



The Kootenay Mountaineer

The newsletter for people with year-round pursuits.

Winter Solstice, 2015

Email exchange between the editor and the club president:

To: Doug Clark
From: Tim Clinton
Subject: Year Statement?

Summary of the AGM? Yearly wrap up? Future hopes?

Tim

To: Tim Clinton
From: Doug Clark
Subject: Re: Year Statement?

I am happy to see a healthy snow pack.

Sent from my iPhone

But, Doug finally came though!

Message from the President

Looking Ahead:

The upcoming winter trip schedule has already achieved its targeted goal of trip numbers, but more is better. Please consider leading a trip that you find enjoyable, whatever the level of difficulty. Trips are the best part of being a KMC member!

The club is in great financial shape. Next year, the executive will start getting its head around how it wishes to use these funds. Member input will be needed in these considerations.

2016 Executive:

The 2016 Executive consists of the following individuals:

President	Doug Clark
Vice President	Sandra Fuller
Secretary	Dan Derby
Treasurer	Ross Bates
Membership	Jocelyn LaFace
Conservation	Peter Jordan
Social	Laurie Helyer
Summer Trips	Peter Oostlander
Winter Trips	Phil Best

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Article submission guidelines:

Plain text is great. No need for PDF or Microsoft Word files. Simply cut and paste your text into an email to newsletter@kootenaymountaineeringclub.ca. Attach your full resolution photos to the email. Lots of photos, please.

Newsletters are published 4 times a year on the solar equinox and solstice milestones. Article submissions can be anytime.

Hiking Camp	Leon Arishenkoff
Mountain School	Peter Oostlander
Cabins	Graham Jamin
Trails, Trail/Road Access	Chris Cowan
Newsletter	Tim Clinton
Website Manager	Tim Clinton

Last thoughts:

The individuals on the KMC executive are competent and effective. As a result, my workload has not been

onerous. Every director willingly rolls up their sleeves and gets down to business to move the club ahead and gives their support to other directors if needed.

Beyond executive, there are many members who make KMC a success, including trip leaders, hiking camp committee (a huge job), car pool drivers, volunteers on brush clearing, those who take the time to bring their concerns and suggestions forward, and all those who show up for KMC trips with a cheerful, can-do attitude.

Doug Clark

President, Kootenay Mountaineering Club

Message from the Editor

Lots of trips. Seven reports, and very good ones at that. Thanks to those authors. **BUT** I do know for sure that there were a lot more trips that took place. To counterbalance the descriptive reports, I have taken advantage of the fact that Phil Best kindly shares links to the photos taken by his camera on all the trips that the camera takes him on. (That's kinda like a dog taking their person along for a walk. It's good for both of them.)

Info Bits

It's Winter! There are many sources of information out there on how increase your odds of safety. Be careful out there!

The editor lifted this warning and recommendation about avalanche beacons from the ACMG Mountain Conditions Report.

If my experience last weekend helps only one person's beacon to work correctly, then this post will be worthwhile:

One of my guest's Mammut Pulse transceiver was giving repeated "Calibrate compass now" warnings, despite being calibrated two times and batteries at 55%. When in doubt, reboot. When I removed the batteries, I noticed there was corrosion on the contacts. I scraped this with my knife, but wasn't able to remove all of it. It looks like the beacon was stored over the summer with batteries inside. We didn't get the error and warning again after the clean up.

I recommend checking beacons and carefully cleaning the contacts with rubbing alcohol and a cotton swab and/or light sandpaper. I think it was

losing power for a fraction of a second triggering the compass on reboot function. Who knows what scary consequences there could be in a real avalanche situation.

The model of beacon isn't important, as corrosion complications could occur with any brand.

Ken Bélanger

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BCA Companion Rescue Series

Editor note: If you haven't had an AST1 course, the shovelling video makes it apparent how hard it is to shovel in compressed snow.

Learn how to use your transceiver, shovel, and probe in a companion rescue situation. Our BCA avalanche rescue education series shows you how to perform an avalanche rescue if your companion is buried. Know before you go – take an avalanche course and review BCA avalanche rescue materials here.

Videos on the same subject from Backcountry Skiing Canada (YouTube videos)

Transceivers 101

Probing 101

Shoveling 101

GPX to KML

...is a website that will freely convert your GPX files to a KML file for Google Earth, and visa-versa.

Cascade Mtn, Poplar Lakes, and Mt Marion Attempt

Dan R

Fifteen years ago, Poplar Lakes would've been an easy 2 hour hike, from what I gather. In 2015, the Poplar Creek FSR is reportedly so completely overgrown as to be rendered useless. Keeping all options of the table, the plan to get there took about a year for me to work out and ended up taking us up Cascade Creek, scrambling Cascade Mountain (twice!), an attempt on Mount Marion, a dip in a few of the Poplar Lakes, and a 17hr day, all starting on July 28th.

