

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

## Nelson and Area

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Ministry of  
Environment

## Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) for the City of Nelson, David White undertook his second year in the program during 2017. WildSafeBC Nelson covers the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) management zones E and F (Figure 1).

Early in the 2017 season the focus of the WildSafeBC Nelson program was on visiting schools prior to the beginning of bear season. A total of 18 bear-safety presentations were delivered in May and early June, with a total of 41 presentations delivered by the WCC between May and November.

The WildSafeBC Nelson program worked closely with the City of Nelson to assist in the transition of skunk management messaging from trapping as the primary control method to an attractant management and education focus. Through collaboration with the WCC, the City of Nelson installed a number of bear-resistant garbage bins in public areas within Nelson and purchased 100 bear-resistant household garbage bins, which will be sold at cost price to the public.

Door-to-door canvassing was continued through the 2017 summer, along with media releases and brochure distribution to continue to promote WildSafeBC’s messaging and work towards reducing human-wildlife conflict.

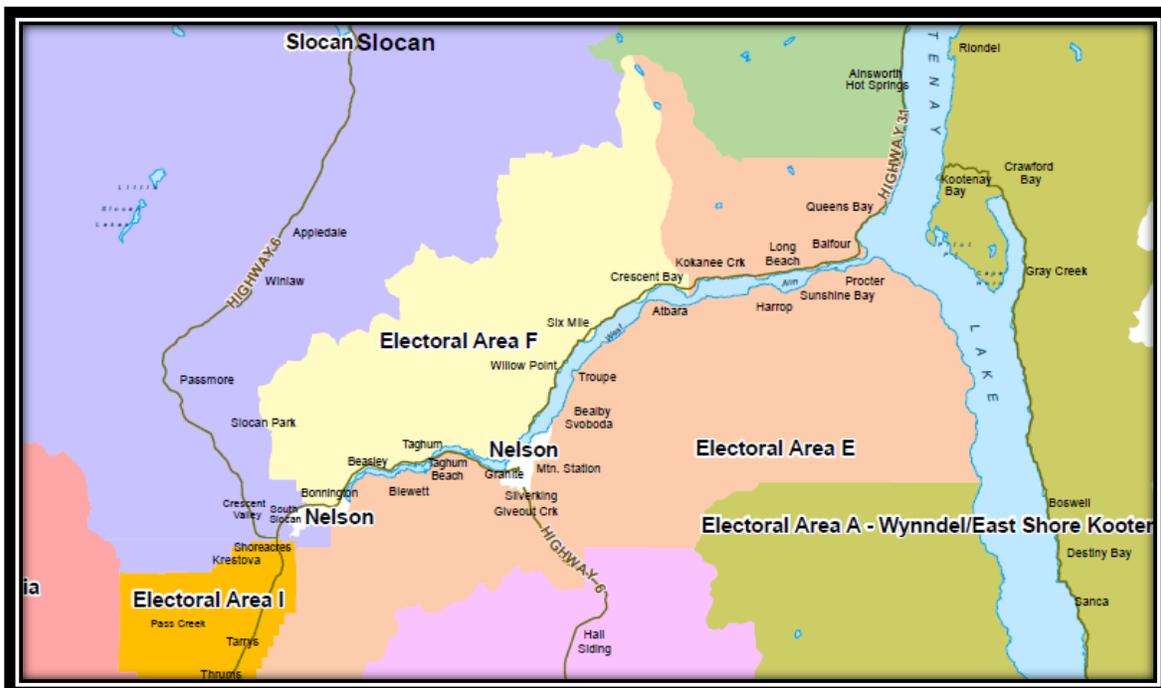


Figure 1: RDCK area E and F Nelson WildSafeBC area of responsibility

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## Highlights from the 2017 Season

### Black Bear Activity

Black bear activity during 2017 in the City of Nelson was slightly higher than the previous five-year average (Figure 2). Regional feedback indicated that 2017 was a good year for huckleberry crops in the areas surrounding Nelson which may have influenced the distribution of bears. Black bear activity within the City of Nelson peaked in spring and increased again towards the end of summer, which is consistent with the availability of berries as an available food source.

