



SQUAMISH WILDSAFEBC PROGRAM  
YEAR END REPORT 2015  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Squamish (DoS) received Bear Smart accreditation from the Ministry of Environment (MOE) in 2010. In 2015, Squamish continued its commitment to further pursuing Bear Smart criteria through the implementation of numerous initiatives and the building of new partnerships.

The DoS has experienced low to moderate bear activity to date. One bear has been relocated with two destructions to date. Both destructions were in relation to available wildlife attractants within two different Provincial Park campgrounds. Factors possibly contributing to the slower start to the season are: an early, productive spring/summer berry crop providing natural forage for many bears; pink salmon run; along with a continual increase in awareness and compliance within the community on how to manage anthropogenic food sources. One sow was killed after being struck by a vehicle on highway 1, leaving behind one cub which was eventually trapped and relocated to Critter Care, a rehabilitation center in Langley. Occasional sightings of bobcats, wolves, elk and cougars have occurred throughout the community with no conflict issues. Coyotes preying on household cats remains a concern.

This report will highlight the 2015 program successes and challenges and will provide insight into how the WildSafeBC Program has concentrated efforts on reducing human-wildlife conflict through education, cooperation and innovation.



Figure 1. WILDSAFEBBC PRESCHOOL PRESENTATION



Figure 1 (a). WildSafeBC Farmers Market Booth



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## 2015 Program Highlights:

The 2015 WildSafeBC Program successes are:

- Collaborated with the DoS and brand.LIVE group to form an Environmental Task Force for the Squamish Valley Music Festival. Stakeholders included Squamish Nation, DoS Bylaw, Conservation Officer Service (COS), DFO and the Ministry of FLRNO. Assisted with the formulation, implementation and completion of a highly successful Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the Squamish Valley Music Festival which brought in over 30,000 people/day for the three day festival. The EMP was instrumental in reducing the potential for human-wildlife conflicts during the festival and for ensuring minimal negative impacts to the environment as a result of the festival. The protection of the pink salmon run was a priority this year.
- Provided the community with the wildlife alert email system. These wildlife alerts are sent out in partnership with the COS and are issued upon determination by the COS when there is an *increased risk to public safety* that warrants communicating to the community. The email is distributed to numerous residents, user groups and media and is posted on the DoS website, Facebook page and Twitter. If trails are closed, a link is provided to the GIS mapping system which highlights the affected trail.
- Utilized remote cameras and field studies data to confirm the seasonal presence of elk in riparian habitat in close proximity to Highway 99. With four elk being hit and killed in this area, within the past three years, WildSafeBC collaborated with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the DoS and Miller Capilano Maintenance Corporation to facilitate the installation of two Elk Caution signs for Highway 99 along with a media release to bring attention to this issue.
- Created an information sheet for mobile food vendors on the requirements to secure all animal attractants as per the Wildlife Attractant Bylaw No. 2053, 2009. This information sheet is attached to all food vendor business license applications and renewals. All food vendors for the Squamish Valley Music Festival were provided with this information sheet.
- Created additional information for the filming application and license in relation to the requirements to secure all animal attractants as per the Wildlife Attractant Bylaw No. 2053, 2009.
- Worked collaboratively with the DoS Sustainability Coordinator to rectify issues with the maintenance of the landfill perimeter electric fence.
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- Offered “Wildlife walks and talks” for the schools. This involved an in-school presentation followed with a walk around the school grounds/trails to put into practice what was learned during the presentation. A scavenger hunt approach to the walk provided for hands-on learning.
- Collaborated with the Mountain FM and created four Public Service Announcements that are played throughout the Sea to Sky Region starting in the spring until late November.
- Collaborated with the Special Events Planning Committee to better guide waste management practices and wildlife habitat protection during special events.
- Continued Bear Working Group meetings with key community stakeholders.
- Fostered a collaborative partnership with the Squamish Nation.
- Furthered the wildlife educational campaign throughout the community with presentations, booths, articles, interviews, door-to-door education and garbage patrols.
- Gathered data for the GIS to be used along with the Sensitive Habitat Mapping for the OCP revisions and protection of wildlife habitat.
- Assisted with education for the curbside kitchen organics collection program.
- Maintained the Squamish WildSafeBC Facebook page with increased total page likes.
- In problematic neighborhoods the number of garbage totes placed roadside prior to 5 am was reduced after following up with garbage tagging procedures.