Douglas, Cindy, and I parked at the first washout on the Cascade Face FSR(2km), and rode bikes the next 10km. It took us only slightly less time than hiking would have. We ditched the bike at the landing before the bridge crossing to the south side of Cascade Ck, and set off through the bush. Our goal was to ascend hiker's left of the drainage that starts SE of Mt Emmens, though we ended up on the right side. A solid hour of alder finally got us back to the left side and we made our way up through steep, moderate bush for a long time. Camped at what I'm calling 'Cascade Lakes'. Eleven hours from the truck.

Day 2, we crossed the watershed between Cascade and Wilson Creeks and saw some heli flags nearby, the only sign of human activity on the whole trip, once off the roads. We dropped packs and scrambled up some steep snow and then the east ridge of Cascade Mountain. Unfortunately (or fortunately as we'll see later), I'd forgotten the summit register back at the packs! After descending, we decided to camp just north and above the Cascade-Marion col, then hiked up south to scout access for Mt Marion. Kim Kratky had reported using this ridge and then dropping down to the glacier. Douglas tried this and made it down to the glacier, but advised against it. We returned to the camp and Cindy and I scouted a route down the headwall of Cascade Creek. This gave us confidence that we could descend here, make an attempt on Marion (by ascending the glacier from below), and then hike out a low route through Cascade Creek, which looked fairly clear from above. All this would allow us to make up for lost time the first day, and still get some more exploring in. Another big day, at least 10hrs I think.

Day 3, we left our camp set up and hiked down the incredible, varied alpine of the Wilson Ck headwaters. Highly recommended. After descending to the flats at the bottom of the area, we ascended to a lookout for views down Wilson Creek and up the drainage SE of Mt Marion. From there, we traversed north and over the divide to Poplar Lakes. We went for a dip in the upper and lower one, and admired the big middle one. We'd hoped to check out the old campsite at the outlet of the lakes, but were low on time. Douglas and Cindy decided to head back a more direct route to camp, which ended up taking them into 4th Class terrain, but with the bonus of seeing a bunch of goats. I was determined to get the summit register onto Cascade, so I hiked across the headwaters of the drainage and then up the NW ridge (easy Class 3). The view and weather and light on top were surreal. The golden light (it was 7:30pm) stretched across the Purcells from Mt Loki to Mt Conrad, and the view across the lesser peaks of the Goat Range to the west towards the sun were unbelievable. And me without a camera! After placing the register, I descended the south face and met the others back in camp. Twelve hour day.

On the final day, we were moving at 6am. Descending the vegetated headwall was slow (near impossible if wet), and this gave us pause as to whether we had time to attempt Mt Marion. We decided to start and just get some glacier travel practice if nothing else. Getting up the lower tongues was the hardest part though and once above, we decided to keep going.



Cascade Mtn behind. East ridge above big snowpatch. Photo Douglas Noblet

We made it up to the west ridge of Marion, above the glacier, but decided we just didn't have the time needed for a quick summit attempt (looked like 45min of easy, loose Class 3), so we admired the views, and turned back.

We were re-packed below the glacier and moving around mid-afternoon, very aware of how much ground we needed to cover, though still able to admire Cascade Creek's namesakes.

The going started out good but numerous creek crossings and increasing vegetation bogged us down. Undoubtedly the low snow year made fording the creek a not-unreasonable endeavor. Head-high stinging nettle on uneven ground, a canyon, thick willows, routefinding six-of-ones, and a half dozen creek crossings all took their toll, but the adrenaline kept us moving. We eventually crossed the creek for the last time, just above the confluence with the big SE tributary, and walked the road back to our bikes, arriving at dusk. We re-packed and started biking with headlamps. The bikes sped the return trip, taking a little over 1.5hrs this time, somewhat slowed by the dark. Back at the truck at 17.5hrs after starting that day, we were totally wasted. We agreed it was the longest day any of us have had in the mountains. And we still had to drive back home! We took shifts driving, Douglas and I making it back to Nelson at 2:30am, after having gotten up at 4:30am that morning!

In the end, our access route was close to the best choice, in my opinion, though we could've saved an hour or two and possibly made it to the Wilson headwaters in a 12hr day, knowing more about the route in hindsight (wishful thinking perhaps). Still, a long day with a lot of elevation gain. Forget using Cascade Creek for access/egress though.

This is an absolutely fantastic area, and the more months that pass, the more I'm be willing to consider going back someday. More lakes to explore SE of Poplar Lakes, and the whole area south of Mt Marion are ripe for exploration. Note that there is reportedly a "14hr, sporty route" return route from the Meadow Mountain Rd to Mount Marion.

Worth noting also is that the Goat Range ski touring traverse route from Chic Scott's book relied on the long Poplar Creek road for egress, and this is no longer possible, though there are rumors that this road will be

opened up again in order to pull the bridges eventually, so that's worth keeping an eye on.



Crossing Cascade Creek



Dan, Upper Wilson Creek. Photo Douglas Noblet



West ridge of Mt Marion

If anyone has done other summer trips into the area since the Poplar Creek Rd ceased to be viable, I'd love to hear about it.

