

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. 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, and D) (Figure 1 and 2). While Squamish and Whistler operate their own education programs, there is a recognized need for human-wildlife conflict reduction education in the rural areas and smaller communities. Into its third year, the WildSafeBC SLRD Program continued to expand into all electoral areas. The SLRD is located within the traditional territories of the Líl'wat, Squamish, St'at'imc, Stó:lō, Tsleil-Waututh, Nlaka'pamux, Tšilhqot'in, and Secwépemc Nations. Pemberton serves as the approximate geographic center of the region and hosts the WildSafeBC 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 activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the Regional District. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 5 WildSafe Ranger presentations and 75 youth reached
- 4 presentations given to community groups reaching 49 participants
- 100 door hangers left during door-to-door canvassing
- 3 bin tagging outings and 30 bins tagged resulting in nearly 40% decrease in early tote placement to the curb since program initiation
- 12 display booths and over 500 people reached
- 63 Facebook posts and 32 new Facebook page followers out of 1,016 from January 1, 2022 to November 30, 2022
- 3 electric fencing cost-share program participants

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 2023 including:

- Continued support of the COS regarding education, outreach and reporting to the RAPP line
- Continued collaboration with First Nations
- Focus on reducing access by wildlife to garbage and fruit trees
- Increased awareness of electric fencing through workshops, social media, community outreach

Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help keep wildlife wild and our communities safe.

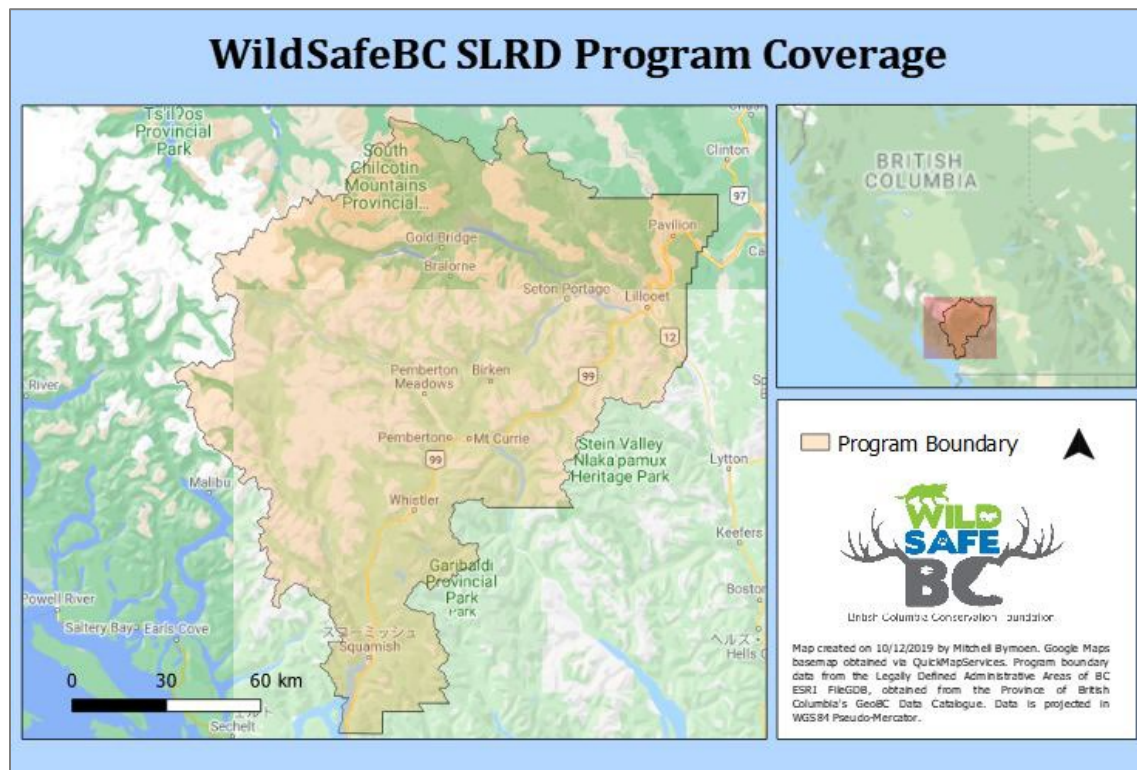


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Squamish-Lillooet Regional District program coverage area.



