

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

Powell River Regional District

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Ministry of
Environment



Executive Summary

Additional funding from the Powell River Regional District and Powell River Community Forest allowed for more hours and resources for the WildSafeBC Powell River program to encourage attractant management and reduce wildlife conflict. Additional funding from Telus allowed for Junior Ranger kits to be distributed to students across the community.

This was the third season for the WildSafeBC program in the Powell River Regional District and saw Francine Ulmer return as the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC). Social media, public presentations and displays, and public outreach contributed to an increased public understanding of the complex nature of human-wildlife conflicts and attractant management in the region.

The 2017 human-wildlife conflict statistics reflect an increase over last year. It is important to note that we had an atypically long blackberry season that provided ample wild food sources when we would normally see a late summer/early fall increase in human-bear conflicts. In contrast, the spring experienced higher human-bear conflicts, possibly due to a later salmonberry crop for hungry bears. Across the province human-deer conflicts were above average in 2017 and Powell River statistics reflect the provincial trend as well.

Human-Wildlife Conflict Overview

The following statistics can be viewed in the figures located in the appendices at the end of this document.

- Garbage was the major attractant, accounting for 17% of wildlife reports (Figure 6)
- Fruit trees were the second most common attractant (14% of wildlife reports) (Figure 6)
- Livestock/ chickens were the third most common attractant (6% of wildlife reports) (Figure 6)
- 55% of wildlife conflict reports did not indicate an attractant (Figure 6)
- 79 reports for food conditioned bears (Table 2)
- 12 reports of livestock kills or injury by bears (Table 2)
- 10 reports of aggressive bear behaviour (Table 2)
- 15 reports of damage to property by bears (Table 2)
- 287 human-wildlife conflicts report to the RAPP line from January through October (Table 3)
- 1 bear cub, 1 juvenile bobcat and 1 fawn were transferred to Critter Care (Conservation Officer Andrew Anaka personal communication)

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Highlights from the 2017 Season

Bear Smart Community

In October WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey made a series of site visits to communities in BC interested in becoming a Bear Smart Community. Frank came to Powell River with Mike Badry the Provincial Wildlife Conflicts Prevention Coordinator for the Ministry of Environment who is responsible for administering the Bear Smart Community program. Together with the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) they meet with City Counsellors and Bylaw Enforcement staff to discuss program requirements, possibilities of forming a Bear Smart Advisory Group and possible updates to local bylaws. An evening session open to the public focused on watching wildlife in BC with Frank Ritcey at a special Malaspina Naturalists meeting, followed by a Bear Smart Community Q & A roundtable discussion with Mike Badry.



Figure 1. Bear Smart meeting attendees, October 2017

In 2016 and 2017 the WCC participated in a committee that met regularly to update the 2013 version of the Powell River Regional District (PRRD) Solid Waste Management Plan. Although there was a section in the 2013 plan that addressed human-bear conflicts the new plan has an updated version. The new section relates to three of the six major criteria for becoming a Bear Smart Community set out by the Ministry of Environment. Considering that garbage has been the major bear attractant in Powell River, this is a significant step towards acknowledging the connection between solid waste and human-wildlife conflict.

Bear Smart Criteria #3: Revise Planning and Decision Making Documents:

The section highlights the positive steps already taken by the City and the Regional District towards the six criteria for becoming a Bear Smart Community. A reference to the six criteria for becoming a Bear Smart Community is also embedded in this section. The importance of the Solid Waste Management Plan to criteria number three is significant. This plan will serve as a guiding decision making document for the future development and implementation of the Regional District and City waste management facilities and programs.

Bear Smart Criteria #5: Develop and Maintain a Bear Resistant Solid Waste Management System:

The section suggests that the PRRD could incorporate similar Bear Smart approaches in the design of future facilities, such as the Resource Recovery Center and recycling depots, in order to operate while minimizing wildlife attractants and increasing public education to residents, businesses and electoral areas.