Lake Bonny Gem and Mount McLeod

Dan R

On a four day trip starting August 17, a friend from the coast and I made it to Lake Bonny Gem, starting at the Heart Lake Trail. We summited Mount Beguin, Mount Wilkinson, and Mount McLeod as well. There were sections of Class 3 with moderate exposure (some of this is avoidable), and moderate route finding.

In 1915, Lake Bonny Gem was first reached (and named) from Carney Creek and Mount Lake, the highest in the Pioneer Group, was summited. In the 60's, Curt Wagner traversed the Settler Group and the Pioneer Group, most of which were first ascents, and he named the peaks in the area. This was roughly the route we used, though they'd started at Kootenay Joe Ridge. In 1974 and 1980, there was a KMC hiking camp at Bonny Gem and for the latter, there was a satellite camp at Eagle Nest Lake, where a few people hiked in between. 1981, Eagle Nest Lake was to be the hiking camp location, but this was changed to the headwaters of the western fork of Clint Creek at the last minute. After that, the Wilderness Conservancy was created, ruling out further helicopter access. I've spoken to someone who bushwhacked up Crazy Creek to 'Crazy Lakes', then on to Eagle Nest Lake and out South Toby. Folks have also tried to hike up Carney Creek to Bonny Gem, but had to turn back just short of the lake. There are likely a few more instances of trips towards Bonny Gem that I've missed, so if anyone else has info about other trips, please contact me!

We camped at the Heart Lake trailhead the night before we started. I was recovering from the flu, so I slowed us down considerably. The travel beyond Heart Lake was smooth. In the next drainage, we saw a survey stake and a firepit, but that was the last signs of human foot travel we saw.



Camp south of Mount Beguin

Once in the Winter/Beguin/Bulmer basin, there was considerable sidehilling on loose rock and we eventually found good flat ground and water at the base of Mt Beguin and made camp, after 7 hours of travel.

Day 2, we made our way up to the summit of Mt Beguin without any difficulty. We were the first party to sign the register in 3 years. Beyond Beguin, we made our way over Bacchus Ridge, without hitting the high point. We crossed the dry glacier (crevasses fairly visible) easily with our hiking poles. We dropped into the Wilkinson/Clark basin, then summited Wilkinson via the SW ridge, which was easier than it looked. We couldn't see good water sources until the lakes below the McLanders-McLeod col, so we descended to the Wilkinson-McLeod col, and traversed to the lakes and camped there.

Day 3, we left our camp in place. We ended up doing some 3rd class scrambling to get up to the col, but in the end, the original plan to just go straight up to the col via a ramp would've been way better. At the col, we spotted heli-flags. Very loose rock got us into the Noel headwaters and we crossed the basin below the remaining glacier across glacier detritus and bedrock. The glacier itself is now about a quarter of the size suggested by the maps.



Lake Bonny Gem with Mount Hamill in the distance.

By the time we had Lake Bonny Gem in sight, we realized we were low on time, so we dropped to the lake, went for a celebratory dip, had lunch, and then had to backtrack. Unfortunate, as the lake was truly beautiful and I would've loved to have explored the outlet area. We'd originally hoped to camp at the lake, but our slow progress had meant Bonny Gem had to be a daytrip. We hiked back up to the col, then decided to bag McLeod. Class 3, some exposure near the top. Left

a summit register. Big views. Descended from the col to the camp via the aforementioned ramp, which was long, but Class 2.

Throughout the day, we'd kept our eyes on possible routes for Mt Lake, of which there were several. The easiest, but not shortest would be to hike above Bonny Gem and ascend the glacier. The other four routes were at least a solid Class 4 or higher, likely.



Oasis near the retreating glacier. Mount Pambrun on the left, Mount Lillian at center.

Day 4, we made the long march back up to Mt Beguin, this time dropping and then gaining the Wilkinson/Clark basin. The glacier north of Bacchus Ridge was not going to give us purchase this time around, so we had to find another route up the ridge, which was much sketchier and involved loose rock and some exposure. We skirted the high point of Bacchus Ridge again, again signed the register on Beguin, and continued at a good pace all the way back to Heart Lake. We'd planned to camp there, but had lots of daylight left, so we went for a dip, then hiked out. Ten hours that day.

Having spoken to people about alternate routes to Bonny Gem, I believe ours is worth recommending, with a few caveats, though allowing for a full day from Bonny Gem would be advised. I've only heard of the Crazy Creek version of this possible traverse of the Purcells, but all the sections of a Settler/Pioneer/Eagle Nest/South Toby traverse have been done in sections. The eastern end of the trip would largely rely on the South Toby route being in good shape.

Overall, this wasn't a particularly easy trip, but getting deep into the Purcell Wilderness was fantastic and it was great fun researching the history and talking to folks who'd made it or tried to make it to Bonny Gem previously.

This version of the trip report is much condensed. See the trip report forum on the KMC website for a longer version. Please contact me with any further information or stories, or to get more details. Thanks to Gary Diers, Mike Brewster, and Terry Turner for info.



