

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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FEEDBACK SOUGHT ON KOOCANUSA RECREATION USE

Four open houses to be held in November to communicate with public on sustainable and responsible recreation in Kootenusa area

(East Kootenay) -- The public will have a chance to discuss recreation management in the Kootenusa area at four open houses this November in the communities of Baynes Lake, Jaffray, Grasmere and Elko.

Hosted by the Kootenusa Recreation Steering Committee, the open houses provide an opportunity for residents, stakeholders and users of the Kootenusa area to give feedback on current and proposed strategies for improving recreation management in the region. The committee is a partnership between the BC government, Ktunaxa National Council, Tobacco Plains Indian Band, Regional District of East Kootenay and Columbia Basin Trust.

“We want to converse with the public, as well as provide current information, about the ongoing development and maintenance of the Kootenusa Recreation Strategy, which will be updated over the next few months to address changing conditions and trends,” said Jeff Zukiwsky, Coordinator of the Kootenusa Recreation Steering Committee. “The updated strategy will be informed by the feedback we receive at the open houses, as well as a number of other meetings and consultations with First Nations and stakeholders.”

Each year, more than 100,000 people visit the Kootenusa region, which is an important tourism and recreation area, attracting outdoor enthusiasts for a wide range of activities. On a typical summer weekend, tens of thousands of people are recreating in Kootenusa. It is also an area of traditional use and interest for Indigenous Nations. The development and maintenance of the Kootenusa Recreation Strategy aims to sustain the important recreation opportunities in the area and support local economic development while reducing negative impacts, and addressing safety concerns arising from increased recreation on Crown land.

“With so many people enjoying this area, it’s important that we all do our part to keep this place clean and safe for all users while also protecting sensitive ecosystems, wildlife, historical sites and cultural heritage, as well as help reduce the spread of invasive species,” said Ken Walburger, Resource Manager with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

The public open houses are from 6 to 8 p.m. at:

- Grasmere Pioneer Hall, November 20;
- Baynes Lake Community Hall, November 21;
- Jaffray Community Hall, November 27; and
- Elko Community Hall, November 28.

The current Kooconusa Recreation Strategy, developed based on public feedback in 2017, can be viewed or downloaded, either as a summary or complete report, at www.koocanusarecreation.ca. Since 2017, the Kooconusa Recreation Steering Committee has been implementing the Strategy, including:

- Installing signage to educate recreation users about appropriate behavior on Crown land;
- Creating and distributing the Kooconusa Recreation Brochure;
- Increasing the presence of enforcement officials in the area;
- Completing a recreation and trail inventories of all roads, trails, camping areas and staging areas;
- Improving garbage and sanitation facilities; and
- In the Dorr-Grasmere Area, establishing designated recreation trails for motorized and non-motorized users, decommissioning unsustainable trails and restoring grassland ecosystems, and establishing more formal camping and parking areas.

Share your views by attending an open house, visiting www.koocanusarecreation.ca, or submitting comments to info@koocanusarecreation.ca.

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Photo Cutline: The Kooconusa Recreation Steering Committee meets regularly with the Kooconusa Recreation Public Advisory Group to get feedback on recreation management decisions

BACKGROUNDER:

The Koochanusa Recreation Steering Committee was formed in 2014 to help address recreation issues on Crown lands around the Koochanusa reservoir. The committee is a partnership between the BC government, Ktunaxa National Council, Tobacco Plains Indian Band, Regional District of East Kootenay and Columbia Basin Trust. In 2017, The Koochanusa Recreation Strategy, a living document, was developed to foster more sustainable and responsible recreation on Crown lands, while providing opportunities for local stakeholders and stewardship groups to play key roles in recreation management. The strategy was created after extensive consultation and engagement, including a partnership with the local Koochanusa Recreation Public Advisory Group, four community open houses and a recreation management survey that received more than 1,100 responses.