

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) Program between May 1st and November 30th, 2021. The program is in its second year and complements the work being done in the Bear Smart Communities of the District of Squamish and the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

The SLRD consists of four member municipalities (District of Lillooet, Village of Pemberton, Resort Municipality of Whistler, District of Squamish) and four unincorporated rural Electoral Areas (A, B, C, D) (Figure 1 and 2). While Squamish and Whistler operate their own education programs, there is a recognized need for a human-wildlife conflict reduction education in the rural areas and smaller communities. This year, the WildSafeBC SLRD Program expanded its presence in Electoral Areas A and B. The SLRD is located within the traditional territories of the Lil'wat, Squamish, St'at'imc, Stó:lō, Tsleil-Waututh, Nlaka'pamux, Tsilhqot'in, and Secwepemc Nations. Pemberton serves as the approximate geographic center of the region and hosts the SLRD office.

Black bears remain the most reported species for the regional district followed by cougars, coyote, and deer. Most reports to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) involving deer arise out of Area B and the District of Lillooet. While most reports to the COS involving grizzly bears arise out of Area A and C. Black bears are abundant throughout all areas of the SLRD.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activity with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the Regional District. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 21 (WRP) presentations and over 450 youth reached
- 10 presentations given to community groups reaching 182 participants
- 47 people reached through DTD in person and 403 door hangers left
- 6 bin tagging outings and 54 bins tagged, 40% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the program's first year were not found on the curb again during the second year.
- 14 display booths and 532 people reached
- 24 Facebook posts and 155 new Facebook page followers from January 1, 2021 to November 30, 2021
- Electric fencing workshop and cost-share in collaboration with Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative

The WCC thanks the BC Conservation Foundation, the Province of BC, and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District for funding the program. The program identified several opportunities for 2021 including:

- Continued support of the COS regarding education, outreach and reporting to the RAPP line.
- Continued collaboration and support with First Nations.
- Focus on reducing access by wildlife to garbage and fruit trees.
- Increased awareness of electric fencing through workshops.
- Promotion of the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program to local campgrounds.

Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.

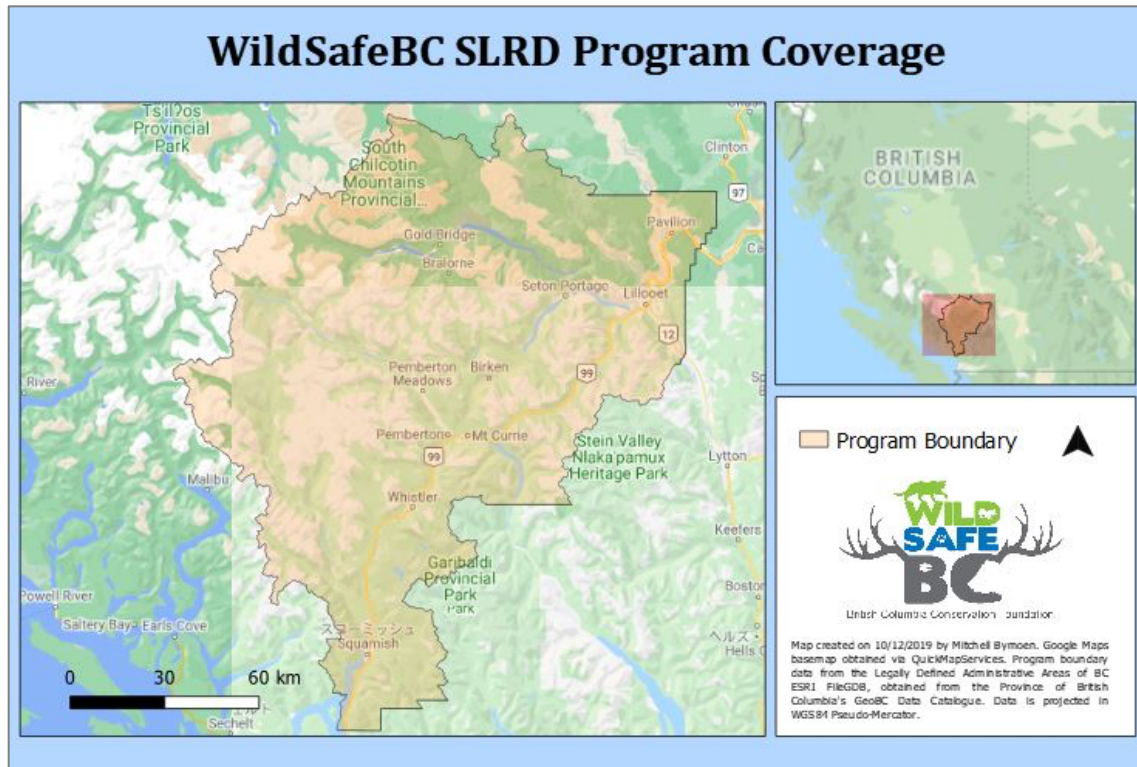


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Squamish-Lillooet Regional District program coverage area.



