

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 Why is a recreation management strategy needed for the Koocanusa area?

Residents and stakeholders in the Koocanusa area have expressed concern about the growing impacts of Crown land recreation in the area. These impacts include: environmental damage, garbage, spread of invasive species, public health and safety concerns, and, negative impacts to cultural and archeological values, and existing tenure holders. The Committee's goal is to address these issues in a coordinated and collaborative manner that is responsive to the needs of residents, First Nations, stakeholders and recreation users.

2 Is there already a recreation plan for this area?

Prior to this Strategy, a recreation plan for the Koocanusa area did not exist. Some recreation planning has taken place through processes like the Koocanusa Official Community Plan (2014) and the Cranbrook West Recreation Management Strategy (2005). The Koocanusa Recreation Strategy builds on what was learned from these previous processes and engages recreation users, residents and other stakeholders to participate in a planning process that identifies recreation management solutions.

3 Why are these recreation issues occurring?

Many recreation issues in the Koocanusa area have intensified because of significant growth in the number of recreation users that come to the area. The impacts are placing a disproportional burden on residents and tax payers for the management of waste, roads, invasive species and other negative impacts.

4 How many people are recreating in this area?

The Koocanusa Recreation Situational Analysis, conducted in 2014, estimated current recreation use between 10,000 to 25,000 visitors on summer weekends. These estimates are based on surveys with private business owners, recreation site hosts, Natural Resource Officers and recreation users in the area.

5 What types of recreation management actions will be implemented?

Stewardship and education efforts are the starting point and foundation for addressing recreation issues and impacts. In the Dorr-Grasmere area, the plan is to 'formalize' the designation of recreation trails and vehicle-access camping areas to enable effective enforcement of recreation use. In other areas of Koocanusa, the current focus is on providing information to recreation users on how they can be better stewards of the area while still enjoying the area for its beauty and recreation opportunities. Additional compliance and enforcement personnel will be on the ground to help initiate these efforts.

6 What organizations are part of the Koocanusa Recreation Steering Committee?

The Koocanusa Recreation Steering Committee (KRSC) includes representatives from the Province of B.C., Ktunaxa National Council, Tobacco Plains Indian Band, Regional District of East Kootenay and Columbia Basin Trust. In 2014, the KRSC commissioned the Koocanusa Area Situational Analysis, which makes recommendations on how to support recreation on Crown land while maintaining or enhancing ecological, cultural, economic and aesthetic values.

7 What community engagement has taken place in developing the Strategy?

An important part of the process to date has been engaging and consulting with local residents and stakeholders at every stage. In 2014 an in-depth community engagement process was undertaken to help identify Crown Land recreational issues and potential solutions in the Koochanusa area. That consultation process included a survey mailed to all Koochanusa area residents, as well as meetings and interviews with local businesses, community groups and visitors to the area. In 2015, a Koochanusa Recreation Public Advisory Group (KRPAG) was established, made up of local residents from diverse backgrounds and who are recreation users in the Koochanusa. The KRPAG provided important local input and perspectives to help guide the development of the Koochanusa Recreation Strategy. Community involvement culminated in an extensive engagement process which occurred from January 23 to February 17, 2017 and included four community open houses hosted in Grasmere, Jaffray, Cranbrook and Fernie, a meeting with Tobacco Plains Indian Band members, and a recreation management options survey that was completed by 1,142 people from the Koochanusa area, British Columbia and Alberta.

8 How has the Ktunaxa Nation been involved in this process?

The Ktunaxa Nation are partners in the process and Ktunaxa Nation staff as well as staff from the Tobacco Plains Indian Band have participated on the Koochanusa Recreation Steering Committee. Staff from the Tobacco Indian Band have also participated on the KRPAG. A community meeting was held with the Tobacco Plains Indian Band in 2017 to engage community members and get their input.

9 How and when will other high impact areas be addressed?

The KRSC is taking a step-by-step approach to recreation management across the Koochanusa area. The Dorr-Grasmere area is experiencing significant impacts from Crown land recreation use and has been chosen as the first area to test and evaluate the effectiveness of focused management actions. Any management approaches used in the Dorr-Grasmere area will be monitored to see if they achieve desired outcomes, and may be adjusted if necessary. If these approaches are effective in reducing negative impacts, while maintaining good quality recreation opportunities, their application to other highly impacted areas of Koochanusa may be considered.

10 How can we avoid relocating issues and problems to adjacent areas?

Recreation management approaches are not intended to be restrictive. The Strategy recommends responsible recreation use that does not degrade Crown land values and provides benefits to local communities and existing land users.

11 What happens next?

The goal of the Koochanusa Recreation Strategy is to support an enjoyable and sustainable recreation experience for all users. KRSC members have made financial and resource commitments to support implementation of the management actions identified in the 2017 Koochanusa Recreation Strategy. The KRSC will continue to work with First Nations, local partners, stewardship groups and other stakeholders to enable residents and visitors to enjoy safe and sustainable recreation in the Koochanusa area.