Summit of Mount McLeod. Mount Lake center-right.

Mount Pool – Possible New Approach, and SE Ridge

Dan R

Mount Pool looked to be the highest non-technical scramble in the Badshots and would also provide the views to the Battle Range and Purcells that I'd been craving. The Spider Mine Rd sounded like it wouldn't be worth the hassle, so Douglas and I used the road above the Trout Lake Transfer Station for access. On October 22 (no snow up high!), we parked at 1700m and walked the rest of the road into the alpine.

We struck off cross-country, and stuck mostly to the Mountain Goat Creek side of its divide with Mohawk Creek. We saw over 20 heli-flags in one spot, and some sort of big Lynx or Cougar tracks. There were also quad tracks extending from the end of the road we used that seemed like they'd go all the way to Mount Thompson. There were also old quad tracks and fire pits at the pass above the old Beatrice Mine, which we reached after 5 hours. After setting up camp there, we walked down the old road and explored a few shafts and cabins.

This was the latest summer trip I'd engaged in before and we had to break ice in our tarn the next morning to get water, before leaving camp. We took a route a bit south of the ridge that rises from the pass. Once above, we crossed down the snowfield, deciding that the SE Ridge of Pool was probably our best bet, though we'd had hopes of doing a traverse of Beak Peak and Goat Tower as well. We made it to the base of the ridge without difficulty and the ridge itself proved to be low 3rd Class, with an avoidable mid-3rd chimney for the final push. On the summit ridge, above 2700m, we saw the same feline tracks in the snow again!

Unfortunately on the summit, we were now just into the clouds, but the constantly changing views and swirling mist added some excitement. Views as far south as Mount Willet materialized, but really it was the view of the rest of the Badshots and the Mount Conrad/Crystalline areas of the Purcells that stole the show. The Odin/Thor area of the Monashees looked great too. Views to the north were mostly cloudy though. We left a summit register at the summit cairn, then spent a lot of time identifying peaks up there, and also on the way down, as the view continued to reveal itself, but had to make haste to make it back to camp by dark. On the way though, it became clear that

ascending Beak Peak from the west looked easier than we'd thought earlier, mostly just loose rock. Our whole day had been about 9-10hrs.

On our third and final day, the views were much clearer, and while still missing out on the Battle Range, peaks further NW around the Albert Group looked fantastic. We kept a higher line on our return across the Mohawk/Mountain Goat divide, including the high point of this ridge. Pretty easy access to the area overall, if you've got the vehicle to get up the road we used, which was a bit punishing for a Subaru Outback.



One of the shafts of Beatrice Mine. Photo: Douglas Noblet



Our camp



Walking on a small snowfield on the upper, easier section of the SE Ridge. Photo: Douglas Noblet



An old shack near the Beatrice Mine



Typical 3rd Class terrain of Mount Pool's SE Ridge. Photo: Douglas Noblet

Mt Ymir

This was a last minute posting for this hike and I expected one or two friends to keep me company, as it was we ended up with seven hikers happy to be out in the sun on a beautiful October day. My choice of route was quite strenuous for some of my hiking mates but they persevered, we made our way to Half Dome on the east side of Ymir Mt. in 2 1/2 hours. We then made our way down the steep slope to the east col and back up the ridge both of which proved challenging to some of our hikers. This route is an excellent training ground for hikers testing their limits and learning mountaineering skills.



We made the summit of Ymir about 1 pm which is a bit slower than I would do this solo but the happy faces and people expressing pride of the accomplishment made it all worth while. We made the journey down the west slope to the west col of the bowl and decided to take the route through the bowl back to the lodge.

A great day with many firsts

We were Jan Osborne, Fred Richer, Phil Best, Dave Brackett, Ray Neumar and myself, Dave St Denis.

Photos by Phil Best.

Lepsoe Cabin Volunteer Day

October 25

Thanks to all for your contributions to making this cabin project a success. Thanks also to those who supported the project in so many ways.

To those who made it to the party, you all made it a very enjoyable event. To those who couldn't make it I hope you get many days enjoyment from the fruits of your labour.

Cheers,

Dave



Ski trip, cabins on Mt. Crowe

Sunday, November 29

This is still an early ski, however we did get more snow in the previous week, so travel wasn't too difficult. The day was sunny and about freezing. Thirteen of us met at the Nancy Greene Summit (Strawberry Pass), highway 3B. Our goal for lunch was to reach the new View Point Cabin on Crowe Mt. to the north. This area is now part of the Rossland Range Recreation Site, and a map of the Recreation Site can be found here: <http://www.rosslandrange.org/RRRS/Docs/Map110315.pdf>

We followed a combination of ski trails, old logging roads, and old skidoo trail, and did some bush whacking on this trip. Our first cabin, the Cookie Jar, is an old log cabin, which had been fixed up by Cookie L'Ecluse, now deceased. He was one of the originals who started the cabin building tradition in the Rossland Range. The stove has been taken out, and this cabin will be left as a heritage site within the new Rossland Recreation Site. It is very colourful with it's red, white, and pink logs.