Figure 2. Map of the SLRD showing the electoral areas and member municipalities (credit: Squamish Lillooet Regional District).

Cover Photo: The WCC with Transfer Station Attendant at a display booth in Gold Bridge, BC.

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Highlights from the 2021 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the COS through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). The data is updated daily and this report for the SLRD includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021. The chart below shows report data for black bears the SLRD and includes the member municipalities (Figure 3). In 2021, there were 590 black bear reports – this represents the lowest number of black bear reports in the SLRD within the last six years. This is opposite to provincial numbers which reflected a higher than average conflict year for bears. Much of the SLRD lies in rural region and some human-wildlife conflict (HWC) goes unreported.

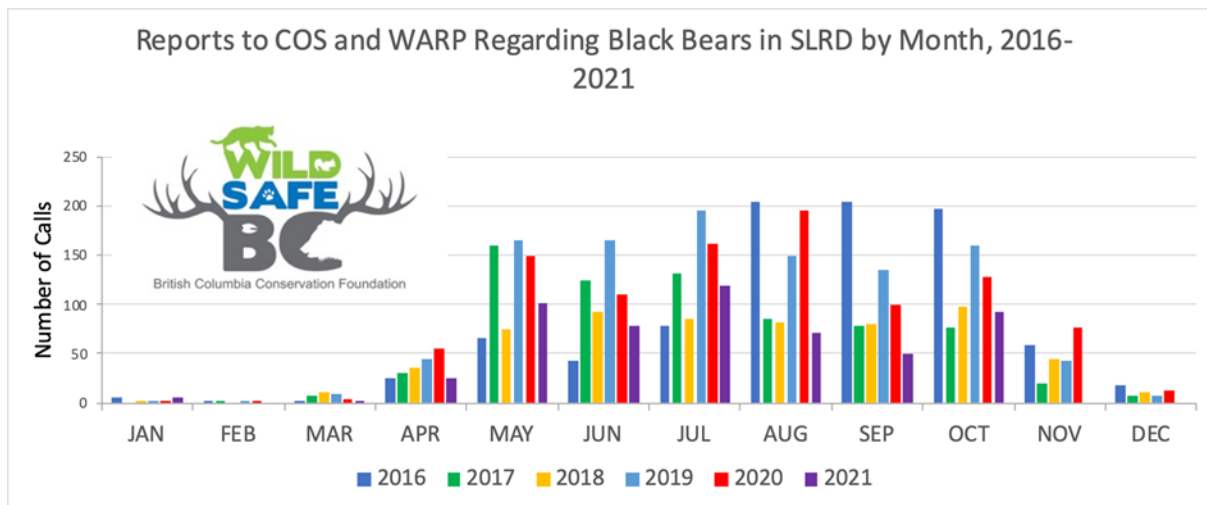


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Garbage, followed by fruit trees, represented the most reported attractants in the SLRD in 2021. Most attractants followed the decreased trend of reported conflicts (Figure 4).