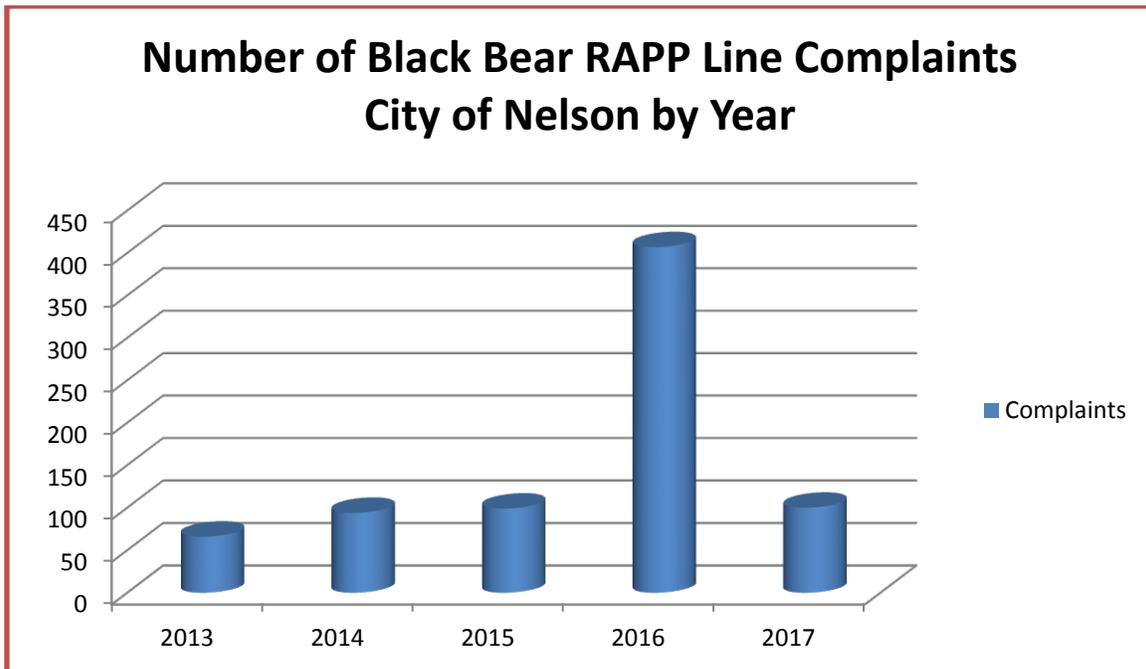


Figure 2: Black bear reports within the City of Nelson, 2017

Many of the black bear reports recorded on the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) within the limits of the City were attributed to garbage as the attractant (Figure 3).

