

DOES INVERMERE NEED A RECREATION ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN?

photos & text compiled by Pat Morrow



WHAT'S AT STAKE?



Does it matter how many trails there are in the backcountry? Does it matter whether it's a hiking trail or a logging road? How does a trail way up in the mountains (or down in the valley for that matter) affect water quality downstream? What can we do to ensure nature is left intact for future generations?

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home." Gary Snyder

This portfolio of photos from the Columbia Valley and the Purcell and Rocky Mountains is a wakeup call for those who call this place home.

It is an appeal to set aside differences in opinion on how to manage the last remaining natural spaces for recreational use and, instead, take a look at the needs of nature first.

This is the only region in the East Kootenay that does not have a Recreation Access Management Plan. In order to find balance, a long-term RAMP is needed to align the values of all users of the region, not just recreationists, and provide enforceable regulation.

Just as we expect our provincial government to provide protection from wildfire and illegal hunting and fishing, we need to advocate for protection from the wanton destruction of the environment.

In 2011 Wildsight Invermere organized the first "Responsible Use Coalition" meeting and since then a series of other meetings has been held, the most recent being December, 2016. The coalition is now called Columbia Valley Recreation Access Planning (CVRAP)

This initiative can help our government develop a disturbance footprint plan for our vulnerable public and private lands, already fragmented by thousands of kilometers of logging, mining and other resource access roads.







ATV riders in Bruce Creek drainage show responsible use of the road by simply staying on the road, and above, a cyclist preserves delicate grassland turf by not straying from the single track of a recreational hiking/biking trail at Columbia Lake.



Off-road, off-trail use in open forest areas like the base of 4 Points mountain causes long term damage to the floor of the forest and terrorizes wildlife.

Welcome to The Old Coach Trail

This 9 kilometer recreational trail travels between Radium Hot Springs and Dry Gulch. The trail passes through the Columbia Valley Wetland Wildlife Management Area and is maintained by the Regional District of East Kootenay for non-motorized use only.

Please

- Stay on the trail
- Pack out your litter
- No open fires
- Leash and clean up after pets
- Be aware - wildlife frequents the trail

Use at Your Own Risk

For more information or to report a problem, please contact the RDEK



Regional District of East Kootenay
19-24th Avenue South
Cranbrook, BC V1C 3H6
250-499-2781 or 855-478-7335
www.rdek.bc.ca

CAUTION

Uneven Trail Surface

Watch for
water bars & cross-ditches



Proceed at your own Risk

What are Greenways?

Greenways are corridors of green space that connect communities to each other and to the land. They protect sensitive ecosystems and wildlife habitat, as well as provide non-motorized trails for people to access and learn about these areas.

COLUMBIA RIVER



Placing signage at trail heads is not enough, as these vandalized signs attest. Education, regulation and enforcement are needed to build a non-destructive recreation user ethic.



Mountain bike and dirt bike tires have left battle scars all over the delicate-soil of slopes between Mts Brewer and Goldie.

The volume, frequency and speed of mechanized recreationists determines the level of wildlife displacement in alpine zones and is intrinsically more serious than the erosion they cause when going off track.





A trashed sub alpine marsh in northern Purcells.



ATV carnage on Haiseldean Lake recreational trail, upper Redfish Creek.

YouTube CA Search



Timbersled on the river 2016

5,469 views

7 5

Illegal motorized use on the Columbia river and wetlands is disruptive to wildlife (opposite page) and humans alike. www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGTuuO6R57Q



HIKERS

Please Give the Goats the Space They Need

Avoid Hiking on White Mountain From Mid-May to Mid-June.

This is a crucial time for female mountain goats and their newborn kids.

Nannies have to be constantly vigilant for predators, including eagles and wolves.

Human disturbance - such as hiking, causes nannies to focus on people, not predators. It adds stress and could displace the goats from this critical habitat.

Yukon
Environment

*For more information,
contact the Southern*

The Yukon government enforces closures at critical wildlife junctures, and our government should do the same at the Toby Creek mineral lick.