Travel after that was easy for a while. We turned left on one of the logging roads before we got to Mosquito cabin. This spur dead ended, and then we had to climb through an old cut block full of young trees, bushes and dead fall. We all had skins on, so going wasn't too bad. We followed an old skidoo trail, then along a narrow frozen slough, and back onto the road system. Hoar frost crystals were very large in places, which will be a future layer in the snow pack.



The group emerging from the slough and checking out the hoar frost.



Linda showing off her fragile butterfly crystal.

Back onto the roads, we intersected and turned right on Cliff Road until it levelled off, cut through a short section of trees and hit the new cabin. The new cabins are a real delight. Each different, each having it's own character. I had been worried that we wouldn't fit everyone in for lunch, but the weather was so nice, most of us ate outside on the small porch. Sun, snow, views of Old Glory.



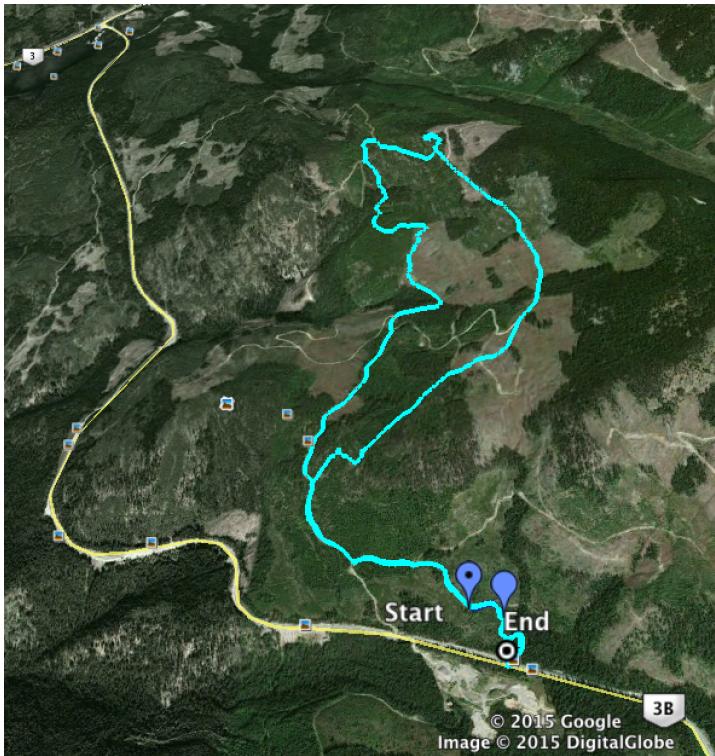
The front door has a beautiful mountain scene painted by local artist and KMC member Jenny Bailey.



Skis back on, we got back onto Cliff road, climbing south east, where we stopped for a group photo. Thanks Helen for taking this.

We crossed another field and headed over to the second new cabin on Crowe Mt., called Mosquito. Both View Pt and Mosquito cabins are located within 30 - 40 meters of the original cabins. The last cabin we skied past was Red Dog, and then back onto the roads we'd been on in the morning.

A Google Earth path provided by Tim Clinton looks like this.



We travelled in a clockwise path, and the View Pt. cabin is located at the north "coat hanger" tip.

Trip stats were:

Trip to View Pt. cabin: 6.5 km, trip back 5.7 km.
Max elevation 1808 m, min elevation 1566 m

The gang was: Helen Foulger, Cindy Kazak-Campbell, Diane Paolini, Dave and Jill Watson, Ken Holmes, Tim Clinton, Jeff Ross, Ross Bates, Tom Johnston, Linda Johannson, Zuzana Zach, and Bob McQueen (coordinator).

Lepsoe Basin Cabin, Mt. Lepsoe

December 6, 2015

Eleven skiers showed up at the Nancy Greene Summit. We knew the skiing would be good, because we got stuck behind the plow truck all the way to the summit. This trip was rated as a B2, almost all on trails. We followed the Seven Summit trail, then took a side detour to visit our first cabin, Eagle's Nest. It is still structurally ok, but needed a good cleanup inside.

Since it, and a number of older cabins in the new Rossland Range Recreation Site have been slated for demolition, volunteers who used to clean them haven't been as keen.



Continuing up the trail, our next stop was Sunspot Cabin. It's still in good shape, clean and in use. I have since learned there is a Rossland group who plan to build a new Sunspot cabin next summer, at a location close to the old one, but with a better view and southern exposure. Finally Sunspot will get some sun!

A little past Sunspot, we intersected the old logging road, which is still part of the Seven Summit Trail. It lead us up to the Lepsoe Basin sign. From here we put in an easy new track that led us to the old Berry Ridge cabin, also slated for removal, probably next summer. It is near the new KMC sponsored Lepsoe Basin Cabin, and hasn't been maintained. It now has signage pointing to the new cabin.



A short hike, and we arrived at the new cabin.

Peter O had brought some Christmas decorations (thank you Ingrid), to spruce up the cabin.