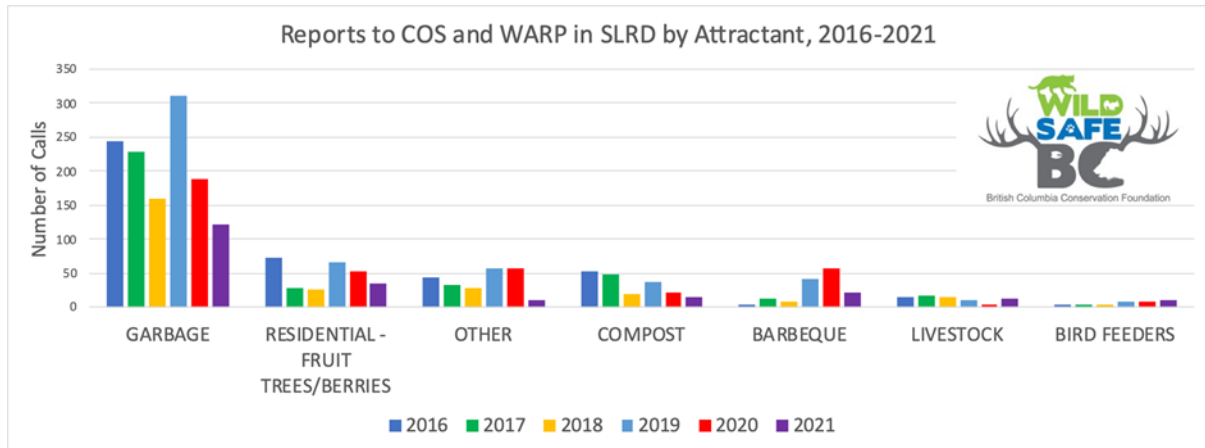


Figure 4. Reports to COS and WARP by attractant in SLRD, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Reports of cougars increased this year with 45 reports in 2021, up from 28 in 2020 (Figure 5). There were fewer grizzly bear reports than in 2020, however there was a grizzly bear family unit that were regularly sighted but not reported in Electoral Area C from May to November. Grizzly bear sightings in Area A went underreported by residents as well. Research indicates an expanding grizzly bear population within the SLRD and with encounters expected to increase.

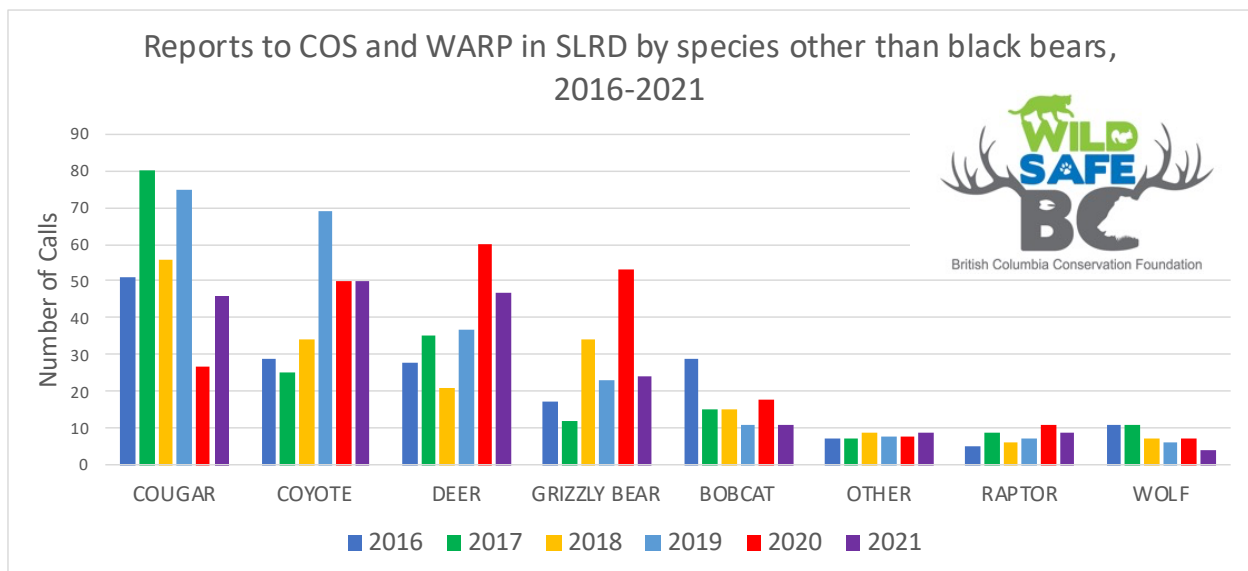


Figure 5. Reports to COS and WARP regarding wildlife other than black bear January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Comparison of SLRD electoral areas suggests most wildlife reports originate from Areas B and C which include the member municipalities of Lillooet and Pemberton respectively (Figure 5). It should be noted that the District of Squamish and Resort Municipality of Whistler were not included in this comparison as these member municipalities operate their own education programs. Inclusion of these member municipalities would also heavily skew the report data due to a greater amount of reports originating within them than in the SLRD.