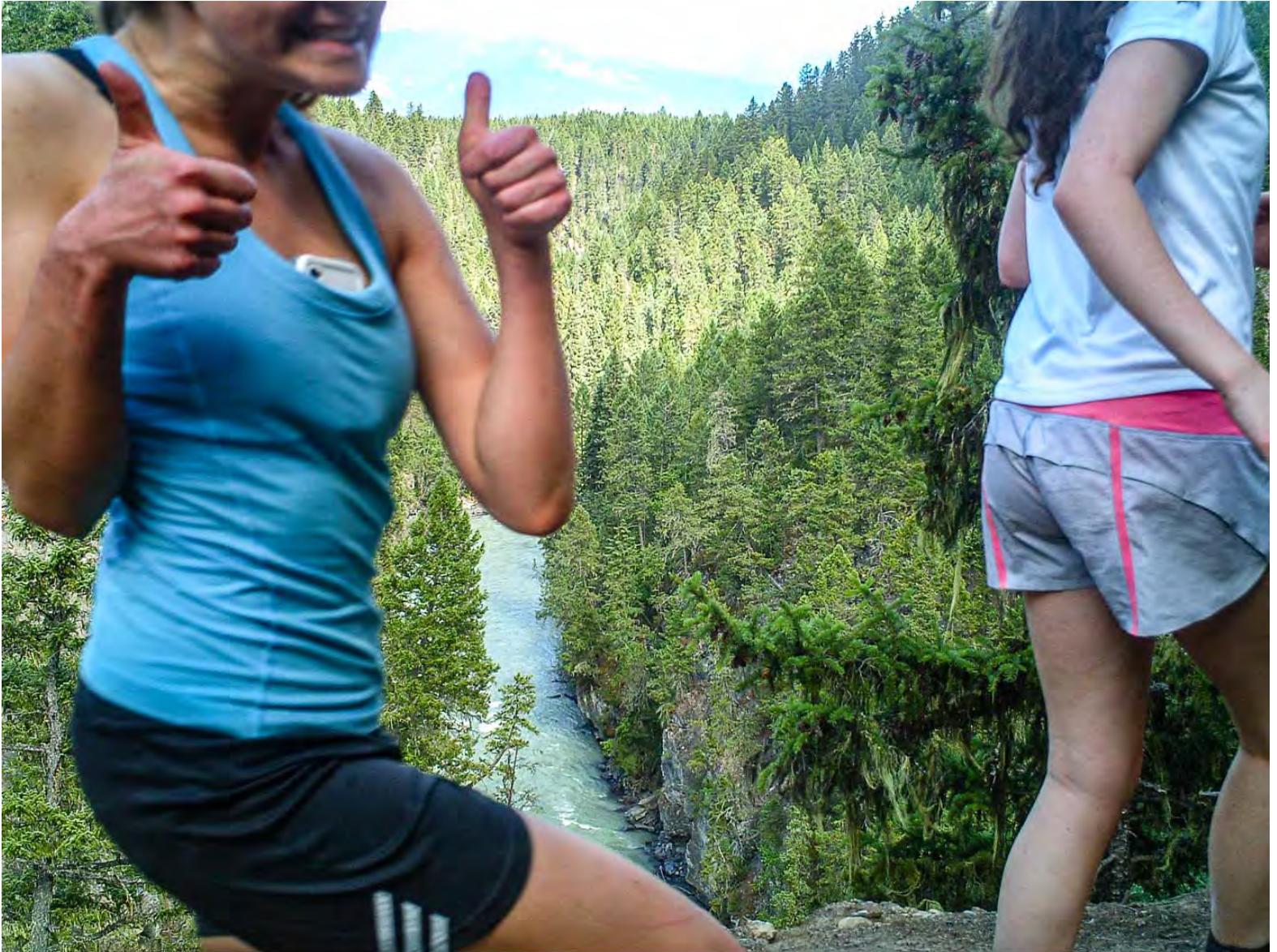
Mountain goats are especially vulnerable to human interference during their precarious spring migration to mineral licks.



As they graze on the power line right of way on their journey to the mineral licks, mountain goats are exposed to predation.



Trespassers on private property created this mud bog mess near the goats' access route (opposite page) to mineral licks and Toby Creek Canyon.



ishnell

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A set wildlife camera reveals that goats aren't the only species visiting the mineral licks at Toby Creek canyon.









Illegal camping and random target shooting on private land near mineral lick on Toby Canyon threatens the safety of both humans and wildlife.