Bear Smart Criteria #6: Implement and Enforce Bear Smart Bylaws:

The section states that current waste management bylaws and enforcement may need to be reviewed and updated with respect to containerization and storage of garbage and compost, set out times, and bear proof requirements for commercial containers.

Media

The season started with 350 page likes for the local WildSafeBC District of Powell River Facebook page and by the end of the season there was 550 page likes (Figure 2). An increase in page likes means that more local residents are following the page in their own news feed and are able to share our messaging that way. Many hot topic posts about bears breaking into houses and deer being killed in motor vehicle accidents received record numbers of views.

An article in the November Powell River Living Magazine provided a seasonal wildlife update. Local radio CJMP and Coast FM continued to play Public Safety Announcements (PSA) about wildlife attractant management and promote local events. After a popular Facebook post caught the attention of local reporters, the Peak Newspaper featured an article about the increase in deer reports to the Conservation Officer Service (COS).

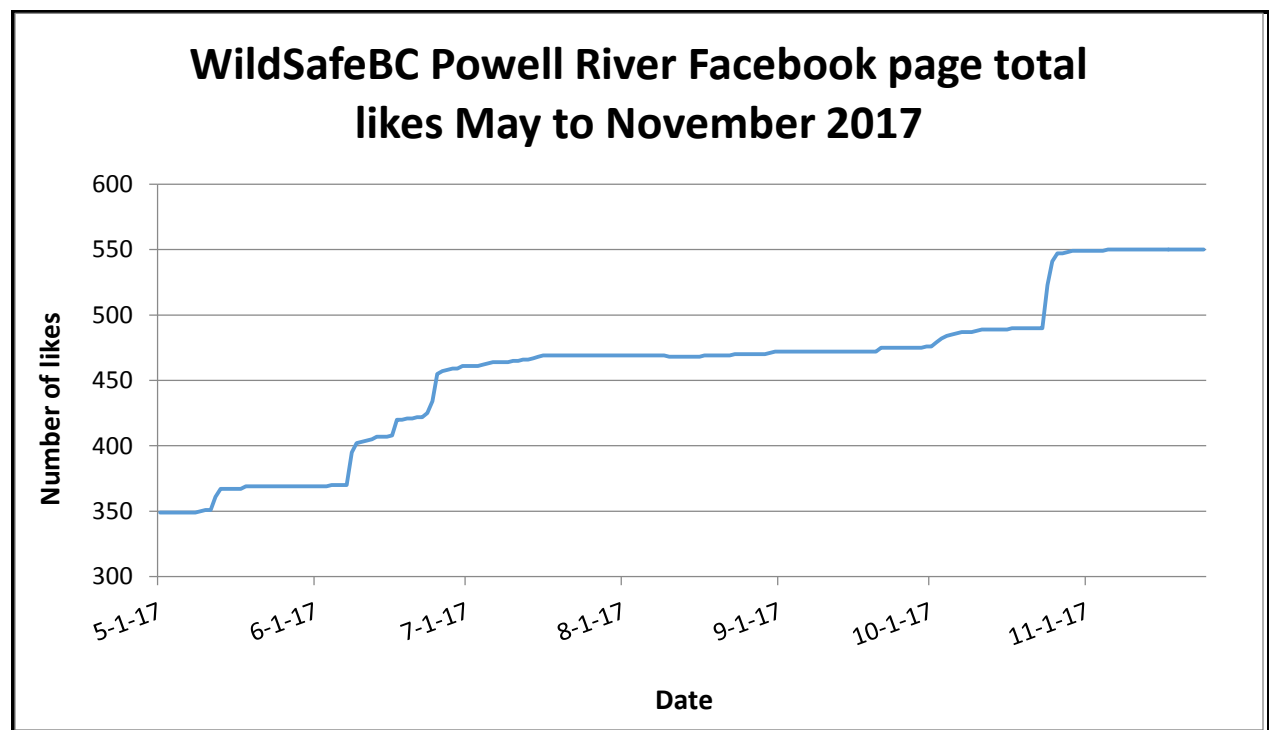


Figure 2. WildSafeBC Powell River Facebook page statistics 2017

Community Presentations

This year the Provincial Coordinator for WildSafeBC, Frank Ritcey, came to town twice. The first visit he delivered his popular predator proof electric fencing demonstration to a large turnout in July. Powell River residents are increasingly receptive to the idea of electric fences as the most effective tool for securing agricultural attractants. This year WildSafeBC delivered more workshops and advice on electric fences than in previous years. For the September BC Goes Wild Weekend there was a great turn out to the For the Love of Bears Speaker Series at the Powell River Library and many residents were reached that weekend at the Fall Fair. The following list of presentations and display booths reached more residents and visitors than in past seasons.

- Garden Club Power Point Presentation
- Powell River Immigrant Services Presentation
- Mother Nature Winter Gardening Seminar Presentation
- Bear Safety Talk with Canada Postal Workers
- Predator Proof Electric Fence Demonstration with Frank Ritcey
- For the Love of Bears Speaker Series with the Powell River Library
- Electric Fence Q&A at the Fall Fair Demonstration Booth
- Watching Wildlife with Frank Ritcey and Bear Smart Community Round Table Q&A at the Malaspina Naturalists Club Meeting
- Bear Smart Community Meeting with City Councillors and Bylaw Enforcement Officers
- Electric Fence Demonstration at Fall Homesteaders Bootcamp
- November Committee of the WildSafeBC Delegation and Bear Smart Power Point Presentation
- Brooks Secondary Student Council WildSafeBC and Bear Smart Community Presentation

