

WildSafeBC New Denver and Area K 2015 Annual Report

Prepared by Bree Lillies, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



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Introduction

In 2015, the WildSafeBC program was delivered throughout New Denver, Nakusp, and Area K by Community Coordinator, Bree Lillies. Thanks to ongoing support and valuable community partnerships, the WildSafeBC Program has been well received. The request for our presence at events and presentations to various community groups continues to increase and is indicative of the program's success.

This Annual Report describes the program delivery for 2015, highlights challenges, and provides insight into how the New Denver and Area K program has concentrated its efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Ideas for how to build on the program for the 2016 season are also included.

Program Highlights

The highlight of this year's program is New Denver's designation as BC's 7th Bear Smart Community. 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 communities. The key components of being Bear Smart include monitoring human-bear conflicts, providing education, managing waste, implementing and enforcing bylaws, managing green space, and community planning. It has taken enormous effort over many years and has involved participation from the provincial government, our municipal government, and local citizens. This is a significant achievement and is an effort the community can be proud of.



Figure 1: Bear Smart Event in New Denver June 26th, 2015

From left to right: Jenny Wallace, Sharon Wieder, Frank Ritcey, Bree Lillies (all from WildSafeBC) and Nathan Smienk, Jason Hawkes and Mike Badry of the Conservation Officer Service.

Program Delivery

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) continued to engage residents in New Denver, Nakusp and Area K through a variety of activities. Each is described briefly below.

Electric Fencing

An electric fencing workshop was held in Nakusp on June 28th. There has been a continual increase every year in the use of electric fencing as more people learn how to use them properly and achieve successful results. The WCC offers electric fencing information and assisted five property owners with design suggestions and voltage testing.

Campground Visits

Black bears are often attracted to campgrounds in the area due to the location in rich bear habitat. Efforts were focused on educating tourists through regular visits to campgrounds during the summer months. Campers were provided with brochures and a brief talk about bear biology, attractant management, and bear safety.

Presentations

Presentations are an excellent method for delivering the program message. WildSafeBC presentations were delivered to the preschool, primary, elementary and high school students in School District 10 and at the Recreation Commission #4 kid's summer camp. An evening presentation was given at the Nakusp Public Library.



Figure 2: Kindergarten and grades 1-3 presentation at Lucerne Elementary Secondary School

Fruit Harvesting

The WCC 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 35 volunteers helped harvest fruit this year, with a total removal of 1,953kg. WildSafeBC has combined efforts with the Healthy Community Society (HCS) to address fruit trees on Village and Regional District property. The HSC has adopted some of these trees and hired an arborist to do some pruning maintenance.

Events

Event displays create an opportunity for people to become engaged in conversation about the program. The questions, stories, and conversations that take place build relationships and understanding around wildlife in our community. The main events in 2015 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 3: WildSafeBC Market Display in Nakusp, July 2015

Social Media and Press

- WildSafeBC New Denver Facebook page has gained 144 likes.
- The Valley Voice newspaper and the Arrow Lakes News printed all submitted articles and advertisements with a total reach of approximately 30,400 readers.
- Interviews with Trail's EZ Rock radio station and 107.1fm "The Arrow" in Nakusp reached thousands more listeners in the West Kootenays.
- 107.1fm "The Arrow" recorded the WildSafeBC presentation at the Nakusp Library and put in on the air every day at noon from September 16th-23rd.

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, biologists, Trans-Border Grizzly Bear Project, and Selkirk College. The West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group discusses and supports creative and effective solutions to address human bear conflict. This year an application was submitted to Columbia Basin Trust Environment Grants for a bear resistant bin cost share program. The bulk purchase of bins will bring bear resistant bins to the West Kootenays at a reduced rate.

Program Challenges

Fruit Trees

The abundance of fruit trees in the area continues to provide wildlife with a food source. In the spring of 2015, the WCC coordinated with a local property management company to reach out to more non-resident homeowners that have fruit trees as this continues to be an area of concern. The effort made by the community to remove fruit and windfall are helpful but there is still room for improvement.

Garbage

A large number of home owners do not have secure garbage storage. Bear resistant bins are cost prohibitive for many residents. WCC will continue to sit on the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group's bear bin strategy committee in hopes that there will be some concrete solutions to offer in the future.

Campgrounds

Bear resistant recycling, garbage, and food storage are an issue in all of the campgrounds in the area. Campgrounds are also lacking current information on staying safe in bear country and attractant management suggestions.



Figure 4: Signs placed in neighbourhoods where bear sightings were reported

Planning for 2016

It has been a successful year overall but there is still more work to be done. WildSafeBC plans to continue offering education and assistance to residents and municipalities in order to further reduce conflict with wildlife.

The following is a list of items to build on in 2016:

- Continue presentations, workshops, event displays, and door-to-door campaigns
- Continue regular campground visits throughout the peak tourist season
- Continue to work collaboratively on the fruit tree mapping initiative with Harvest Share, Healthy Communities Society, Selkirk College, and the Village of New Denver
- Continue networking and planning with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group
- Bring residential bear resistant bins to the area through the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group's Bear Bin Strategy Committee
- Expand the WildSafeBC presence in Silverton, Nakusp and Area K
- Collaborate with Village staff in New Denver and Nakusp in order to reach non-resident homeowners about fruit trees as an attractant and encourage pruning and harvesting
- Acquire WildSafeBC campground signage and information for camping and staying safe 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
- Presentation to Nakusp Mayor and Council at start of season

Acknowledgments

The efforts and success of WildSafeBC New Denver in 2015 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 Bear Smart event. 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. Ongoing funding for the WildSafeBC program means new goals can be achieved year after year.

I am also grateful for the support from the Village of New Denver' Mayor Bunka and Council, Council's WildSafeBC Liaison Nadine Raynolds, and Village Staff; the West Kootenay Region Conservation Officer Service; the Healthy Community Society; Harvest Share volunteers and steering committee; British Columbia Conservation Foundation personnel and the Provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators.

A special thanks to Katrine Conroy (local MLA), Village of New Denver Mayor Ann Bunka and Councilors, Frank Ritcey, Jenny Wallace, Sharon Wieder (WildSafeBC), Mike Badry (MOE/COS), Jason Hawkes and Nathan Smienk (COS) for attending the Bear Smart event.