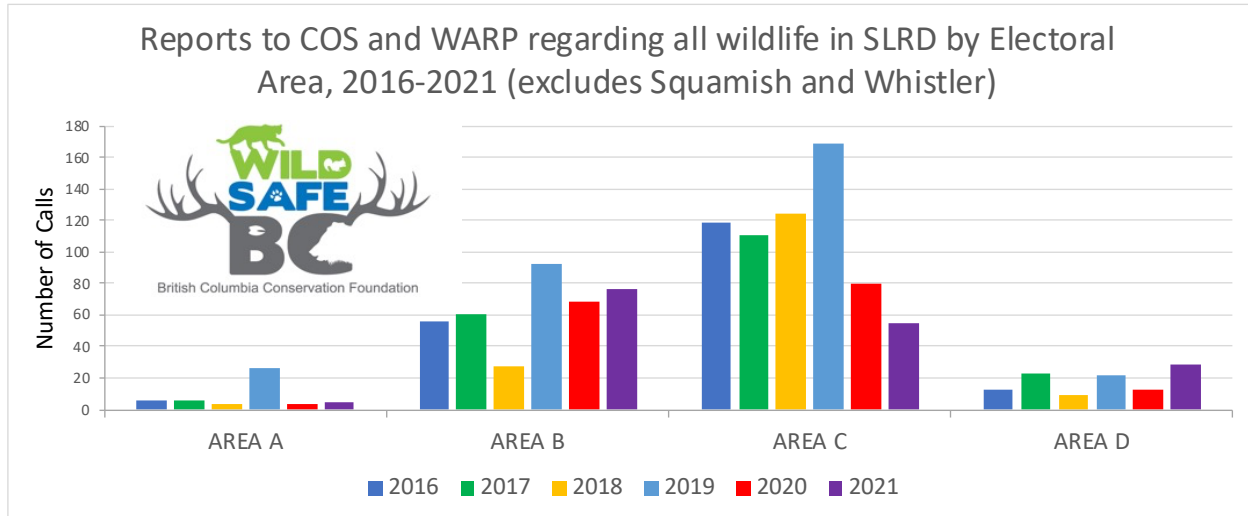


Figure 6. Reports to COS and WARP in SLRD by electoral area, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. A total of five schools and youth groups participated in the WRP through in-person presentations that allowed for physical distancing. A total of 21 WRP presentations were delivered. Over 450 students became WildSafe Rangers and received kits (Table 1). Of these, 10 students received the extended version which included two visits, an outdoor activity and a take home assignment on attractant management that was reviewed in class.

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.

School	Grade	Students	Extended
T'it'q'et Summer Camp	K-7	18	Yes
Stewardship Pemberton Nature Camp	3, 4, 5	15	
Cayoosh Elementary	4, 2, 7	41	
George M. Murray Elementary	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	70	
Signal Hill Elementary	K-7	308	



Figure 7. WRP for the T'it'q'et youth summer camp.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 10 presentations through webinars, indoor and outdoor presentations to over 180 participants (Table 2; Figure 8).

Table 2. Presentations to community groups in 2021.

Organization or Location	Type of Presentation	Date	# of Attendees
FireSmart SLRD	Webinar – Residential attractant management	May 15, 17 June 7, 14, 21	80
SLRD & Stewardship Pemberton Fruit Tree Project	Webinar – Residential attractant management	July 13	5
Birkenhead Lake Estates	Bear spray	July 31	32
Pemberton and Regional District Library and Community Center	Electric fencing	August 6	25
Pemberton and Regional District Library and Community Center	Bear spray	September 16	10
Furry Creek Golf and Country Club	Wildlife awareness and safety	October 7	8
FireSmart SLRD	Bear spray demo	October 24	22



Figure 8. Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation at the Furry Creek Golf and Country Club.

Display Booths

The WCC hosted a total of 14 outdoor display booths which were visited by over 500 people (Table 3). Locations were chosen based on community requests, human-wildlife conflict hotspots, and areas prioritized to increase wildlife awareness in the community.

Table 3. Display booths throughout the 2021 season.

Location	Reach	Date	Summary
Pemberton Farmers' Market	217	June 18 July 9, 30 Sept 10 Oct 8	Provided information regarding local fruit gleaning organizations, securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.
Gold Bridge Transfer Station	45	July 19	Extended WSBC program reach into Area A by liaising with residents attending the transfer station
Lillooet Landfill	20	July 21	Provided information regarding local fruit gleaning organizations, securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.
Lillooet Rec Center	70	July 22	Water Safety Day. An event tailored to families. Provided