With the mandatory grilled cheese sandwiches on the stove, and Peter decorating the tree, we settled in for a good social lunch.

Our ski back down the field, included some fun turns in a deepening snow pack. We made our way back down the old logging road, and through the gravel pit to our vehicles.

Coordinates for the new Lepsoe Basin Cabin are: NAD 83 U11 0434358, 5448689, elevation 1885M.

We were: Dave Watson, Diane Paolini, Jeff Foss, Peter Oostlander, Chris Cowan, Ross Bates, Jan Osborne, Sandra Fuller, Ken Holmes, Tom Howells and Bob McQueen (coordinator).



UBCM Conference Presentation by Jeremy McCall of the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia

Making the Most of the Back Country

Thank you for inviting the Outdoor Recreation Council to address you all today. My colleagues in the ORC Executive and I are very pleased to have this opportunity to tell you something about outdoor recreation in BC and give you some of our thoughts on making the most of the Back Country.

I would like to tweak the topic slightly and talk about “How to make the most of the back country” or “How to do outdoor recreation!”. And I am not from the government, like the three previous speakers, but I am here to help you! I will firstly suggest things you can do as individuals, then follow up with some things you can consider in your capacity as representatives of local governments and conclude by proposing something we can all do.

Something for individuals

I will start by assuming that every one of you has an interest in some form of outdoor recreation, whether it be hiking, mountain biking, fishing or riding a quad, a snowmobile or a horse on a back country trail. And for the purpose of my talk I will assume that you know very little about outdoor recreation in BC, perhaps because you have come from outside the Province.

Joining a club

The first thing we recommend is that you join a group or club relevant to your interest. If you are a hiker, you might care to join the North Shore Hikers, which would also make you a member of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC. If you are a mountain biker, we suggest you join one of the many mountain biking clubs which have grown up in many centres round the Province and which are especially active on the North Shore and in Squamish and Whistler. If you do that you will get to be associated with the International Mountain Bicycling Association, otherwise known as IMBA Canada. If you are a quad rider, then you may want to join one of the many ATV clubs in BC and you will also become a member of ATVBC. As a caver, you might want to join the BC Speleological Federation and find out where the caves are. And if you are a kayaker, you could consider joining the Sea Kayak Association of BC or the BC Marine Trail Network

Association to find out where campsites already exist or are planned for the BC coast. It is important to remember that BC’s coast is a big part of the Back Country, even if that sounds a bit odd!

The benefits of joining a club

One of the main benefits of joining one of these organizations is that they organize regular field trips, especially on weekends. By going on organized field trips you can avoid the risks of travelling alone in the back country. You will also get to meet other members who know the area and the trails and the best places to go for that type of recreation.

You will also learn something about the ethics of the group or the club and how they relate to other members of the public. For example, if you join an ATV club you will learn that their members are especially keen to display a sense of responsibility for the environment and to respect other users of the trails they ride on. If you join a mountain biking club you will learn about the trails in your area and you will almost certainly have an opportunity to help with the construction of new trails to the exacting environmental standards of IMBA. If you are a keen birder you will benefit greatly from joining your local naturalist club and joining other birders with local knowledge. You will also find that naturalists organize hikes suitable for all levels of difficulty and summer camps in remote alpine areas.

When it comes to discussing recreation ethics the environment is generally one of the most important aspects of getting into the back country for most groups. You will probably find that almost any group or club is involved with protection of the environment either through advocacy or by practical work on the landscape, such as cleaning up rivers or developing trails in ways which will not result in erosion or other environmental damage.

You are also likely to learn about Tread Lightly, a movement which is supported by motorized organizations such as the Four Wheel Drive Association and which advocates principles such as avoiding sensitive areas and respecting the rights of others. In a similar way the Leave No Trace movement, which advocates sticking to trails and respecting wildlife, is supported by non-motorized recreationists. Other ways to access the back country

Besides consulting other members of your club or user group you may want to do your own research on ways to access the Back Country and that usually means finding out about trails. There are several ways to do that, starting with the detailed topo maps published by Natural Resources Canada and available through Mountain Equipment Coop and other map suppliers. Also today there are the excellent Backroad Mapbooks available which have been published by the Mussio family since 1994 and which are periodically updated. Although described as backroad mapbooks they could equally be called Back Country mapbooks as they provide lots of detailed information about the entire landscape, including contours. They have mapbooks for all regions of the Province and they also publish topographic maps.

When you want to learn about specific trails you can also use the website of Clubtread, an online community dedicated to the outdoors. Membership is free. This website is run by a group of outdoors enthusiasts who get together online to share ideas, trip reports, photographs, and advice. Its message board is the main method for communicating with others and planning trips. Clubtread provides detailed information such as trail descriptions, how to access the trails, and key trail metrics such as gradient and elevation gain for virtually all trails in BC.