Junior Ranger Presentations and Scavenger Hunts

Students from 40 classes across the district participated in an outdoor experiential education Junior Ranger Scavenger Hunt, or received a Junior Ranger power point presentation on bear biology, bear safety, and attractant management. Over 1,000 students and school staff participated, bringing the messaging home to families. Additional educational resources were purchased and each class enjoyed experiencing the set of rubber animal tracks. The British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) secured extra funding for Powell River from Telus so that students in grades 2-4 received a Junior Ranger goodie bag with a colouring book, pencil, button, sticker, tattoo, bookmark, and additional Junior Ranger materials.

- Edgehill Elementary School (4 classes)
- James Thomson Elementary School (8 classes)
- Westview Elementary School (11 classes)
- Kelly Creek Elementary School (4 classes)
- Henderson Elementary School (3 classes)
- école Cote-du-soleil (8 classes)

- Powell River Christian School (2 classes)



Figure 3. Students at a presentation interacting with educational tools

Displays

Display booths were set up at the following events.

- Lund Shellfish Festival (2 days)
- Farmers Market
- Lang Bay Day
- Logger Sports (3 days)
- Fun In The Sun Kids Day Camp Scavenger Hunt
- Father's Day Family Fishing Weekend
- Canada Day Celebration at Willingdon Beach
- Sandcastle Weekend on Texada Island
- Fall Fair (2 days)
- Edible Garden Tour Electric Fence Demonstration

Door-to-Door Education

Door-to-door education was delivered at the request of the COS in areas experiencing conflict with bears. The mobile home parks in Wildwood and Westview were targeted for education because storage of attractants is a challenge for smaller homes and lots. With less secure storage options, many attractants are left outside leading to food conditioned bears learning about the food rewards and causing property damage.



Figure 4. Property damage to homes in the Westview by a black bear

As we move towards phasing in the curbside organic collection program and the anticipated curbside garbage collection, storage may pose an ongoing barrier to attractant management. The lack of secure storage in multi-unit dwellings, small or heritage houses, and mobile homes may pose a continued challenge for the community.

The Regional District Waste Management Education Team (Let's Talk Trash) has been providing educational materials and door-to-door education to the community about proper storage, waste management tips, and wildlife attractants. As the new programs are phased in more door-to-door education and garbage tagging can be done by the WCC to assist with the education and transition to the new system.

Challenges of the 2017 Season

Several challenges presented themselves over the 2017 season.