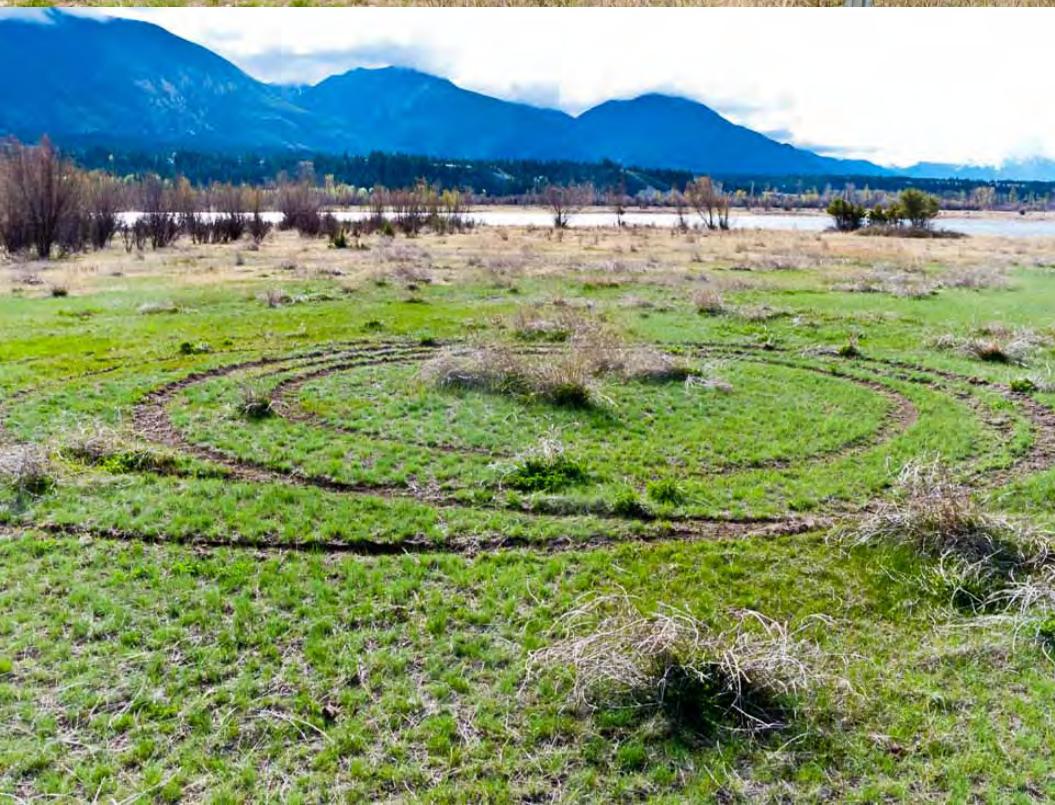


Knapweed removal near Radium. These and other noxious weeds are spread widely by recreationists on knobby tires.

Human/wildlife conflict is exacerbated in winter when survival conditions are at their most severe.

Aggressive speed and violent noise of any mechanized vehicle can drive wildlife away from its ideal habitat in any season.





Illegal mechanized joyriders left their trademark signatures on the delicate foreshore of the wetlands in Columbia National Wildlife Area.



Preserving indigenous spiritual and cultural values is the pathway to wisdom shared by the original stewards of the land.

Cleaning up after recreationists is the last resort of a properly managed resource.



Lake Enid garbage cleanup is an annual event undertaken by those who care for our environment.



Rangeland specialist Randy Harris offers encouragement to members of the volunteer work crew who have helped restore the Lake Enid area on various work bees.



A collaborative cleanup and responsible use campaign at Lake Enid led by Wildsight and the Windermere Valley Dirt Riders.



Volunteers built a boardwalk access for nature-lovers while reclaiming a Lake Enid marsh that was destroyed by ATVs.