Another useful website is Bivouac.com which describes itself as the Canadian Mountain Encyclopedia. Its stated purpose is to inspire people to get out into the mountains. Membership cost is \$25. It claims to have a massive database containing records for mountains, backroads and trails, along with photos and trip reports. The trail bulletins are particularly valuable as they are based on eye witness information by members. The detailed trip reports are carefully edited and indexed to serve as a useful guidebook. Most of the trip reports are hiking and climbing trips, but there are also some bicycle and canoe and kayak trips - anything that involves camping and exploring. Other trail user groups have websites with lots of trail data. For example Trailforks is a mountain biking trail database.

Dealing with risk in the back country

A good place to start when considering how to deal with the risks you may encounter in the Back Country is the "What to Bring" page of the North Shore Search

and Rescue website which lists the ten essential items to take with you. This applies whether you head out alone or in a group.

Something you will have to get accustomed to if you go on field trips organized by your club or volunteer for trail work is signing a Release of Liability, often described as a waiver, which will ensure that the club and its directors and members are not responsible if, for example, you should cause an injury to anyone by your actions on the trip. So you will likely experience the joy of signing one of those complicated forms at the trailhead in the early morning. And if it is likely to rain you would be well advised to read it in advance on the club's website!

You may want to volunteer to help with the construction or maintenance of trails and recreation sites and it could be useful to be aware of the relevant designations under the Forest & Range Practices Act. If the trail or rec site you are working on is established under Section 56 of FRPA then your group will be eligible to sign up for \$2 million of commercial liability insurance and \$40,000 of Accidental Death & Dismemberment insurance provided at no cost by the Province. However if the trail is not designated, you will not be eligible even if you do volunteer, but you will likely be covered by the club's own insurance!

And also in the area of risk management you may also learn about the intricacies of the 1998 amendment to the BC Occupiers Liability Act, which provides that persons entering property for outdoor recreation do so at their own risk and that the property owners owe you no duty of care, subject to fairly obvious exceptions such as not creating a danger or acting with reckless disregard to the safety of the persons on their property.

User conflicts

Another of the important advantages of belonging to an outdoor recreation organization is the opportunity to work with your fellow members to address problems such as trail user conflicts with members of other user groups. These conflicts are inevitable in a rapidly changing world of outdoor recreation. For example who would have thought a few years ago that there would be hundreds, if not thousands of mountain bikers using trails in the backcountry. We have found that there are well proven ways to deal with these conflicts when they arise. Discussions between user groups can take place either through trail alliances, such as those

in the Shuswap, Grand Forks and Fernie, or by participation in a Recreation Advisory Group, like the one which meets regularly in the Chilliwack Forest District, or through attending one of the annual Share the Trails Workshops sponsored by the Horse Council of BC in conjunction with the Outdoor Recreation Council.

Another area which is showing positive signs at the present time is the ability to discuss such things as plans for trails with First Nations along the route. For example the Vancouver Island Spine Trail Association, which is planning a trail for the length and breadth of Vancouver Island, is having some success at the present time entering into verbal agreements with First Nations in northern Vancouver Island.

Is there a role for local authorities?

Indeed there is. We are always pleased to see local authorities and communities taking a pro-active role for the enhancement of recreation access to the back country. The Resort Municipality of Whistler was a recent example when it encouraged snowmobilers and back country skiers in the Rainbow Lake area to respect the motorized and non-motorized zones designated in the Sea to Sky LRMP. The Municipality's motive was to ensure that its water supply area will remain pristine but its persuasive efforts have had beneficial side benefits.

Another example is the Village of Cumberland, a current beneficiary of a federal trail grant which was processed and supported by the Outdoor Recreation Council. Cumberland is developing mountain bike trails in the forest lands adjacent to the community. Apparently the private forest timber companies that own the lands around Cumberland have been reasonably agreeable to work with for trail access solutions, although most of the legal responsibilities and risks will be borne by the community.

Hut-to-hut trails - Another way for local authorities to be involved

One very effective way to enhance the enjoyment of trails in the back country is to develop more hut-to-hut trails. The extraordinary Sunshine Coast Trail runs 180 kms on the Upper Sunshine Coast between Saltery Bay and Desolation Sound. There are 12 huts along the route and it takes at least 12 days to complete the entire trail. This European approach to making trails much more accessible is great for aging populations. While

funding is obviously a requirement to purchase materials these huts are mostly built by volunteers. According to Eagle Walz, one of the leading advocates for the SCT, partnerships and community participation have been crucial for its completion. He also said that at the local government level it was necessary to sit at a variety of tables and attend many meetings to communicate one's interests clearly. We would like to see more hut-to-hut trails in appropriate parts of the back country.

And following the discussion about the deactivation of resource roads by one of the previous speakers, perhaps a role for local authorities in future might be support for the non-de-activation of roads in their areas where it can be justified for outdoor recreation and without the risk of environmental degradation.

Some final thoughts and a plea for your help

I would like to end my talk by reminding you what is happening to the Back Country in a general sense and suggesting a way we can all work towards compensating for it.