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

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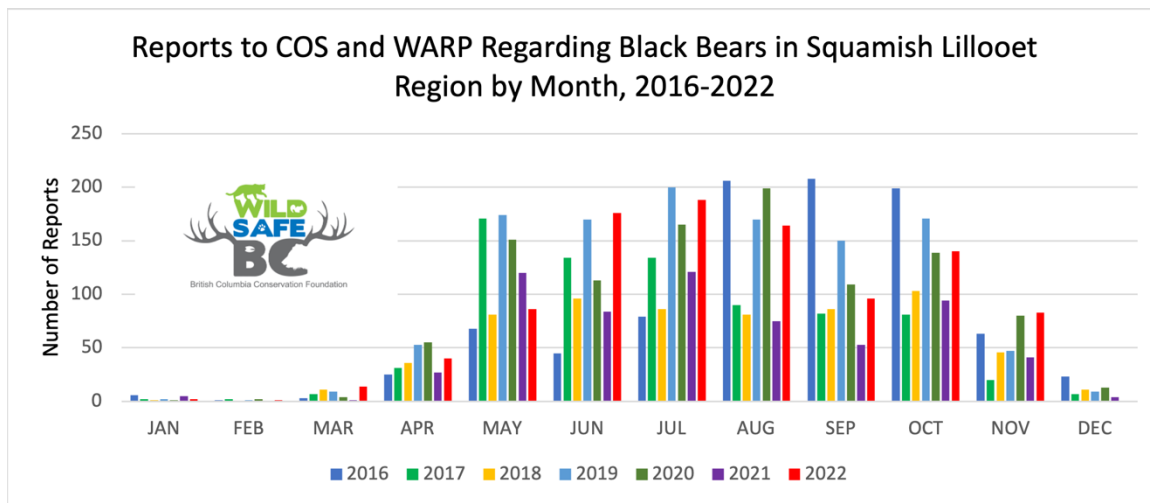
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## Highlights from the 2022 Season

