

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp

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Ministry of
Environment and
Climate Change Strategy



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Executive Summary

In 2018, the WildSafeBC program was delivered throughout New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K by WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Bree Lillies. 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.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator worked throughout the North Slokan and Arrow Lakes Valleys to provide communities with attractant management education. Presentations, door-to-door canvassing, public displays and events, collaborative effort with other community groups, media releases and interviews, and electric fence consultations continue to promote WildSafeBC's messaging and work towards reducing human-wildlife conflict. With strong community support throughout the area, the WildSafeBC New Denver-Nakusp program continues to strengthen.

This annual report describes the program delivery for 2018 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 2019 season are also included.

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) engaged residents in New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K through a variety of activities. Public education is a core component of the program through activities such as presentations to community groups, stakeholders and the delivery of the Junior Ranger Program to elementary school children. The WCC gave a total of 13 presentations to over 200 participants including:

- Mayor and Council in the Villages of Nakusp and Silverton
- School District #10, Arrow Lakes, grades K-7
- Recreation Commission #6 Summer Camp



Figure 1. Junior Rangers at Nakusp Elementary School.

Door-to-Door Education

Door-to-door visits are an effective method to raise awareness about bear activity in the area and to share attractant management information. Neighbourhoods were targeted based on reports to the RAPP line, recommendations by the Conservation Officer Service, and reports made by individuals to WildSafeBC. This year more than 100 homes were visited in Nakusp and New Denver.

Public Displays and Events

WildSafeBC participated in various events throughout the season (fig. 2). Involvement in these community events creates an opportunity for people to become engaged in conversation about local wildlife and the WildSafeBC program.



Figure 2. WildSafeBC educational display at the New Denver Friday Market.

The main events included:

- The Garlic Festival (New Denver)
- Annual Harvest Festival (Lucerne Elementary Secondary School, New Denver)
- Friday Market (New Denver)
- Saturday Market (Nakusp)
- Toad Fest (Summit Lake)
- Sufferfest CX Race (Nakusp)

The BC Goes Wild Weekend (BCGWW) is an annual event that celebrates BC's Wildlife and promotes WildSafeBC messaging through fun activities and demonstrations such as bear spray use and electric fencing. This year, WildSafeBC New Denver-Nakusp joined Kootenay Sufferfest for the Nakusp Suffercross CX Bike Race. The event took place at the Nakusp Gazebo on Sunday, September 16th. The WCC offered bear spray demos throughout the day (fig. 3) and an estimated 200 people were in attendance.



Figure 3. Bear spray demonstration of the BC Goes Wild Weekend event in Nakusp.

Social Media and Press

WildSafeBC New Denver-Nakusp Facebook page has gained 299 likes. Weekly posts kept followers up to date on events, wildlife activity, and attractant management tips. The WCC coordinated event sharing on the Visit Nakusp Facebook page and the Village of Nakusp Facebook page. Press releases were submitted to Arrow Lakes News and Valley Voice early in the season. The WCC participated in interviews regarding local activity with both local newspaper outlets as well as the regional radio station (EZ Rock).

Partnerships

Thanks to ongoing support and valuable partnerships the WildSafeBC program continues to grow in the North Slokan and Arrow Lakes. Established partnerships include:

- West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group
- Conservation Officer Service (West Kootenay Zone)
- Municipalities of Silverton, New Denver, and Nakusp
- Harvest Share (New Denver)
- Root and Branch Harvest (Nakusp)
- Healthy Community Society (New Denver Harvest Festival and RDCK funded Bear Resistant Composting Initiative)

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

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.

New Denver Bear Smart Initiatives

In June of 2015, the Village of New Denver was awarded Bear Smart Status by the Province of British Columbia. The process of being Bear Smart involves a shift from the reactive management of “problem” bears to the proactive management of the attractants that draw bears into the communities.

Village of New Denver Council acknowledges that efforts to reduce human-bear conflict will require an ongoing commitment. In June of 2018, as part of their commitment to being Bear Smart, Council amended the Village’s Solid Waste Management Bylaw 581 to include wildlife attractants.