If we are truly concerned about preserving and enjoying the Back Country then we should be worried about the fact that it is shrinking! The 2010 State of BC Forests report stated that, as the amount of road in BC's forests has increased over time, the area available for roadless recreation experiences has decreased. In 1982, undeveloped watersheds covered an estimated 84% of BC, by 2008 they covered 62%, and they are projected to cover only 53% of the Province by 2021. This is not a good trend for backcountry recreation, or for remote tourism opportunities, and it is definitely not good for wildlife. It has been said ironically that we might do better to 'make the least' of the back country rather than the most!

BC Parks

I suggest that one really effective way to compensate for this worrying trend in the Back Country is to find ways to support BC's incredible Provincial Parks, many of which contain huge areas of pristine back country. They protect some of the finest ecosystems in the temperate zones on our planet. They are visited and enjoyed by more than 21 million people each year! Yet BC's Provincial Parks are so badly underfunded that the infrastructure of the parks system, which is vital for residents and visitors to the Province to access and enjoy the parks, is deteriorating year by year. And the

obvious shortage of Park Rangers in the parks to communicate and educate the public and the absence of the once popular nature interpretation programs are also a sad commentary on the funding of our parks system.

According to its 2013/2014 Annual Report, BC Parks managed 14 million hectares in 2014. This area amounted to 14.4% of the Province and it included more than 1,000 protected areas, including 627 Class A Parks as well as other types of park, environmental reserves and conservancies. Additional protected areas have been added or are in the process of being added, including at the present time a significant part of the area originally proposed for the South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Reserve.

With its 14 million hectares, BC Parks is the third largest system in North America. Only the US National Parks with 34 million hectares and Canada's National Parks with over 22 million hectares are larger. (And in case you are wondering there are about 8 million hectares in the Ontario Parks system.)

The BC Parks Annual Report is a treasure trove of interesting information about the BC Parks system and I thoroughly recommend that you review it to get an idea of the many projects and activities throughout the system and the amazing job being done by BC Parks staff with the limited resources available to them.

The Report will also tell you that the front country of many parks is managed by Park Facility Operators or PFOs. In 2013/14, 22 PFOs operated 29 bundles of parks — including front country areas of 201 parks, and another 50 non-bundled parks were operated under individual contracts with PFOs.

The funding of BC Parks is set out in a separate Statistical Report. The financial figures in that report are not easy to interpret because part of the parks' funding comes from fees received by the PFOs for such things as campsite rentals and the PFOs retain those fees as payment for their services.

But the one figure which is incontestable is provided in the BC Government's annual estimates as tabled in the legislature. For 2015/2016 that figure is \$31 million, a figure which has been about the same for several years even as the parks system has expanded. The \$31 million budgeted is probably about one third of the amount needed to adequately maintain the system. Comparison with all the other large park systems

mentioned earlier or with Metro Vancouver Parks indicate that the amount spent on BC Parks operations is extremely low. In absolute terms it represents only 0.07 of 1% of the total BC budget of \$45.8 billion! And this for a parks system where it has been shown that visitors to the parks spend over \$8 for every dollar we budget for park operations visitors and, of course, those visitors are one of the key economic drivers for the Province. If we are to keep those visitors coming it is imperative that BC Parks maintains its reputation as a top tourist destination as well as providing health benefits for residents and visitors alike.

So what can you do?

To preserve our back country and responsible access to it we strongly recommend that the amount budgeted for BC Parks be increased. We suggest that as individuals you can promote an increase in the operating budget for BC Parks and, when you can, ask your MLAs to support increased funding. As local authorities you could also consider assisting BC Parks by taking over appropriate parks as the town of Pemberton did when it took over One Mile Lake and Hope did with Kawkawa Lake. And, in a slightly different scenario, I have been informed that Nanaimo Regional District created the Mount Arrowsmith Regional Park when BC Parks was reluctant to take it on.

BC's back country is extraordinary. I hope that with this talk I have suggested a few ways for you to either get out into it or at least do all you can to help to preserve it !

If anyone would like to receive a copy of my talk please e-mail me at jeremymccall@orcbc.ca We will also be posting it on our website at www.orcbc.ca

Best Photos

As the newsletter editor, I feel that assembling a history of the activity of the club is why there is the position of editor. The recording of that activity is up to the members. Phil does a great job of recording that activity. He may not use a lot of words, but his pictures are great.

What follows are one picture from each of the trips he's recorded and made public on his website since the beginning of the season covered by this issue of the newsletter. He has more, dating back to 2014

Phil's Kootenay Mountaineering Photos



Mount Reno, September 21



Mt. Grohman, September 22



Mt. Giegerich, September 27



Mt. Ymir, September 29



South Sister, October 4



Palisades, October 05



Pot Hill, October 11



Middle Sister, October 14



Mt. Waldie, October 15



Mt. Gladstone, October 18



phil best photography

Texas Peak, October 25



phil best photography

Lightning Strike, October 27



Rossland Range Cabins, November 1



Old Glory, November 4



Mt. Beattie, November 15



White Queen, November 23



Prospector Ridge, November 29