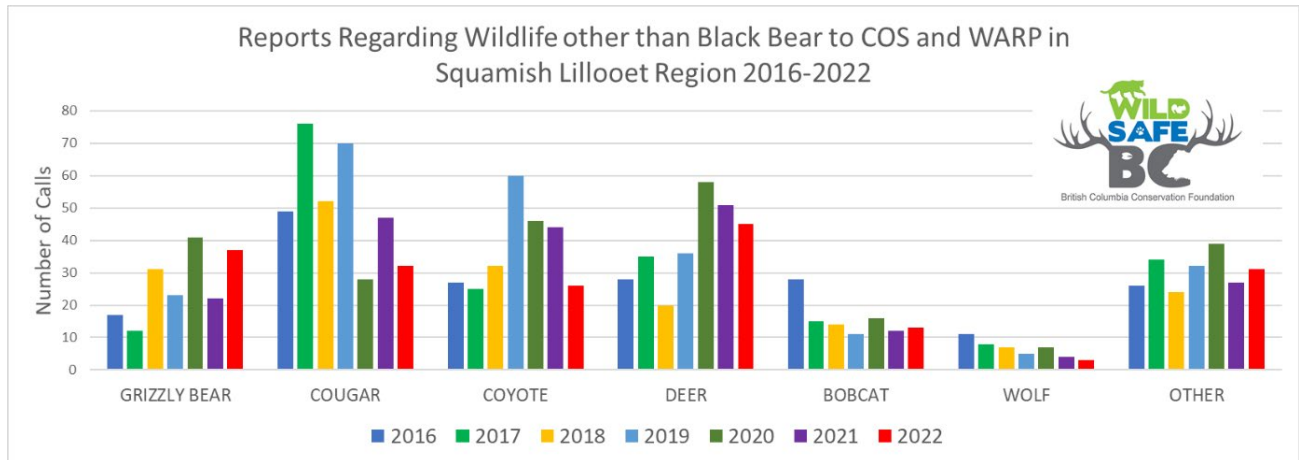
### Wildlife Activity

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 the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). The data is updated daily and this report for the SLRD includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022. The chart below shows report data for black bears in the SLRD and includes the member municipalities (Figure 3). In 2022, there were 990 black bear reports – up 365 from 2021. This may be attributed to a mild spring with high amounts of snowfall. This led to a delayed berry season in certain areas which may have contributed to the high number of bear reports during mid-summer. The fall showed high levels of reports which may be attributed to the unusually high temperatures extending well into October.



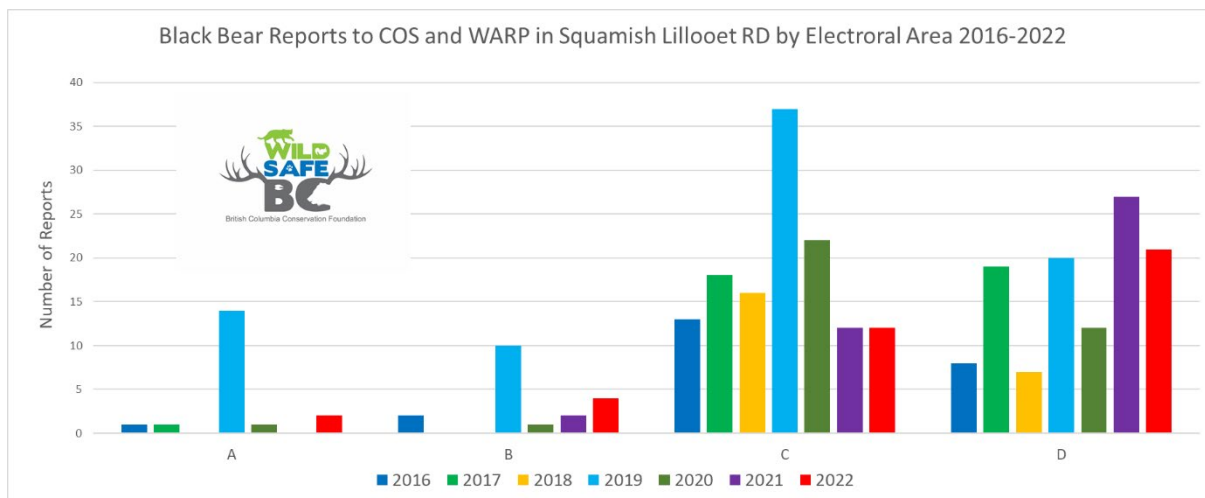
**Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.**

Reports of most species were less than in the previous two years with reports of coyotes and cougars dropping significantly from last year. Deer reports are less than in 2021 but still higher than the average over the six years depicted in the data (Figure 4). Grizzly bear reports, however seem to be rising in recent years, most notably in Area C and D. Research indicates an expanding grizzly bear population within the SLRD and encounters are expected to increase.



