of Environment to be designated as a Bear Smart Community.

New Denver Bear Smart Community Program

Since 2012, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WSCC) has been educating the residents of New Denver on the subject of attractant management. Partnerships with a number of groups in the community have developed to address root causes of human wildlife conflict. The WSCC has been working to cultivate relationships with residents, Village Staff, and Council to facilitate the community's move towards obtaining Bear Smart status.

The process of becoming a Bear Smart Community involves a shift from the reactive management of "problem" bears to the proactive management of the attractants that draw bears into the communities. The key components of the program include monitoring human-bear conflicts, providing education, managing waste, implementing and enforcing bylaws, managing green space, and community planning

New Denver has already met many of the requirements listed as Bear Smart Criteria, however, the final requirement before submitting the application was assurance that the Village of New Denver indeed wishes to continue their commitment to reducing human-wildlife conflict and be designated as a Bear Smart Community.

I am pleased to report that at the October 14th Council meeting, a resolution was made that staff be directed to submit an application to the Ministry of Environment for the Village of New Denver to be designated as a Bear Smart Community. Together with Village staff, the WSCC is working on finalizing the application.

Program Delivery

In 2014, the WSCC continued to engage residents and tourists in New Denver and across the expanded RDCK area through the following activities:

Electric Fencing

A properly constructed and maintained electric fence is an effective tool and complimentary to the WildSafeBC educational messaging. Three electric fencing workshops were held in 2014: June 8th in New Denver, June 14th in Edgewood, and September 11th in Nakusp. The WSCC assisted many homeowners with electric fencing throughout the season. There has been a continual increase every year in the use of electric fencing as more people learn how to use them properly and word of their success spreads.



Figure 1: Electric fence workshop in New Denver, June 8th 2014

Campground Visits

Black bears are often attracted to campgrounds in the area due to their location in rich bear habitat and tempting odors. Efforts were focused on educating tourists through weekly visits to the campgrounds during the summer months. Campers were provided with brochures and a brief talk about bear biology, attractant management, and bear safety. Campground attendants were also provided with education and have greatly contributed to the reduction of conflicts in local campgrounds.

Presentations

WildSafeBC presentations were delivered to the preschool, primary, and elementary students in School District 10 and at the Kootenay Kids Adventure Camp. These presentations focused on bear biology, bear safety, and attractant management.



Figure 2: Kindergarten/Grade one presentation at Lucerne Elementary Secondary School

Other public presentations included a presentation and discussion at the Burton Learning Centre regarding WildSafeBC, and at the Fauquier Community Hall regarding creating a community gleaning project to reduce attractants and conflict with wildlife.

Fruit Harvesting

Fruit trees remain the number one attractant in the area. The WSCC continued to concentrate efforts on fruit tree management and collaborated with Harvest Share to assist homeowners with the removal of fruit from their property. A total of 21 volunteers helped harvest usable and unusable fruit this year, with a total removal of 1,360kg of fruit. In the fall, the WSCC called on volunteers to help glean fruit trees in response to calls to the RAPP line that directly related to fruit trees.

Fruit tree mapping

In the spring of 2014, WildSafeBC worked in partnership with Selkirk College GIS mapping student, Tamara Goble, to compile fruit tree data that was collected throughout the 2013 season. The data was used to create density maps, fruit tree distribution maps, and graphs to show the amounts harvested.