Figure 2: HIGHWAY 99 ELK SIGNAGE INSTALLATION

## 2015 Challenges:

**Camping:** Historically, numerous campgrounds have experienced bear activity due to the overall availability of attractants. This year was no different: one bear was destroyed in the Stawamus Chief Provincial Park campground and another was destroyed at Alice Lake Provincial Park as a result of campers leaving food and garbage accessible. One bear was relocated from a private campground and numerous bear sightings and encounters have occurred within the Ministry of FLNRO's Cat Lake Rec Site and BC Park's Alice Lake Provincial Park. The DoS Kinsman campground has experienced frequent bear activity with the CoS attempting, unsuccessfully, to relocate a bear out of the area.

Educating campers is a challenge due to the highly transient nature of camping and the need for continuous education, awareness and enforcement.

The DoS continues to pursue the MOE Bear Smart standards yet every year, Squamish is faced with unauthorized camping along Forest Service Roads located on Crown Land but within municipal boundaries and in close proximity to residential neighbourhoods. Despite camping being a Ministry of FLNRO permissible activity on Crown Land, the municipality has within their Zoning Bylaw, a no camping clause within the municipality, unless appropriately zoned. The zoning bylaw is not enforceable therefore the DoS needs to create an enforceable no- camping bylaw. Additionally, Bylaw staffing levels hinder the education and enforcement of these sites and despite the DoS' best efforts to follow Bear Smart standards, camping throughout the corridor is negatively impacting the environment, the wildlife and is most certainly contributing to the potential for human-wildlife conflict.

**New Residents:** Squamish's population is growing at a rapid rate. The need to educate new residents is an on-going challenge. Additionally, rental units and landlords, who do not live in the area, create a complicated process for education and for subsequent enforcement.

**Recreation & Trail Use:** Squamish is a community on the brink of exponential growth. With a newly branded tagline of "Hardwired for Adventure" we can anticipate an increase in people moving to Squamish for the outdoor lifestyle along with recreationists discovering Squamish's back country and front country trail networks. Educating the public about reducing human-wildlife conflicts while out recreating is an on-going challenge that is requiring more and more resources.

**RAPP Line:** Many residents of Squamish misinterpret the purpose of the RAPP Line, believing that reporting a bear will result in the bear being destroyed. This misinformation in conjunction with longtime residents becoming complacent with bear activity is resulting in many residents not utilizing the Rapp Line.

**Social Media:** Misinformation is a large obstacle and the amount of incorrect wildlife information circulating on social media is a matter of most grave concern. The District of Squamish is making strong efforts to correct misleading information found online, by directing the public to their own social media outlets which outlines the correct information. The inherent nature of the internet makes it challenging to manage misinformation and in the 2016 season a strong focus on directing the public to reliable information sources such as the DOS or WildSafeBC should be maintained.



Figure 3: WOLF TRACKS WITHIN LANDFILL E-FENCE PERIMETER

## Recommendations for 2016:

- Form a Sea to Sky Camping Working Group to address camping practices and standards throughout the corridor including various agencies i.e. private, municipal, FLNRO and BC Parks.
- Continue collaborating with Squamish Nation to foster partnerships and offer support.
- Continue to work with the DOS to amend or revise decision-making documents to better reflect and incorporate human-wildlife conflict mitigation criteria.
- Assist with the necessary education and support needed for the installation of electric fencing for the protection of wildlife attractants.
- Provide guidance related to the keeping of bees and chickens in urban areas and reducing the potential for human-wildlife conflict.
- Continue facilitating Bear Working Group meetings to foster communication and partnerships amongst community stakeholders.
- Provide further guidance for special events & filming operations.
- Concentrate efforts on out-reaching to new residents to the community.
- Maintain a strong social media presence.
- Continue to educate the public on the actual benefits of utilizing the RAPP Line.



Figure 4: COMMUNITY BOOTH



Figure 4(a) COMMUNITY BOOTH AT FIRE HALL





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