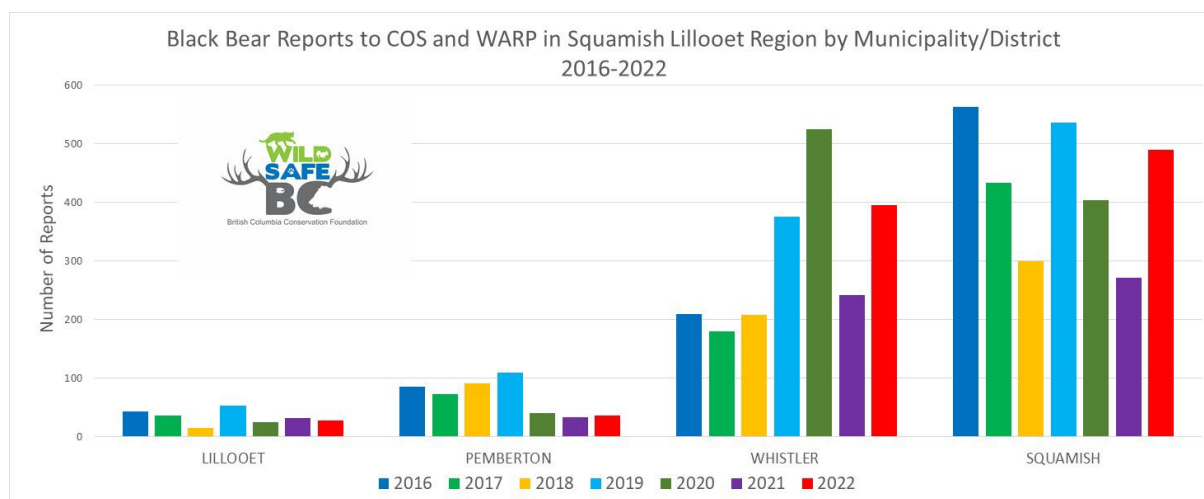
**Figure 4. Reports to COS and WARP regarding wildlife other than black bear January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.**

Comparison of SLRD electoral areas suggests most wildlife reports originate from Areas C and D (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 5. Reports to COS and WARP in SLRD by electoral area, January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.**

Comparison of SLRD member municipalities suggest the majority of reports originate from the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) and the District of Squamish (DOS) (Figure 6). These municipalities are densely populated and are located within prime bear habitat. There is a correlation between the number of inhabitants in a municipality and the amount of wildlife attractants made available.



**Figure 6. Reports to COS and WARP regarding wildlife other than black bear January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.**

## WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. Three groups participated in the WRP through in-person presentations and 5 WRP presentations were delivered (Figure 7). A total of 75 students became WildSafe Rangers and received kits (Table 1). As well, 40 students received a modified version of the WRP, adapted for older students to include education on bear spray.

**Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2022.**

School	Grade	Students
Stewardship Pemberton Nature Camp	K-7	14
Sea to Sky Community Services Playgroup	Pre-K	21
Pemberton Secondary School	8, 9	40



**Figure 7. Children visiting WildSafeBC display booth at a Wildsafe Ranger Presentation.**

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave five presentations delivered through indoor and outdoor presentations to 64 participants (Table 2, Figure 8). Bear safety and bear spray workshops focused on bear behaviour, bear encounters and attacks, attractants, and included a bear spray demonstration component. Electric fencing workshops provided information on materials, design, considerations, and included the installation of a demonstration electric fence.

**Table 2. Presentations to community groups in 2022.**

Organization or Location	Type of Presentation	Date	# of Attendees
Whistler Public Library	Bear Safety and Bear Spray	June 24	14
Lillooet Public Library	Electric Fencing	August 9	10
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Staff	Bear Safety and Bear Spray	August 16	16
Pemberton Off Road Cycling Association	Bear spray	September 7	9
Cloudburst Park – Upper Squamish Valley	Electric Fencing	November 13	15



**Figure 8. WCC demonstrates the deployment of bear spray using an inert canister.**

## Display Booths

The WCC hosted a total of 12 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.