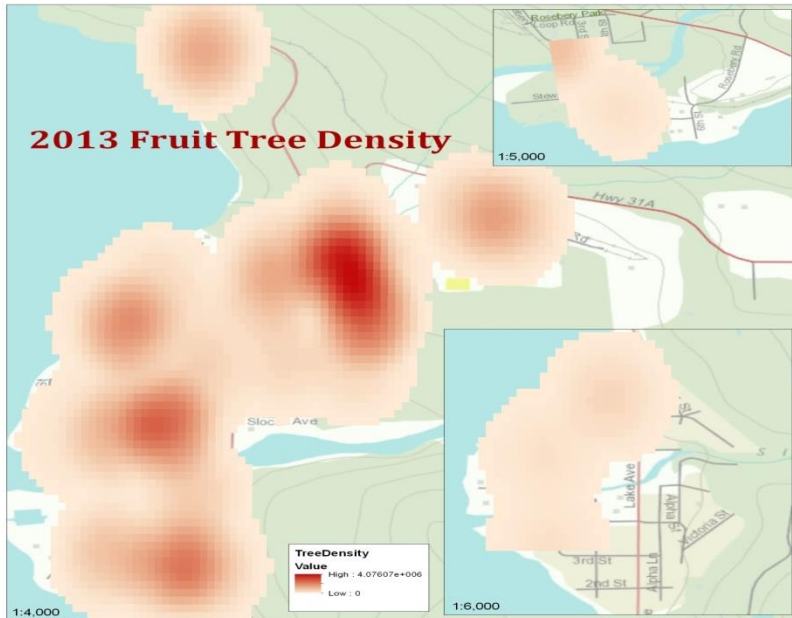


Figure 3: Fruit Tree Density in New Denver

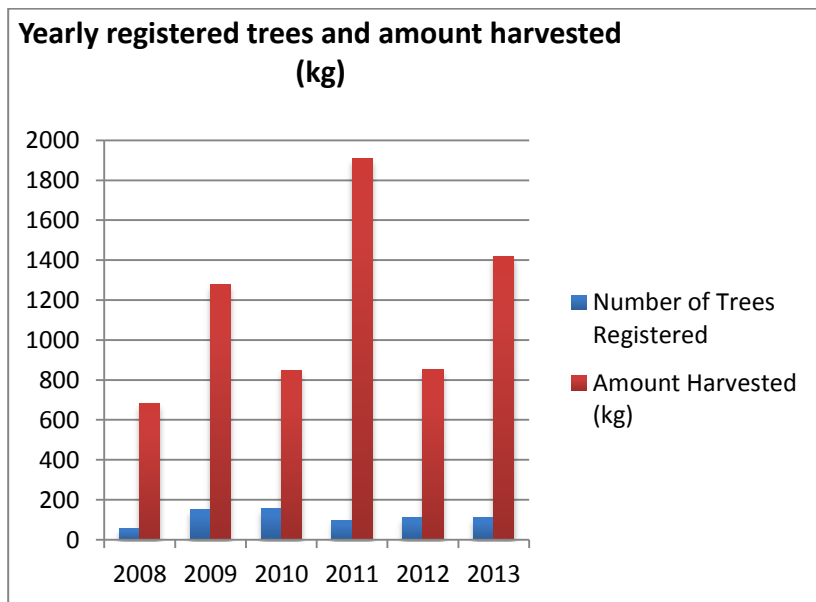


Figure 4: Harvest Share amounts in New Denver

Public Displays and Events

Public displays and events set the stage for community engagement. The questions, discussions, stories, and conversations that take place at these venues build relationships and understanding around wildlife in our community. The 2014 events included:

- Market Displays in New Denver, Nakusp, Burton, and Edgewood
- BC Hydro's Toad Fest at Summit Lake
- Garlic Festival in New Denver
- Harvest Festival in New Denver



Figure 5: WildSafeBC Market Display, July 2014

Social Media and Press

WildSafeBC New Denver Facebook page has gained 114 likes. The people following this page are updated on events, attractant management tips, and educational video clips.

The Valley Voice newspaper and the Arrow Lakes News printed all submitted articles and advertisements with a total reach of approximately 30,400 readers.

West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group

The working group is a diverse group of representatives from West Kootenay Regional Districts and Municipalities, BC Conservation Officer Service, BC Parks, BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, WildSafeBC Community Coordinators, grizzly bear biologists, the Trans-Border Grizzly Bear Project, Selkirk College, and interested local residents. Our working group discusses and supports creative and effective solutions to address human bear conflict.

Program Challenges

Fruit Trees

The abundance of fruit trees in this area continues to provide wildlife with a food source. The WSCC will be coordinating with Village staff in the spring to address non-resident homeowners that have fruit trees as this continues to be an area of concern. The efforts made by the community to remove fruit and windfall and to remove feral trees were outstanding, but there is still room for improvement.

Garbage

A large number of residents, especially in Area K where there is no garbage pickup, do not have secure garbage storage. Bear resistant bins are cost prohibitive for most people. The West Kootenay Bear Working Group is applying for funds that would bring in a supply of bear resistant bins to the area and be distributed by the WSCC on a priority basis.

Planning for 2015

The following is a list of items to build on in 2015:

- Continue school and public presentations
- Continue offering electric fencing workshops
- Continue public information booths at community events
- Continue door-to-door campaigns in response to calls made to the RAPP line or the WSCC
- Continue weekly campground visits and information sessions throughout the tourist season
- Continue to work collaboratively on the fruit tree mapping initiative with Harvest Share, Healthy Communities Society, and the Village of New Denver
- Continue networking and planning with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group
- Attract volunteers in Burton, Fauquier, and Edgewood to assist with door-to-door campaigns in those remote communities
- Educate non-resident homeowners about fruit trees as an attractant, encourage pruning and harvesting
- Create WildSafeBC campground signage and handouts for camping in bear country
- Assist in the efforts to align the New Denver Official Community Plan with the Bear Hazard Assessment and Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan
- Celebrate the achievement of Bear Smart Status!

Acknowledgments

The efforts and success of WildSafeBC New Denver in 2014 would not have been possible without the in-kind support from the Village of New Denver. The Village of New Denver has provided in-kind funding of staff time for meetings, brainstorming and planning and by generously covering the cost of the Knox Hall for the electric fencing workshop. They also contribute by distributing WildSafeBC contact information and attractant management guidelines to all property owners in the Village.

I gratefully acknowledge funding from the Columbia Basin Trust, Regional District of Central Kootenay, and the Ministry of Environment.

I am also grateful for the support from:

the Village of New Denver's Mayor Bunka and Council, Council's WildSafeBC Liaison Nadine Reynolds, and Village Staff; the West Kootenay Region Conservation Officer Service; Healthy Communities Society; Harvest Share Volunteers and steering committee; British Columbia Conservation Foundation personnel and the Provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators. A special thanks to Mike Badry for his support and guidance during the Bear Smart application process.