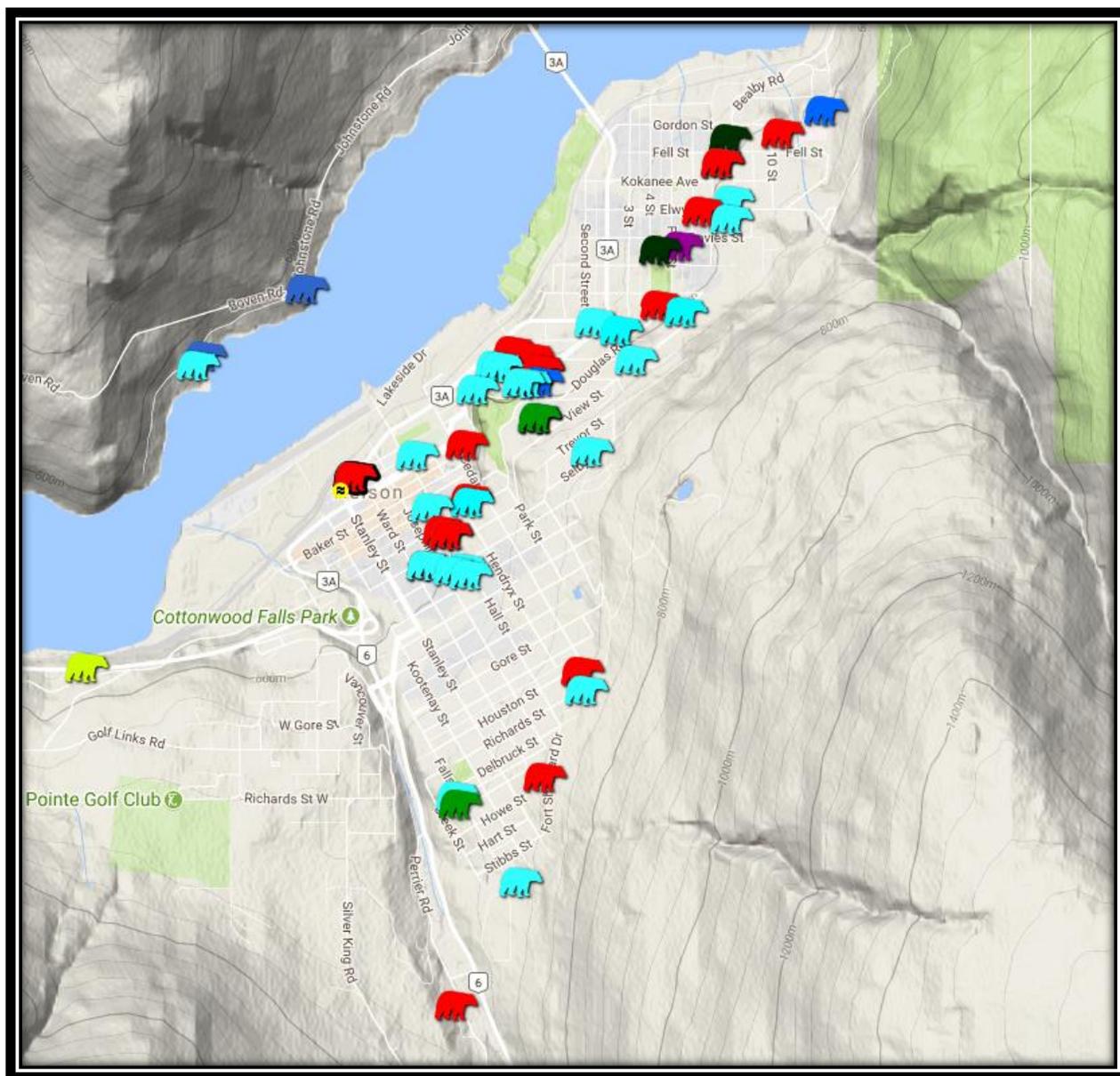


Figure 3: Locations of black bear report in the City of Nelson

## Presentations

Throughout the spring and summer, WildSafeBC Nelson maintained a connection with young people and families by presenting bear safety messaging to schools, day cares, summer camps, scouts meetings and at the Kokanee Park Visitor Center. A total of 41 presentations were delivered by the WCC during 2017 and included:

- SPCA Summer Camp (5)
- Forest Path Summer Camp (3)
- Trafalger Middle School
- St. Joseph's Elementary School (6)
- South Nelson Elementary School (8)
- Blewett Elementary School (2)
- Bonnington Blossoms Day Care
- Kootenay Kids Day Care
- L.V. Rogers High School Aboriginal Studies Program (2)
- Boy Scouts (Cubs) Canada
- Kokanee Creek Park visitor center (6)
- École des Sentiers-alpins (4)



Figure 4: Talk at the Forest Path Program and kids practicing bear safety skills



Figure 5: Presentation at an elementary school and a Boy Scout Canada Cubs meeting

## Door-to-Door

Going door-to-door to educate residents on how to reduce human-wildlife conflict is an important part of delivering the WildSafeBC program. First it gets the WCC out in the community meeting people, educating the community and helping it to stay safe. It also expands the WCC's knowledge of the community and allows them to share this information with residents and wildlife officials. This helps everybody make better decisions.

Much of the door-to-door activity undertaken by the WCC is in response to particular human-wildlife conflict events. Through either WARP or the Conservation Officer Service (COS) the WCC is alerted to particular issues or incidents that are then responded to through door-to-door canvassing. Neighbourhoods with wildlife habitat interface, as well as known wildlife attractants such as unmanaged fruit trees and unsecure garbage were targeted by the WCC. Over the course of the 2017 season the WCC spent over 70 hours undertaking door-to-door canvassing.

## City of Nelson

The City of Nelson and WildSafeBC partnered in a number of areas in 2017. First the City decided to transition away from trapping skunks to an education approach for attractant management and skunk population control. The City approached the WCC to help with the educational approach. The WCC dedicated approximately 55 hours over the summer fielding calls about skunks and racoons, doing property assessments, going door-to-door in neighborhoods with frequent skunk issues, and engaging media outlets including the local newspaper and radio station.

Due to the higher than average bear activity experienced in 2016, the City of Nelson and the WCC worked closely to initiate the first steps of the Bear Smart Community application throughout 2017. The City installed three Hid-A-Bag Waste Containers in Gyro Park, the City campground and Lake Side Park (Figures 6, 7 and 8). Additionally the City purchased 100 Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) certified bear resistant Toter Bear-Tough carts (Figure 9). These carts were made available to the public to be purchased at cost price.



Figure 6: Lakeside Park



Figure 7: Gyro Park (three units installed)



Figure 8: City campground on High Street



Figure 9: Toter's Bear -Tough cart

## Brochure Distribution

The WCC ensured all public locations that have brochure stands had the full complement of WildSafeBC brochures including grizzly bear, wolf, and “Bare Camping” brochures which were introduced in 2017. The WCC continued to ensure the brochures were fully stocked through the summer. Brochures were placed in the Department of Environment office and at information stalls on Highway 3A, the City of Nelson Visitor Center, the visitor center at Kokanee Creek Provincial Park and the RDCK office. Black bear brochures were distributed to all outdoor and bicycle stores in downtown Nelson and all motor sport dealers, hotels, convenience stores,

restaurants and marinas along Highway 3A on the North Shore. The Kokanee Creek Camp Ground also started a large-scale distribution of the WildSafeBC black bear brochure, by providing all campers with a copy upon check-in.