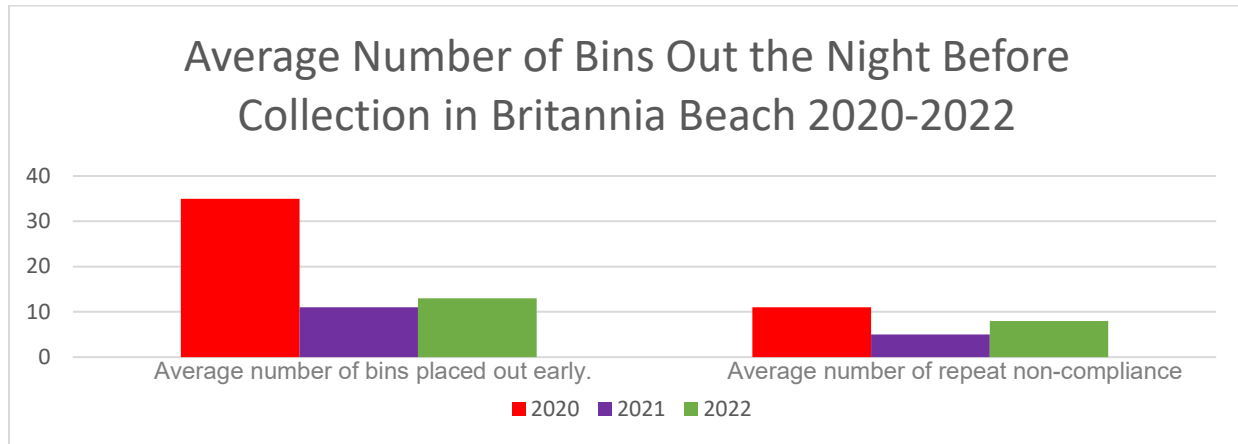
**Table 3. Display booths throughout the 2022 season.**

Location	Reach	Date	Summary
<b>Pemberton Eco Fair</b>	62	April 23	Community clothing and used gear swap. Provided information on electric fencing, livestock husbandry best-practices, wildlife information, bare camping, provided brochures and handouts.
<b>Pemberton Farmers' Market</b>	135	June 10, August 5, Oct 14	Provided information regarding local fruit gleaned organizations, securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.
<b>Alice Lake – with BC Parks Foundation</b>	280	June 10-12, July 15	Provided information regarding securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.
<b>Britannia Beach Community Park</b>	6	June 21	Provided information regarding securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.
<b>Furry Creek, Oliver's Landing Parking Lot</b>	5	June 22	Collaboration with SLRD Waste Recovery and Communications staff. Provided information regarding securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.
<b>Lillooet Farmers' Market</b>	71	July 22, October 7	Provided information regarding securing attractants, electric fencing, livestock husbandry, wildlife information, provided brochures and handouts.

## Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Furry Creek and Britannia Beach neighborhoods were prioritized for door-to-door canvassing activities to increase wildlife awareness and coexistence strategies within the community. Through door-to-door education, 100 people were reached with door hangers which included a letter reminding residents of the SLRD wildlife attractant bylaw.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. During 3 outings, a total of 30 bins were tagged in Britannia Beach and Furry Creek and 15 had received stickers previously. Britannia Beach has the highest number of residents in non-compliance with the SLRD wildlife attractant bylaw which prohibits the early placement of waste bins for collection. The effectiveness of garbage tagging, social media, and door-to-door education for changing behaviors is demonstrated by nearly 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 non-compliance, 2020-2022 in Britannia Beach, BC.**

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Squamish Lillooet RD Facebook page grew 3% in 2022 from 988 to 1,014 followers. Social media posts were regularly shared three times per week throughout the season. These posts provided wildlife information and were often species specific. The posts were created and shared during time periods matching wildlife seasonal lifecycles. The SLRD published one press release announcing the return of the WildSafeBC program to the area in 2022. In addition, the *Bridge River Valley Newspaper* published an article and infographic that provided deer fawning season information. The paper also helped promote the electric fence cost-share program through an advertisement.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

A total of five Bear in Area signs were installed by the WCC in the SLRD. All signs were installed at the access points to the Mackenzie FSR trail network in Pemberton (Figure 10). The signs were posted in August following reports of black bears charging mountain bikers. Sow bears with cubs were involved in each incident. These signs were removed after two weeks had passed since installation, as per the local CO's guidelines.



**Figure 10. Bear in Area sign at Mackenzie trail network following reports of a defensive sow black bear.**

## Electric Fencing

An electric fencing cost-share program was successfully launched this season and made available to all SLRD residents. The program serves to offset the cost of electric fencing materials for residents who have attractants that cannot otherwise be managed. Using electric fencing to control livestock and secure attractants has been a common practice for decades in the District however, inadequacies in design and/or material choice have repeatedly resulted in fence failures. This program addresses that issue by requiring participants to meet certain

standards in design and material choice. Moreover, the education and guidance provided through the program provides homeowners with a deeper level of comprehension and trust in electric fencing.

