



WILD TIMES

Summer 2015



Pat Morrow

THE FUTURE OF OUR WATER

You have just finished an incredible paddle in your favourite river. Your mind is at ease and you are filled with the peace that only comes from spending time in nature. Before you go home, you pull your science kit out of your backpack. You search for macroinvertebrates like the caddisfly under rocks and take measurements like pH. You notice changes in the river, the caddisfly are gone, the pH has changed.

When you get home, you submit your data to Environment Canada. A few months later, the data submitted by you and other members of your community confirms your suspicions—something is wrong. It's discovered that important changes need to be made to restore the health of your river.

Welcome to the exciting world of citizen science—ordinary people empowered to take care of the water central to their lives.

As we face serious issues like water shortages,

drought and climate change, citizen participation at the watershed level is not only important, but urgent. The issues are complex, flowing across communities and entire countries. We can no longer rely on simple patches to complex problems. Our approach must be collaborative, bringing together community groups, industry, academics and all levels of government.

Wildsight is thrilled to be part of this ever-growing movement. Our Living Lakes Canada team has been training and empowering stewardship groups in the Columbia Basin and beyond to gather data and take care of their water: The Lake Windermere Ambassadors, Friends of Kootenay Lake and the Elk River Alliance. We are continually inspired by the impact these groups have had and by what's possible when we all work together to take care of what's important to us.

Find out how you can get involved in your watershed at livinglakes.ca.



Caillum Smith

JUMBO WILD: REASON TO CELEBRATE

After 24 years of struggle, we finally have a reason to celebrate. Development of the mega ski resort in the Jumbo Valley has been halted. Jumbo is still wild and, as it stands now, will remain wild—and it’s all because of you.

BC Environment Minister Mary Polak’s landmark ruling on June 18th that Glacier Resorts had not achieved a substantial start on their proposed resort before the expiry of their Environmental Certificate was the result of a true grassroots effort spanning decades.

You’ve written thousands and thousands of letters, given generously of your time to be at rallies, protests, monitoring camps and meetings with all levels of government. You’ve held onto hope that ordinary people can make a difference.

The Road from There to Here

Eleven years ago, Glacier Resorts was granted an Environmental Certificate. Just before it expired, they tried to build an illegal road without consulting local government, First Nations or the Ministry of Environment. Public outrage boiled over and people came from all over the Kootenays to participate in a road blockade. After eight weeks, Glacier Resorts withdrew their equipment and went home.

In order for a developer to keep their Environmental Certificate, construction must be

“substantially started” by the end of a five year period. Although they hadn’t completed anything that could be counted as substantial (besides an illegal road, that is), just days before Glacier Resort’s Environmental Certificate was to expire, they received an extension for another five years.

“THERE ARE VERY FEW AREAS LIKE THIS LEFT IN THE WORLD, AND WE SHOULD PRESERVE IT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. I WANT MY CHILDREN AND ALL BRITISH COLUMBIANS TO BE ABLE TO ENJOY THIS AREA, JUST AS I AM ABLE TO.”

Scott Niedermayer,
former NHL player and Olympic athlete

With only a few months remaining on their five-year extension, Glacier Resorts began construction. The Citizens for Jumbo Wild established a monitoring camp near the construction site to make sure there wouldn’t be any funny business. The monitoring camp, largely led by a mix of feisty octogenarians, ran for 57 days!

In the final days before the deadline, the developers sent concrete trucks up the valley in a desperate last-minute attempt to save their project. However, mother nature took care of herself and the trucks weren’t able to make it up the rugged logging road due to poor conditions. The next morning, the trucks climbed the mountain road again, this time heroically equipped with special road pads. Two non-load bearing slabs, or “foundations” were poured.

RK Heliski, a local independent heli-ski operation that has been operating in the Jumbo Valley for over 20 years, knew immediately that the “foundations” had been placed in an avalanche path. They submitted a detailed report with photographic evidence to the Environmental Assessment Office.

This prompted Glacier Resorts to commission a professional avalanche study. The study found that one of the “foundations” was located inside a very large avalanche path and the other dangerously close to it.

For a supposedly multi-billion dollar project, Glacier Resorts had achieved very little in the ten years after being issued their Environmental Certificate. And the small amount they did achieve not only put their potential customers at serious

risk, but showed a flagrant disrespect for the Environmental Assessment rules, put in place to protect the mountains.

Looking Forward

Although the “not substantially started” decision wasn’t the only decision that Minister Mary Polak could have made, it was certainly the only reasonable decision.

What will happen next? Only time will tell. If fighting to keep Jumbo wild for the last 24 years has taught us something, it’s that anything can happen. We look to the Ktunaxa Nation to guide a long-term vision of a protected area where the grizzly bear spirit roams free.

But for now, let’s celebrate. To you, to Jumbo. To a future in which both humans and nature can thrive.



People power has kept Jumbo wild for 24 years

BIOBLITZ 4



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This July 24-30, scientists—both professional and citizen alike—will gather together to document and gather important information on the conservation lands purchased by Teck in the Flathead and Elk Valleys, a critical landscape for wildlife connectivity. “These lands are part of an essential corridor for grizzlies, lynx and other wildlife that move up and down the Rocky Mountains,” says John Bergenske, Wildsight’s Conservation Director. The first Flathead Bioblitz focused on bugs, the second on birds, the third on bats, and this year it will be a multi-species all-in extravaganza. The hunt is for rare and exciting species, from small mammals like the endangered badger, to unique bird species.

WATERBIRD SURVEY



Shirley Lannoo

Wildsight Golden has just completed the first ever Columbia Wetlands Waterbird Survey. During the spring migration, nearly 40 volunteers counted and identified birds at 64 sites along the Columbia Wetlands. Over 90 species of bird were spotted, and nearly 15,000 birds were counted over three mornings—incredible results for this citizen science project! Although the wetlands are widely recognized as important habitat, few bird surveys have been conducted there and most data is out of date. This important data will help to justify international status as an Important Bird Area, helping to further protect the world-renowned Columbia Wetlands. For more information and to get involved, visit our website.

GO WILD: YOUTH BACKPACKING TRIP INTO THE PURCELLS



Southern Canada’s largest protected wilderness area, the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy (PWC), recently celebrated its 40th birthday and we want to celebrate! The PWC has always been about people protecting what they love, and Wildsight wants to inspire this love in the next generation. This August 15-20, we’ll be taking a group of Kootenay youth on a backpack trip into the PWC to experience the region’s breathtaking wilderness landscape and develop their outdoor leadership skills. The trip will be lead by wilderness guide, wildlife biologist and adventure writer, Dave Quinn. If you know someone aged 14-18, spread the word! The memories and skills gathered on this adventure will last a lifetime.

WILDSIGHT IS PEOPLE LIKE YOU

Being a member of Wildsight means being part of our team.
Valuing wilderness, wildlife and healthy communities.
Believing that by taking care of the things we love,
collectively, through action, we can change the world.

250 427 2535 | 2 - 495 Wallinger, Kimberley, BC V1A 1Z6

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