			brochures, activity books, stickers, etc. to youth.
Lillooet Farmers' Market	35	July 23 Sept 24	Provided information regarding responsible residential waste management and tips to avoid conflict with wildlife.
Wedgemount FSR Parking Lot	51	July 30	Attended site following reports of campers feeding black bears. Provided bare camping information and handed out brochures, installed bear in area signage.
Gold Bridge Bear Day	20	Aug 14	Provided brochures, strategies to avoid human-wildlife conflict and bear spray information.
Lillooet Community Connect HUB grand opening	52	September 24	Provided brochures and strategies to avoid human-wildlife conflict.
FireSmart Community Day – Reid Rd, Pemberton	22	October 25	Handed out brochures and other materials, facilitated bear spray demonstration.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Furry Creek and Britannia Beach neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity to increase wildlife awareness and coexistence strategies within the community. The District of Lillooet was also canvassed to extend the WildSafeBC SLRD program's reach further into Area B and in response to an elevated amount reports identifying garbage and fruit trees as attractants.

Through door-to-door education, a total of 47 people were reached during in-person conversations and 403 people were reached with door hangers.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. During 6 outings, a total of 54 bins were tagged in Britannia Beach, Furry Creek, Pemberton, and Lillooet and 5 received education more than once. Britannia Beach has the highest number of residents in non-compliance of the SLRD wildlife attractant bylaw which prohibits the early placement of waste bins for collection. The effectiveness of garbage tagging and door-to-door education for changing behaviors is demonstrated by a 40% decrease in non-compliance in Britannia Beach since the inception of the WildSafeBC SLRD program in 2020 (Figure 9).

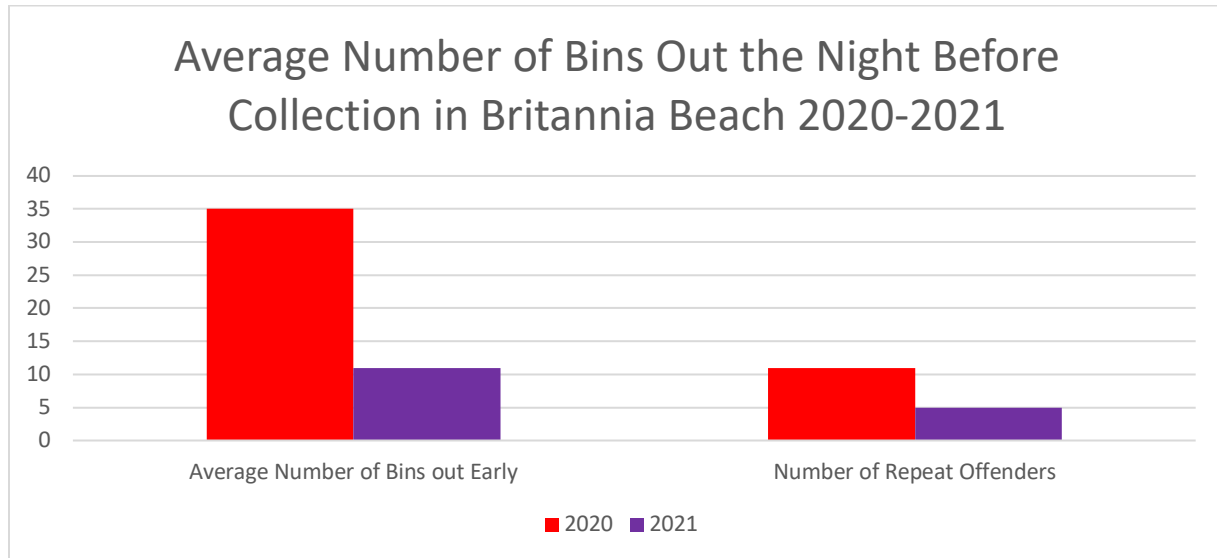


Figure 9. Number of carts placed out early for collection and repeat offenders, 2020-2021 in Britannia Beach, BC.

WildSafeBC is working with the Solid Waste Association of North America's Pacific Chapter to gather information about solid waste management, bear-resistant infrastructure and policies, and the associated challenges and successes. The WCC completed a solid waste survey for the SLRD with the SLRD Solid Waste Recovery Coordinator to contribute data from the regional district.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Squamish Lillooet RD page grew 19% in 2021 from 832 to 988 followers. The WCC submitted one press release to the SLRD which also ran in the Pique Newsmagazine. The press release focused on program initiatives and encouraging reporting of wildlife in conflict. <https://www.slrd.bc.ca/inside-slrd/news-events/regional-district-partners-wildsafebc-provide-community-outreach-and-education-0>

Wildlife in Area Signs

A total of six Bear in Area signs were installed by the WCC in the SLRD. There were three installed in Britannia Beach following WARP and resident reports of food-conditioned bears in the community. Two were installed at parking lots by trailheads at the Wedgemount FSR area following reports of people feeding a black bear (Figure 10). One sign was installed in Pemberton by the train bridge, following an event where a defensive sow attacked a dog.