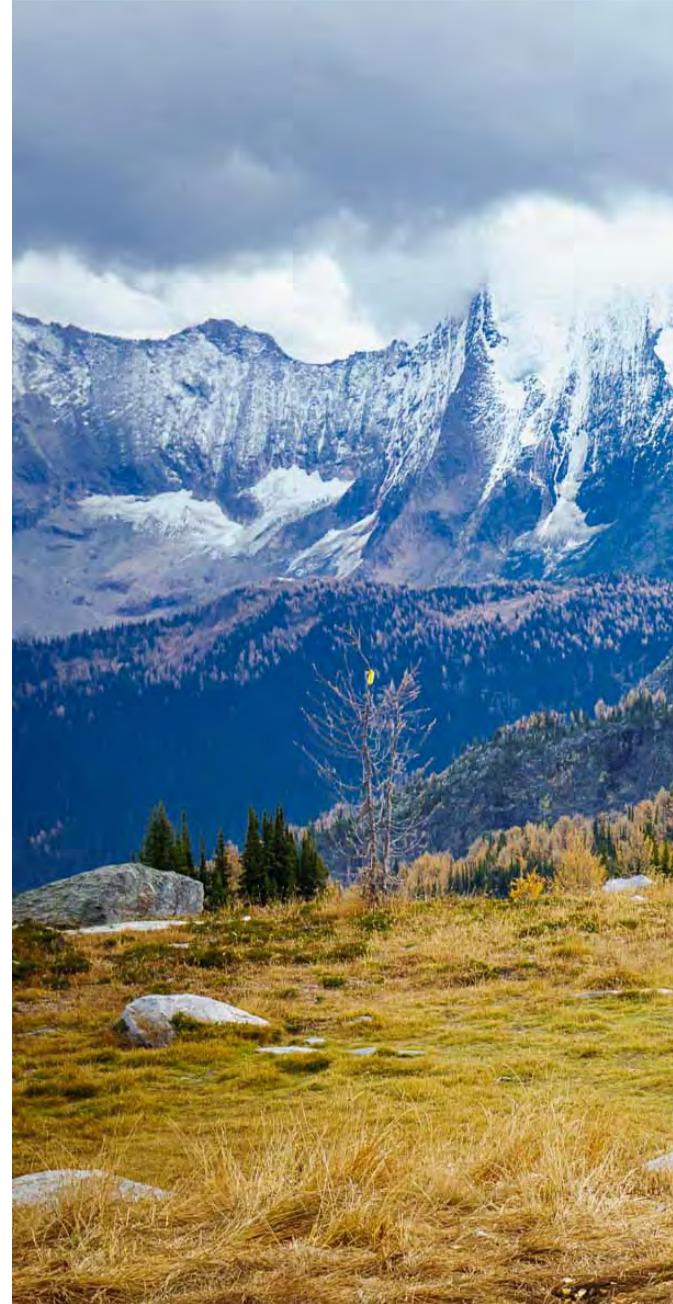


Spawning beds for native fish and nesting & denning sites for all aquatic species of birds and mammals are threatened by disturbance of streams and lakes.



We, the residents of the Upper Columbia Valley, will pass this land on to the next generation. What will that look like?

The choice is ours to make. The time to do it is now!





Disclaimer:

Most of the information on ecological impacts here comes from science-based studies from our Albertan and American neighbours who are hard at work addressing identical access and environmental degradation issues. And most of the photos were shot within a 50 km radius of Invermere.

One of the most-talked about topics is the concept of linear features, and how they are used for access by recreationists: all the logging roads, seismic lines, power lines, pipelines, railroads, logging cut blocks, and recreational trails we leave on the land - it's about how we are fragmenting the landscape.

In order to determine linear features density, there are some basic calculations. Linear features densities more than 0.6km/km² is the apparent threshold at which populations of large vertebrates such as moose and elk begin to decline. Grizzly bears have a lower tolerance and their numbers decline at LFD above 0.4km/km². Bird abundance declines at seismic line densities above 8.5km/km².

See startling time lapse of increase in linear features in the vicinity of Brisco, BC from 1984 til present - <https://vimeo.com/209141434>

One peer reviewed study looked at the response of elk and mule deer to ATVs, mountain bikes, horseback riders, and hikers. It concluded that elk reactions were more pronounced during ATV and mountain bike riding, and were less so during horseback riding and hiking. Additionally, elk flight responses were greater around ATV and mountain bike use, up to 1500m, compared to 500m from hikers and horseback riders. Elk and wolf stress hormone production was more stressed out with the intensity of snowmobile activity in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Again in the greater Yellowstone, moose bedding and feeding within 300m of snowmobile trails altered their behaviour by moving to less favourable habitat. Proximity to trails and frequency of trail use by people were the most significant factors in this change in behaviour.

from Winter Wildlands Alliance Report: Severinghaus and Tullar (1978) theorize that for white-tailed deer, during a 20-week winter with snowmobile harassment each weekend, "food enough for 40 days of normal living would be wasted just escaping from snowmobiles."





Shoreline at Rushmere trashed by ATVs, 100 m from a BC Forestry sign that prohibits motorized use in environmentally sensitive areas.