- WildSafeBC, Skookum Gleaners and the Food Security Coordinator collaborated on gleaning efforts in the community. However, the funding levels were insufficient for employing a full time gleaning coordinator and efforts were not expanded or redesigned. Although there is much potential for collaboration, the WCC worked with parents from Wildwood to bring fruit from the neighborhood into the school. This model involves the families who stand to benefit from safer neighborhoods and improved student nutrition and can be expanded in the future.
- Human-bear conflict calls for 2017 were 194 for January through the end of November. The volume is higher overall than in 2016 which had 180 calls the whole year. However, residents had the perception that this year was a better year for bears because the early fall conflict season was lower. Increased use of WARP alerts could increase the public perception of wildlife conflicts.
- After the 2016 season presentation to Mayor and Council about the Bear Smart Community program, the council directed staff to look into the idea of becoming a Bear Smart Community. However, with all that the City is working on this action item was put on a long list and there was no action taken in 2017. At the Committee of the Whole meeting in November 2017 the WCC requested that a formal group be formed as an advisory body on Bear Smart initiatives.

Goals for the 2018 Season

With three seasons completed there is a greater recognition of the WildSafeBC program and much progress has been achieved in attractant management and education. Local understanding of human-wildlife conflict is increasing. The following goals will help the program grow in 2018.

- A spike in new homeowners brings new residents who may be unaware of the bear activity in their neighborhood and on their new property. Creating a campaign to target new homeowners will get the attractant management messaging to new residents before problems arise. Creating a new homeowner welcome letter with local resources and attractant management tips can be a great resource for realtors and the WCC. Regular Facebook posts of WARP alerts can inform the public.
- This season the program invested in a set of rubber animal tracks for use in Junior Ranger Presentations and they were well received by students. Additional resources keep presentations fresh and interesting from year to year. Building a felt story board for early childhood and primary education will be a wonderful and interactive educational resource.
- Powell River is increasingly popular as a recreation and tourist destination. Many foreign tourists and international students are coming to Powell River every year. Educational messaging and signs for campgrounds and areas frequented by tourists and international students will provide education to people who may not be aware of local wildlife and attractant management.
- The curbside compost collection pilot program began this fall and the selected houses are randomly dispersed throughout the community making bin tagging for educational purposes impossible. Depending on the roll out schedule for the new waste collection programs hopefully some form of garbage or compost bin tagging will be possible for the first time in 2018.

Acknowledgements

The continuity of WildSafeBC programming relies on community partnerships. We are grateful that the Regional District has sponsored the program for a third year. The PRRD and the Powell River Community Forest increased funding which allowed for additional educational resources this season. WildSafeBC acknowledges that the City of Powell River contributed to WildSafeBC since the City is the sole shareholder of the Powell River Community Forest. Our Junior Ranger Program received a boost in funding from Telus for goodie bags of Junior Ranger resources for students across the district.

Thanks to the BCCF staff for the training, resources, and visits from the Provincial Coordinator. Special acknowledgment goes to Trina Radford, Corrine Hutchinson, Shelley Nohels, Frank Ritcey, and Mitchell Bymoen for their assistance and expertise.

Thank you to Conservation Officers Andrew Anaka, Gerry Lister, and Dean Miller for your advice and technical expertise. Their tips and ideas are invaluable and have provided an insight into the nature of local human-wildlife conflicts. A special thanks to Mike Badry from the

Ministry of Environment for travelling to Powell River to share information about the Bear Smart Community program.

Many thanks to Abby, Tai and Inger-Lise of the Let's Talk Trash Team for co-creating resources and continuing to spread information about attractant management.

References

<http://letstalktrash.ca/>

<http://letstalktrash.ca/resources/bear-smart/>

http://letstalktrash.ca/wp-content/uploads/composting_brochure_2016.pdf

Appendix

Human-wildlife conflict calls to the COS Report All Poachers Polluters (RAPP) line are reported by WARP for mapping and data analysis purposes. Anyone can access WARP by going to <https://wildsafebc.com/warp/>. Sign up for WARP Alerts to get notification of wildlife conflicts in your area.

