



NEWS RELEASE

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COMMUNITIES GATHER TO TALK KOOCANUSA RECREATION USE

Still time to contribute to the conversation though an online feedback form

(East Kootenay) -- Over 100 people attended four open houses in November to offer feedback to inform an updated Koocanusa Recreation Strategy, which will be developed over the next few months with the goal of enhancing sustainable and responsible recreation on Crown lands.

"We thank everyone who came out to the open houses and greatly value the thoughtful feedback and positive discussions had at the four events," said Jeff Zukiwsky, Coordinator of the Koocanusa Recreation Steering Committee.

Hosted by the Koocanusa Recreation Steering Committee (KRSC), the open houses provided an opportunity for residents, stakeholders, and users of the Koocanusa area to learn about and discuss current and proposed strategies for improving recreation management in Koocanusa. The KRSC is a partnership between the BC government, Ktunaxa National Council, Tobacco Plains Indian Band, Regional District of East Kootenay and Columbia Basin Trust.

Anyone who was unable to attend the open houses can view the information displayed at the events and contribute to the conversation by completing the online feedback form on the website www.koocanusarecreation.ca/open-houses. The feedback form, which was provided at all open house events, is designed to collect public opinion on the recreation management strategies that have been implemented to date, and on future management direction. The deadline for feedback is December 15, 2019.

"We will use feedback from the open houses to update the Koocanusa Recreation Strategy in 2020," said Zukiwsky. "In addition to public feedback, we'll also be consulting with local First Nations, stakeholders, wildlife experts, archeologists and many others. A wide range of values are being considered when looking at recreation management options and strategies."

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Photo Cutline: Community members discuss Koocanusa recreation at the Grasmere open house.

BACKGROUNDER:

The Koocanusa Recreation Steering Committee was formed in 2014 to help address recreation issues on Crown lands around the Koocanusa 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 Koocanusa 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 Koocanusa Recreation Public Advisory Group, four community open houses and a recreation management survey that received more than 1,100 responses.

Since 2017, the Koocanusa 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 Koocanusa 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.