The cost-share aspect of this year's program sparked interest in many SLRD communities, with most interest originating from the agricultural-heavy Pemberton community. Four residents from Areas C and D completed the required steps and received reimbursements for materials (Figure 11). Fruit trees and chicken coops were the attractants secured using materials suggested through the program. Several residents contacted the WCC after learning about the cost-share for general information on electric fencing. Site visits were initiated by the WCC to provide guidance on materials, electrical connections, grounding, fence design, location, and trade techniques.



**Figure 11. Electric wires outrigged around a chicken coop using materials funded through the WildSafeBC cost-share program.**

## Collaborations

The WCC communicated with the COS throughout the season and provided outreach educational information and materials as well as installed signage in areas experiencing wildlife conflict. Coast to Cascades Grizzly Initiative supported the electric fencing cost-share program by providing additional funding. Presentation and display booths were scheduled and advertised through the help of the Pemberton and Lillooet Farmers' Markets, the BC Parks Foundation, and the SLRD communications team.

## Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

Several members of the Xwísten Band attended an electric fencing workshop in Lillooet. The idea of bringing electric fencing to the community was proposed following the idea to secure the area around the fish drying racks. Discussions are ongoing to bring this initiative to fruition.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage continues to be the main source of attractants that draw wildlife into residential areas, in the SLRD. Bears have been reported damaging waste and compost bins and travelling into residents' yards which impacts the safety of the community. Several areas have been identified as human-wildlife conflict hotspots in the District and would benefit from increased education as well as access to bear-resistant products and solutions. To address the attractiveness of residential solid waste to wildlife around the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- Increased door-to-door and garbage tagging in higher conflict areas
- Education campaigns focused on the hazards and solutions posed by unsecured garbage and organics through social media, news articles, workshops, and flyers included in municipal tax information
- Connect residents through social media community groups
- 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 residents' yards while accessing fruit trees heavy with unpicked fruits, which impacts the safety of the community. Several areas have been identified with higher abundance of unmanaged fruit trees 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 2023:

- Electric fence demonstrations and continued implementation of a cost-share program to help subsidize the installation of e-fencing on properties with fruit trees and other attractants
- Education campaigns focusing on the benefits and option for fruit tree management or removal through social media, news articles, workshops, and flyers included within municipal tax information
- Engage food banks and other non-profits
- Connect residents through social media food sharing group
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in key areas

Electric fencing to deter wildlife from accessing attractants that cannot otherwise be managed should continue to be encouraged by the WCC throughout the District. This year's successes with electric fencing should be built upon through continued promotion within communities and

on social media. The results of the cost-share are influential and have sparked repeated interest from friends and family of those who have participated in the program. Increasing the amount of electric fencing workshops and demonstrations should be provided next season as it increases community trust and understanding. Aiming to make these events available in each electoral area will ensure consistent delivery throughout the Regional District.

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, these interactions 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 human-wildlife conflicts. Continued collaboration with the COS to address these issues is an opportunity for the WildSafeBC SLRD program in the future.

Continued expansion of the WildSafeBC SLRD program to rural communities should continue to occur so that all SLRD residents have access to the program resources. 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 2022. The WCC would like to acknowledge SLRD Solid Waste Recovery Coordinator Maire-Lou Leblanc, SLRD Communications and Projects Coordinator Vanessa Lafontaine, SLRD Directors, Conservation Officers Sgt. Simon Gravel, Tim Schumacher, Erich Habrich, Brittany Mueller, Sasha Zukewich, Bylaw Officers Jennifer Davidson and Lee Nancy, the Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative team, the Pemberton Fruit Tree Project and Stewardship Pemberton Society, BC Parks Foundation, the Pemberton Off Road Cycling Association, the Pemberton Farmers' Market Association, and the Lillooet Farmers' Market for assisting in accomplishing program goals.