Over \$30,000 has been invested in bear resistant bins on municipal property along with bear resistant recycling bins at the municipal campground. The Village continues to provide in-kind support to the WildSafeBC program and supports the Harvest Share program through CBT Community Initiatives funding. In 2017, the Village of New Denver began purchasing electric fence kits to be loaned out to property owners on a first come first served basis. In 2018, \$2,000 in additional funds were committed to further grow the electric fencing program. The WCC facilitates the education component involved to ensure proper installation and maintenance. The Village of New Denver has become a model community across the West Kootenay Region for their proactive approach to reduce wildlife conflict.

Nakusp Bear Attractant Audit

On August 28th, the WCC assisted West Kootenay Conservation Officers with a bear attractant audit in the Village of Nakusp. The audit was focused on the downtown core which historically has the highest density for black bear activity. Door-to-door surveys were performed on 50 homes in the downtown core as well as all businesses on Broadway Street.



Figure 4. The WCC with Conservation Office Mark Walkosky during a bear attractant audit in downtown Nakusp.

Electric Fencing

On June 27th, an electric fence workshop was held at the Nakusp Senior's Hall, led by Gillian Sanders from Grizzly Bear Solutions. WildSafeBC offers electric fencing information and assists property owners with design and voltage testing. The WCC assisted 16 homeowners with electric fence design and more than 20 residents with electric fence consultations. The WCC worked with local building supplies stores to bring in electric fence equipment that meet WildSafeBC guidelines. The WCC coordinated with Valhalla Wilderness Society who offer a 50/50 cost share funding program for electric fencing in the North Slokan Valley and Grizzly Bear Solutions which offers 50/50 cost share across the Columbia Basin. These valuable partnerships have helped minimize the barrier of cost to residents. 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.

Bear Resistant Composting Initiative

The WCC is working with the Healthy Community Society on a bear resistant composting initiative (fig. 5). The group is currently running a pilot project funded by the Regional District of Central Kootenay. The initiative aims to reduce wildlife attractants in the community as well as reduce the organic materials going into the landfill. There are currently three Joracan 401 certified bear-resistant compost bins in use in the Villages of New Denver and Silverton. Each composter can handle organic waste of up to 30 households



Figure 5. Julia Greenlaw, Director of the Healthy Community Society with a Joracan 401 certified bear-resistant compost bin.

Challenges for the 2018 Season

The Slocan and Arrow Lakes valleys have diverse communities and each experience their own challenges with human-wildlife conflict. 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 in the municipalities presents a human-wildlife conflict situation that requires a significant amount of attention. While many homeowners pick their fruit or partner with local fruit gleaning projects, unpicked fruit remains a chronic attractant issue.

The rural area surrounding Nakusp had increased conflict with cougars and black bears in 2018. Proactive attractant management, particularly electric fencing for small livestock and crops, is increasing with the availability of resources such as education and cost share funds in the region. The area would benefit from a continued WildSafeBC education program to support this positive movement.

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

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

WildSafeBC plans to continue offering education and assistance to residents and municipalities to further reduce conflict with wildlife. The following is a list of items to build on in 2019:

- 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 networking and planning with the West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group to bring residential bear resistant bins to the area.
- Continue collaborating with community groups to enhance the electric fencing program.
- Collaborate with Village staff in New Denver, Silverton, and Nakusp to reach all homeowners about fruit trees as an attractant.
- Assist in the efforts to align the Official Community Plans with the Bear Hazard Assessments and existing Human Bear Conflict Management Plans.

Acknowledgements

The efforts and success of the WildSafeBC program in 2018 would not have been possible without the support from the Villages of New Denver and Nakusp. The Village of New Denver has provided in kind funding of staff time, photocopying, and hall rentals for WildSafeBC events. The Village continues to demonstrate their commitment to being a Bear Smart Community. Support from Village of Nakusp Staff and Council have proved significant in the growth of the program.

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 Reynolds, and staff; the West Kootenay Region Conservation Officer Service; local RCMP Slocan and Arrow Lakes Detachments; Village of Nakusp Mayor and Council, Nakusp Director of Parks and Recreation Terry Welsh, Village of Nakusp CAO Laurie Taylor; the Healthy Community Society; Harvest Share volunteers and steering committee; Erika Hepperle and the Root and Branch Harvest Committee; British Columbia Conservation Foundation personnel; and the Provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators.

