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KOOCANUSA STRATEGY TO ADDRESS RECREATION ISSUES

(East Kootenay) – A new strategy aims to tackle the long-standing impacts of tourism and recreation on Crown land in the Kooacanusa area. The actions outlined in the strategy will begin this spring, and will be funded in part by \$750,000 over three to five years from Columbia Basin Trust.

“The release of this strategy marks an important milestone and turning point for recreation management in the Kooacanusa area,” said Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines. “We listened to the public and came up with a plan that will enhance recreation opportunities and promote respectful use of Crown lands. Education and stewardship are the foundation of the plan, so that all residents and visitors can continue to enjoy this area for many years to come. In order to make sure we move to action, the various partners have committed the resources necessary to make this happen.”

“Residents told us that the Kooacanusa area is an important asset to our region, not only in terms of tourism and recreation, but because of its natural values,” said Johnny Strilaeff, Columbia Basin Trust President and Chief Executive Officer. “By partnering on this strategy, we’re supporting solid actions that will help manage the use of this resource and ensure it remains a healthy, inviting place.”

The Province of B.C. has also committed staff time and resources to implementing the actions, including financial support for increased enforcement and to improve recreation facilities.

“I am thrilled with the Kooacanusa Recreation Strategy,” said Yvonne Miller, local rancher and member of the Kooacanusa Recreation Public Advisory Group. “For the first time there is a commitment to begin implementing on-the-ground actions that will reduce the impacts of uncontrolled recreation on our natural resources.”

Key actions include the following:

- Continue to educate recreation users about appropriate Crown land behaviour through signage and by distributing the Kooacanusa Recreation Guidelines and Map.
- Support the Kooacanusa Recreation Steward Program, which provides two additional natural resource officers for the Kooacanusa area.
- Complete a recreation inventory of existing roads, trails, camping sites and staging areas.
- Continue to engage with local partners, advisors and stewardship groups.

The overall goal of the strategy is 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 Kooacanusa Recreation Public Advisory Group, four community open houses and a recreation management survey that received more than 1,100 responses.

The Strategy also includes more specific management actions to be implemented in the Dorr-Grasmere area starting in 2017. These actions will be implemented over two phases with the goal of designating appropriate Crown land camping and parking areas, and recreation trails for motorized and non-motorized users.

The Koochanusa Recreation Steering Committee includes representatives of the Province of B.C., Ktunaxa Nation Council, Tobacco Plains Indian Band, Regional District of East Kootenay and Columbia Basin Trust. It has worked collaboratively to develop a strategy that supports recreation while being responsive to the concerns of residents, recreation users and stakeholders.

For more information and to download a copy of the strategy, visit www.koocanusarecreation.ca.

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