Figure 10. Bear in Area sign at Wedgemount FSR following reports of a food-conditioned black bear.

Collaborations

The WCC communicated with the COS throughout the season and provided outreach and installed signage in areas experiencing wildlife conflict. In partnership with Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative, an electric fencing cost-share program was introduced for residents of Pemberton Meadows, and an electric fencing workshop was held (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Electric fencing workshop presented by WildSafeBC in collaboration with Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative.

Recreation Sites and Trails BC supported the program by permitting the WCC to attend all sites in the SLRD and provide outreach to campers. Presentation and display booths were facilitated through the help of community groups such as the Pemberton and Regional District Library and Community Center, the Pemberton Fruit Tree Project, FireSmart SLRD, the Pemberton and Lillooet Farmers' Markets, the Lillooet Community Connect HUB, the Bridge River Valley Community Association, Britannia Beach and Furry Creek Community Associations, and the Furry Creek Golf and Country Club.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC can provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. The WCC contacted several privately owned campsites in the SLRD. Although no campsites are currently participating in the program, Squamish Valley Campsite & RV Park was quick to express interest in the program for the 2022 season.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC was invited to host two WRP presentations to the T'it'q'et Summer Camp. This collaboration brought human-wildlife conflict education to T'it'q'et – a community located at the wildland-urban interface, rich in fruit trees and gardens with a high potential to attract wildlife. This collaboration led to conversation with St'at'imc Government Services, and an opportunity to use the hide of Spapza7 (formerly Homer) the grizzly bear for future education purposes.

Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage continues to be the main source of attractants in the SLRD that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging waste and compost bins and travelling into people's yards which impacts the safety of the community. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the Regional District and would benefit from increased education and bear-resistant products and solutions. To address the attractiveness of residential solid waste in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Increased garbage tagging in hot spot areas
- Education campaigns focused on the hazards and solutions posed through unsecured garbage and organics through social media, news articles, workshops, and flyers in municipal tax information
- Connect residents through social media community groups
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots
- Work with the SLRD to encourage more residential use of bear-resistant bins

Fruit trees also persist as a source of attractants in the SLRD. Bears and deer have been reported damaging fences and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the community. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education and fruit gleaning activities.

To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Electric fence demonstrations
- Education campaigns focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, and flyers in municipal tax information
- Engage food banks and other non-profits
- Connect residents through social media food sharing group
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots

Continued encouragement of conflict reporting to the RAPP line is suggested for upcoming years. While many residents share wildlife sightings and conflict information on social media groups, they regularly go unreported to the COS. Additionally, some communities in the SLRD exhibit a reluctance to report while publicly sharing misconceptions surrounding the COS. Certain areas of the SLRD may underreport due to a combination of their isolated nature, a

sense that it is customary for wildlife to access residential attractants, or residents not knowing when or how to report HWC. Continued collaboration with the COS to address these issues is an opportunity for the Program in the future.

Continued expansion of the WildSafeBC SLRD program to rural communities should continue to occur for all SLRD residents to have access to the Program. Much of the SLRD is comprised of small, isolated communities, with few organizations or businesses operating nearby. Continuing to develop relationships with residents, local community groups, First Nations, and businesses is essential for program delivery in these regions.

Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Province of British Columbia, and the SLRD for funding the WildSafeBC SLRD program in 2021. The WCC would like to acknowledge SLRD Solid Waste Recovery Coordinator Maire-Lou Leblanc, SLRD Communications and Projects Coordinator Vanessa Lafontaine, SLRD Directors Rainbow and Birch-Jones, Conservation Officers Sgt. Simon Gravel, Tim Schumacher, Erich Habrich, Wildlife Safety Response Officer Sasha Zukewich, Bylaw Officers Jennifer Davidson and Lee Nancy, the Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative team, the Pemberton and Regional District Library and Community Center, the Lillooet Naturalist Society, the Pemberton Fruit Tree Project and Stewardship Pemberton Society, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, the Pemberton Off Road Cycling Association, the Pemberton Farmers' Market Association, and the Lillooet Farmers' Market for assisting in accomplishing program goals.