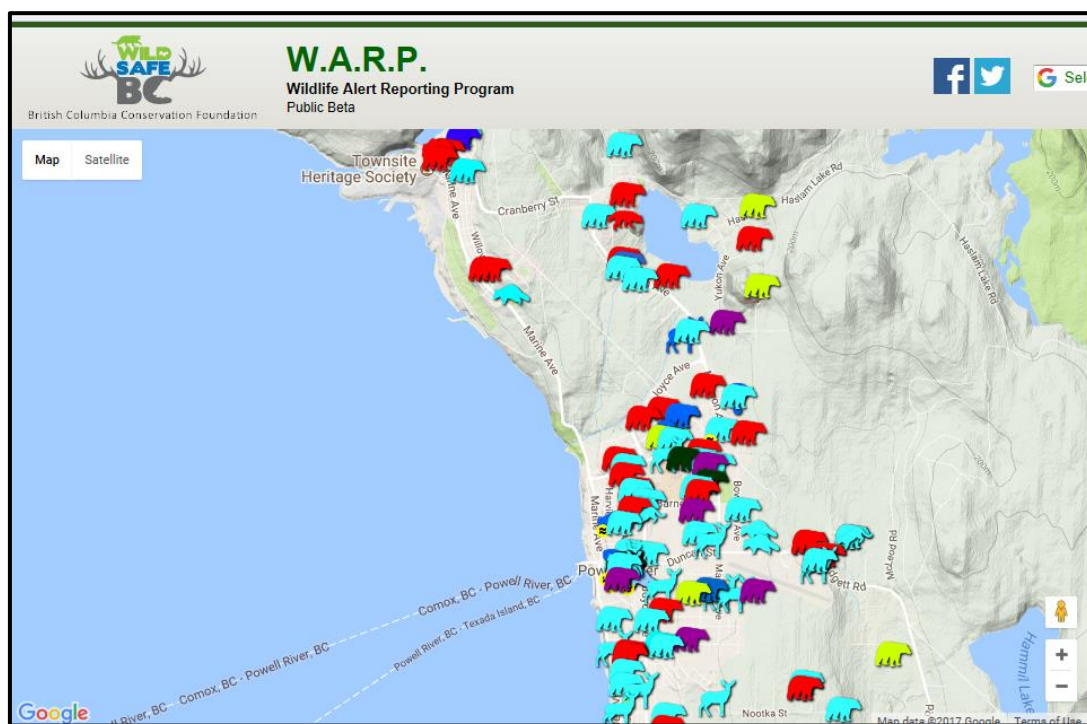


Figure 5. WARP reports for Powell River January 1 to November 1, 2017

Attractant Colour Legend	
■	Garbage
■	Fruit tree
■	Compost
■	Livestock
■	Not specified

