

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

New Denver, Silvertown, Nakusp and Area K

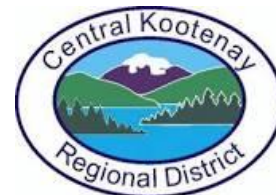
Prepared by Bree Lillies, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



Photo: Tasha Pollon, Nelson BC. WildSafeBC BC Goes Wild Photo Contest Entry



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Executive Summary

In 2017, the WildSafeBC program was delivered throughout New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K by Community Coordinator, Bree Lillies. Thanks to ongoing support and valuable community partnerships, the WildSafeBC program continues to grow.

The Slocan and Arrow Lakes valleys have diverse communities and each experience their own challenges with human-wildlife conflict. WildSafeBC focused on addressing and preventing conflict with residents, particularly regarding fruit trees, small livestock, and garbage.

WildSafeBC aims to work with communities to assist with the reduction of conflict and offer solutions that will help keep wildlife wild and the community safe in the long term. This annual report describes the program delivery for 2017 and provides insight into how the program has concentrated its efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Ideas for how to build on the program for the 2018 season are also included.

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Program Highlights

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) engaged residents in New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K through a variety of activities. Public education is the focus of the program. Program delivery highlights and achievements are briefly described below.

Bear Forum in the Village of New Denver

On June 20th the WCC partnered with the Village of New Denver to host a public meeting regarding bear activity in the community. The panel of guests included regional Conservation Officers, the WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator, Provincial Wildlife Conflict Manager, and local government representatives from the Villages of New Denver and Silverton. Each panel member explained their role related to human-bear conflict, followed by questions from the public. This was a well-attended event with over 50 people present, and a great opportunity to share provincial and municipal messaging about attractant management and bear safety. Response and communication expectations around wildlife conflict were discussed by the various agencies involved. There is interest in hosting a similar event in 2018, and possibly annually, to continue dialogue and education.

Electric Fencing

On June 22nd an electric fence workshop was held at the Nakusp Senior's Hall, led by Gillian Sanders from Grizzly Bear Solutions. There continues to be a sweeping increase in the use of electric fencing year after year as more people learn how to use the tool properly and achieve successful results. WildSafeBC offers electric fencing information presentations and assists property owners with design suggestions and voltage testing.

The Village of New Denver and Harvest Share have purchased a total of four full electric fence kits to be loaned out to high priority properties in the community.



Figure 1: Hands on demonstration at the electric fence workshop

Bear Safety

On June 30th the WCC led Valhalla Pure Outfitters staff in a bear-spray training session. The staff are now well equipped with the current WildSafeBC messaging around bear-spray and bear safety.

School Presentations

The Junior Rangers program is intended to introduce youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict and encourage them to take an active role in reducing human-wildlife conflict at home by helping their families identify backyard wildlife attractants. Presentations were delivered to approximately 100 children including, the New Denver Early Learning Program (ages 2-5), Lucerne Elementary (grades K, 1), Nakusp Elementary (grade 3), and Edgewood Elementary students (K-7).



Figure 2: Junior Rangers presentation with Edgewood Primary Class

BC Goes Wild Weekend

The third weekend in September is the time when human-bear conflict tends to peak in the province. A province-wide photo-contest and local events throughout the province were organized to celebrate this event. WildSafeBC used this weekend of activities to inspire people to keep wildlife wild and communities safe.

For the 2017 BC Goes Wild Weekend, WildSafeBC New Denver-Nakusp joined Kootenay Sufferfest in Nakusp for the Suffercross CX Bike Race and Duathlon and Corporate Challenge. The event took place on September 17th at 9am at the Nakusp Gazebo with races continuing throughout the day. The WCC created a booth geared towards mountain bikers and held on-demand bear spray training sessions. There were 150 race participants (ages 2 and up), plus spectators. It was a great way to engage with outdoor enthusiasts with WildSafeBC bear safety messaging.



Figure 3: Collage of photos from the BC Goes Wild event in Nakusp

Composting in Bear Country

On October 14th WildSafeBC and Harvest Share collaborated on hosting a composting workshop led by Mario Lanthier from CropHealth Advising and Research out of Kelowna. The workshop discussed preparation and testing of compost, mistakes that lead to poor compost, and steps to make high quality compost that is less attractive to wildlife.

Fruit Harvesting

WildSafeBC continued to concentrate efforts on fruit tree management and collaborated with Harvest Share in New Denver and the Root and Branch Harvest Program in Nakusp. These programs assist homeowners with the removal of excess fruit from their property. WildSafeBC has combined efforts with the North Slokan Food Program and Lucerne Elementary and Secondary School to have students assist with fruit picks for the annual Harvest Festival.