Figure 10: WildSafeBC brochure display

## Kokanee Creek Provincial Park

Kokanee Creek Provincial Park experienced high bear activity just prior to and during the salmon run. Bears were active in the parks campground and over four adult bears and three cubs were seen regularly utilising the Kokanee Spawning Channel from mid-August to the end of September. Wildfire within the area resulted in park rangers closing trails and sections of the Park. The WCC focused on providing outreach to operating campgrounds, distributing literature, promoting bear safety methods and ensuring people maintained a safe distance from feeding bears. The WCC also assisted with bear monitoring and provided education to participants throughout the RedFish Festival in August.



Figure 11: Sow black bear fishing in Kokanee Creek

## Media

The WCC worked closely with the local media to promote WildSafeBC messaging. The WCC was interviewed once by the Nelson Star regarding the cities changing skunk policy. The WCC also authored five stories for the Nelson Star on a variety of topics from managing attractants such as fruit trees, garbage, updates on the WildSafeBC program and bear activity. The WCC was also featured on the local radio stations of Juice FM and EZ Rock discussing bears, skunks and conflict reduction initiatives.



Figure 12: Article authored by the WCC

## Public Displays

WildSafeBC Nelson held booths in 12 markets and events during the 2017 season including eight Cottonwood markets within Nelson, one booth at the Canada Day event at Lake Side Park, one booth at the ferry landing in Balfour for the 70th Anniversary Celebration, and one market at the RedFish Festival at Kokanee Creek Visitor Center.



Figure 13: Public displays throughout the 2017 season

## Bear Spray Training

Promoting the awareness of bear spray as an important safety measure was a priority to the WildSafeBC Nelson 2017 season. The WCC provided training to the staff at the Valhalla Pure outdoor retail store in the proper use of bear spray. Valhalla Pure is one of the main retailers of bear spray in Nelson and training the staff, gives them the best information to then pass on to the Nelson community.

Bear spray training was also given to all the staff at the Waldorf School, as this school is located in key bear habitat for both black bears and grizzly bears. Additionally, a training session was given at LV Rogers High School for the Aboriginal Studies Program which has a strong wilderness component.



**Figure 14: Participants of bear spray training**

## West Kootenay Human-Bear Conflict Working Group

The WCC was involved in the West Kootenay Human-Bear Working Group. This group is a multi-agency organization that works towards reducing human-bear conflict in the West Kootenay region. Among the participating organizations are the WildSafeBC Coordinators of the West Kootenay region, the COS, biologists for the Ministry of the Environment, Trans-Boarder Grizzly Bear project and BC Provincial Parks.

The main focus for 2017 was the continuation of the bear-resistant garbage bin project from 2015 and 2016, in particular the distribution of bear-resistant garbage bins for household use. The 2017 activities included a new proposal for the purchase of Toter's Bear-Tough carts. It was this proposal that was shared with the City of Nelson, and that prompted the City to purchase 100 of these carts to sell at cost price to the public.

## Objectives for 2018

The WildSafeBC Nelson objectives for 2018 are:

- To continue to promote WildSafeBC's messaging to the public on reducing human-wildlife conflict.
- To continue providing solid advice and guiding principles to the City of Nelson as they move towards Bear Smart status.
- Work closely with schools and camps to educate the young people on bear and cougar safety and work closely with the COS to target neighborhoods with wildlife conflict for greater educational efforts.
- The program will continue to work towards getting more bear-resistant garbage receptacles within the City's parks and along main streets and to aid the City in promotion and distribution of the bear-resistant carts.

## Acknowledgments

WildSafeBC Nelson would like to acknowledge the generous support it receives from its sponsors, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of Central Kootenay and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the City of Nelson.

Also the support of all the partners that help in coordinating program delivery and presenting the important message, such as the Conservation Officer Service, including Sgt. Cynthia Mann, CO Nathan Smienk and CO Jason Hawkes. Also all the schools of the Kootenay Lake School District 8 (SD8) and the École des Sentiers-alpins, that provided the program with time out of their busy schedule to allow WildSafeBC Nelson to discuss bear safety to their children. Finally WildSafeBC Nelson would like to thank the local media for working with the program to deliver the message to the community at large, such as the Nelson Star Newspaper, 103.5 Juice FM Radio and the Nelson CO-OP radio.