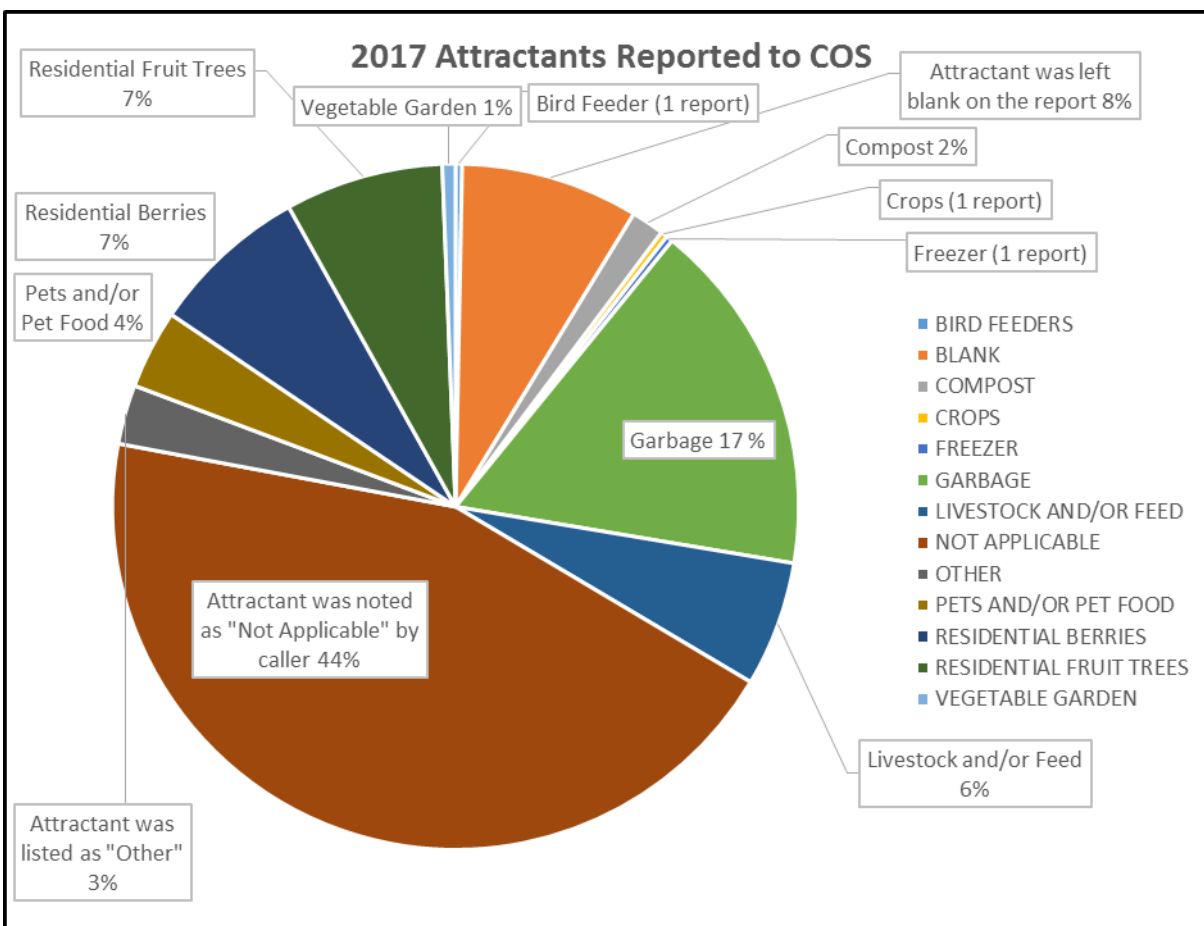


Figure 6. Attractant statistics for all species reports in Powell River January 1 to November 20 2017

A pie chart of reported attractants shows garbage as the top attractant followed by berries and fruit trees, livestock and/or feed, and pets and/or pet food. It is important to note that 55% or callers either did not report an attractant or it was reported as "other" or "not applicable". However, this does not mean that there was not an attractant associated with the call; often the attractant is not clear to the caller at the time.

Table 1. Outcomes of human-bear conflicts in the PRRD, 2017

2017 Human-Bear Conflict Outcome	Sum of Count
Advice provided	77
Destroyed by COS	8
Gone on arrival	5
Hazed	3
Not specified	74
Other	25
Transferred to rehab	1
Trap set – No capture	1
Grand Total	194

Table 2. Types of human-bear conflict in the PRRD, 2017

2017 Type of Human-Bear Conflicts	Sum of Count
Aggressive	10
Confined	2
Damage to property	15
Dead wildlife	3
Food conditioned	79
Injured/Distressed	14
Livestock/Pets - Killed/Injured	12
Orphaned	3
Other	1
School/Park/Playground	7
Sightings	47
Wildlife in trap	1
Grand Total	194

Table 3. Total species reported to the RAPP line, 2017

2017 Species Reported to COS	Sum of Count
Black bear	194
Bobcat	3
Cougar	24
Coyote	1
Deer	48
Grizzly bear	3
Other	5
Raccoon	6
Raptor	1
Unknown	1
Wold	1
Grand Total	287