



Nelson and RDCK Areas E and F 2015 WildSafeBC Annual Report



BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Executive Summary

Nelson, Areas E and F WildSafeBC, a program of British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), received funding from the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) and the Regional District of the Central Kootenay (RDCK) in 2015. WildSafeBC, a province – wide program, strives to “keep wildlife wild and communities safe”. Joanne Siderius, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator delivered the program in 2015.

As part of our educational efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict, WildSafeBC attended local events, spoke to Nelson City Council, talked to kids at schools and took the Nelson Beaver Scouts out on a night hike. Facebook postings and articles, and several radio interviews kept the program in the public eye. We partnered with predator electric fencing projects and a program to make bear-resistant garbage cans available in the Kootenays.

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Highlights

- Nelson and Area WildSafeBC worked with three volunteers who assisted with garbage tagging and events.
- The Nelson Facebook page attracted over 45,000 views over the season and boasts over 400 Facebook “likes”. Our postings stressed avoiding conflict with wildlife and included videos of local wildlife including cougars, black bears, and coyotes. We also promoted the use of predator electric fencing and bear-resistant garbage cans on the site.
- We again worked successfully with the media especially radio, including Kootenay Coop Radio, EZ Rock, and Mountain FM.
- We have planned a presentation to Nelson City Council (November 16) to give a program update and to promote the use of bear-resistant cans in the city.
- Nelson and Area WildSafeBC worked with the Grizzly Bear Electric Fencing Program and other CBT sponsored predator electric fencing programs to put up eight predator electric fencing units to keep bears (and other large predators) from gaining access to fruit, chickens, and chicken feed.
- We attended a Bear Conflict Management Group meeting (whose membership includes: Conservation Officer Service, Nelson City Police, Municipal staff, bylaw officers, biologists and the public) and a subcommittee of that group to introduce bear-resistant cans to the Kootenays (in association with other WildSafeBC coordinators). Our proposed application to make bear-resistant garbage cans available to those with no other solutions to storing household garbage was approved.
- As a result of this successful application, eight household bear-resistant cans were purchased and distributed on a 50/50 cost-share basis. We received \$1,500 from RDCK Area E Community Initiative Funding and \$1,250 from the Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project for cans that were distributed in Nelson and RDCK Area E.
- We attended events (including Redfish Fest, the Invasive Species Carnival, and the Bonnington Bash) with a display and talked to over 1,000 people about solutions to human-wildlife conflict.
- Our educational presentations included 3 schools programs (Blewett School, South Nelson School, and Waldorf School); and a talk and a hike with the Nelson Beaver Scouts. We introduced the BCCF Junior Ranger program at the Blewett School 4/5 presentation.
- The WildSafeBC coordinator gave two presentations to Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Forest staff at safety day activities.
- Our two information tables at the Kokanee Marine recycling station discouraged people from dumping garbage in the recycling bins and promoted human-wildlife conflict avoidance behaviour.

- The WildSafeBC coordinator assisted in the human-bear management plan at the Kokanee Creek Provincial Park spawning channel by distributing pamphlets to campsites, giving presentations to group campers, and talking to park visitors at the spawning channel.
- Our community outreach included door-to-door canvassing in 17 neighbourhoods in Nelson and in RDCK Areas E and F: reaching over 200 people.
- We also conducted three garbage tagging efforts in three Nelson neighbourhoods.

Challenges

- Human-wildlife conflict occurs throughout the year. Currently, WildSafeBC community coordinator hours are in place from May to the end of November. If more time were available throughout the year we could work on wildlife conflict when it begins early in the year and into the winter to counter cougar and coyote issues.
- Our educational efforts target new residents to these communities but we still need to reach more recent residents to remind them that they are living with wildlife: especially with respect to bears, cougars, coyotes, skunks, and raccoons.
- Our educational efforts need to reach more “old-time” residents and make them aware of newer solutions to wildlife conflicts (for example, predator electric fencing and bear-resistant garbage cans).
- Currently, there is no distributor for bear-resistant containers in the Kootenays and yet household garbage is the greatest wildlife attractant in this area. Those residents who have no options for proper garbage storage have no solutions to keeping garbage from bears, skunks, raccoons, coyotes, or other animals.
- There are a great many fruit trees in the area and much of the fruit is unusable or people are not interested in picking the fruit.

Goals for 2016

- We will continue to work with the bear conflict management group to make bear-resistant garbage cans available in the Kootenays.
- We will strive to find more volunteers.
- We will continue to work with Harvest Rescue and continue to educate people about fruit as an attractant and shall try to convince people to replace fruit trees with usable fruit trees or with other native non-fruit bearing trees.
- We will continue to promote (and in some cases provide the expertise to construct) predator electric fencing as an option to protect chickens and fruit trees from bears and some other wildlife.

Acknowledgements

Nelson Areas E and F WildSafeBC thanks:

- The Ministry of Environment, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation for funding this program;
- Area E RDCK, CBT and Dr. M. Proctor for funding the bear-resistant garbage cans we distributed to those experiencing conflict with bears over garbage;
- Jason Hawkes and Nathan Smienk of the Conservation Officer Service for their support and pro-active approach to reducing human-wildlife conflict;
- J. Bellhouse and F. Ritcey of BCCF for making sure all the cogs go around;
- Our volunteers: G. Lintz, C. Allen and B. McConnell;
- And all the WildSafeBC community coordinators for their innovative ideas, sharing of ideas and support.



Figure 1 WildSafeBC activities in 2015.