Events

WildSafeBC participated in various events throughout the season with an educational display. Involvement in these community events creates an opportunity for people to become engaged in conversation about local wildlife and the WildSafeBC program. The main events included the Fall Fair in Nakusp and the Harvest Festival in New Denver. WildSafeBC helped welcome the Valhalla Fine Arts Suzuki School participants at the opening evening with an overview of the WildSafeBC program and provided education on camping in bear country as most of the guests stay in the Silverton and New Denver municipal campgrounds.

Social Media and Press

- WildSafeBC New Denver-Nakusp Facebook page has gained 255 likes.
- Weekly Facebook posts kept followers up to date on events, wildlife activity, and attractant management.
- The Valley Voice newspaper and the Arrow Lakes News printed all submitted articles, interviews, and advertisements with a total reach of approximately 30,400 readers.
- An interview with Mayor Hamling of Nakusp was aired on 107.1 The Arrow Daily following the noon news October 2nd – 6th and again from 9th – 13th.

Door-to-Door

Door-to-door visits are an effective method to raise awareness about bear activity in the area and to share attractant management information. Neighborhoods were targeted based on reports to the RAPP line, recommendations by the Conservation Officer Service, and reports made by individuals to WildSafeBC. Reports to the RAPP line in 2017 were significantly lower compared to 2016.

Campground Visits

Black bears are often attracted to campgrounds in the area due to the location in rich bear habitat. This year the Village of Silverton and coordinators of the Valhalla Fine Arts Music School requested extra campground visits during the high traffic weeks in August. Throughout the summer, with the help from campground attendants, WildSafeBC efforts focused on educating tourists about black bear activity, safety, and securing attractants.

West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group

The WCC actively participates in the West Kootenay Human 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 group discusses and supports creative and effective solutions to address human bear conflict in the region.

Challenges for the 2017 Program

Communities in this area have the ideal conditions for attracting bears to forage throughout the season. While the number of active bears fluctuates from year to year, WildSafeBC continues to focus on delivering attractant management messaging to ensure when activity is higher, residents are prepared with the proper knowledge and tools to prevent conflict.

The abundance of fruit trees presents a human-wildlife conflict situation that requires a significant amount of attention. While many homeowners pick their fruit or partner with the local fruit gleaning projects, there are no bylaws that require residents to manage their fruit trees, and unpicked fruit remains a chronic attractant issue. In June 2017 the Village of New Denver Council passed a resolution to draft a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw and/or make amendments to the Solid Waste Management Bylaw. A wildlife attractant bylaw that includes guidelines for fruit tree owners has the potential to greatly reduce access to that food source in the community and will also address the challenge of fruit trees on non-resident/seasonal properties.

Reducing conflicts will require a proactive plan from the municipalities with cooperation from the residents, non-resident home owners, and tourists alike.

Goals for 2018

WildSafeBC plans to continue offering education and assistance to residents and municipalities to further reduce human-wildlife conflict. The following is a list of items to build on in 2018:

- Continue presentations, public meetings, workshops, event displays, and door-to-door campaigns.
- Continue regular campground visits throughout the peak tourist season.
- Continue to work collaboratively with local governments.
- Continue working with the Village of New Denver on creating a wildlife attractant bylaw.
- Continue networking and planning with the West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group.
- Introduce residential bear resistant bins to the area.
- Collaborate with Village staff in New Denver, Silverton, and Nakusp to reach all homeowners about fruit trees as an attractant and encourage pruning and harvesting.
- Assist in the efforts to align the Official Community Plans with the Bear Hazard Assessment and Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan.

Acknowledgments

The efforts and success of the WildSafeBC program in 2017 would not have been possible without the support from the Village of New Denver. The Village of New Denver has provided staff time for meetings, brainstorming and planning, photocopying, and hall rentals for WildSafeBC events. In 2017 the Village purchased additional electric fencing supplies to be used in high priority areas of the community.

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.

Thank you for the support from the Village of New Denver's Mayor Bunka and Council, Council's WildSafeBC Liaison Nadine Raynolds, and staff; the West Kootenay Region Conservation Officer Service; our local RCMP; Nakusp Director of Operations Warren Leigh; the Healthy Community Society; Harvest Share volunteers and steering committee; Julianne Hughes and the Root and Branch Harvest Committee; British Columbia Conservation Foundation personnel; and the Provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators.

