

BALANCING USE AND PROTECTION

Over-use of our mountains could damage the very things that we like about them. Please consider these questions:

-How can we tell if we are over-using the Rossland Range?

Monitoring is the way to find out if you are over-using. The tricky part is choosing indicators and the values that those represent. I.e. Are you monitoring ecosystem functions, aesthetics, recreational experience, etc. Each requires different indicators. Depending on who you ask, you might find conflict between indicators. I suggest this is where values will emerge and compromise likely needs to take place. Perhaps the first step is understanding people's priorities for the area: recreation, wildlife, etc.

Another question to ask is how much change are people willing to embrace? Perhaps a visioning session on possible futures of the Rossland Range could help imagine this.

Restrict the number of motorized vehicles

As soon as guides start bringing clients to the Rossland Range, then it will be overused. The Nancy Greene Summit needs a first-rate outhouse and garbage cans.

-How can we balance use with the need to protect ecological values?

Use doesn't necessarily detract from ecological values. The environment can withstand change to a point. I suggest looking at the baseline needed for the ecosystem to function and deliver the service you need. Start from there and then manage accordingly so as not to compromise this.

-How can we prevent or correct over-use?

Difficult without enforcement. I do believe you could have a volunteer group that rotates and walks the trail during high traffic periods to interact with people, find out their interests, how things are going. This may make it possible to also engage with the abusers and not 'look' like policing.

Social pressure is really the only way. i.e. having the abusers buy into the plan.

-Can we manage increased use while protecting natural values and our recreational experiences?

I believe so. The Rossland Range is likely underutilized compared to most places on earth where people recreate. Designated trails, rules for use, maintenance should all help.

On a separate note is this area truly considered of high conservation value? If so, by what designation? It's beautiful, offers a great recreation place and much appreciated by many in the area - I am inclined to think these are the real reasons (and very valid) for the need to conserve.

All of these issues of conservation, recreation, over-use, ecosystem protection have for years been issues facing the Parks Branch. [Research] their information. The key is to restrict use to specified area: trails, designated specific use. A growing problem is unrestricted use or developing areas.

RECOGNIZING ECONOMIC VALUES

-How important is the Rossland Range to the economy of our community?

Not sure but perhaps worth studying.

I don't think that the Rossland Range is an important economic factor – most who use the Range have already spent elsewhere before they even get here.

-How important is the fact that recreation within our proposed Designated Recreation Area is free to the public?

Very important.

-How can we deal with costs that may arise in managing a Designated Recreation Area?

Donations, fundraising, volunteers, possibly user fees....how much money are you envisioning. There is a big difference between a few thousand and tens of thousands.....

-What is the best approach to the relationship between the forest tenure holder, Atco Wood Products, and the needs of recreational users?

I am not sure but would look to other places in the province (or the world) to find examples of good practices and worst practices. Providing examples is always helpful to gain confidence and of course, to learn from the errors of the past. Most importantly, you may want to develop this together as ultimately they should feel good as well.

Atco Wood Products (myself as forestry manager) is to clearly understand uses and how we can operate in a coordinated way with recreation and mitigate operational effect on forestry operations (logging, road construction and silviculture) – specific items such as season of operation, coordinated harvest and trail plans, parking lots, etc. (Ron Ozanne)

You need to meet with Atco and discuss everything out in the open and come up with a plan that will work for all parties.

ACCESS: PARKING

Increased use of the Rossland Range has created parking problems, including safety hazards, along Highway 3B. The Ministry of Transportation provides no money for ploughing of parking areas along the highway. (The ploughing that is done is by the good graces of Emcon.) Parking lots that meet the Ministry's policies, so that ploughing could be funded, are expensive, and complicated to have approved.

- What parking is needed?
- How could it be built?
- How could it be paid for?
- Would there be any negative consequences of creating more parking in the Rossland Range?
- How can we decide what is the right amount of parking?
- Comments to all questions on this issue?

Creating parking will very likely bring more people. Once trails and areas are established, marked, mapped, etc, the less adventurous will come out as its easier for them to access. Again, thoughtful strengths, weaknesses of the parking lots need to be weighed and considered.

Suggestion: Atco assisted with MoTH with West Kootenay Snowgoers parking lot at Simms Creek on Highway 3. This type of approach could be investigated with the appropriate parties. (Ron Ozanne)

Highway 3B appears to have secondary status, so the parking standards may not be all that complicated. As anyone who has been along the highway knows, all that is needed is a wider gravel sholder that is polwed on a regular basis in parking areas. Three main parking areas are needed – Summit, Kirkup, and Elgood.

ACCESS: GLADING AND BRUSHING

Over the years, areas that were previously logged have grown up, either in new forest, or in brush. There may be a need to work with the forest tenure holder on a program to remove some of this growth in order to maintain reasonable winter access.

- What areas need to be considered for a clearing or thinning program?
- What rules and cautions should be applied?

Not sure if I quite understand this. Where exactly are you thinking forest needs to be managed and for what recreation exactly. This needs more definition in my opinion to properly respond.

It is important to know where the best trails or use areas are located. Multi-use is a good plan i.e. bike trails in summer, ski trails in winter.

Glading and brushing is not needed and should not even be considered. With time, natural accesses and egresses will occur.

THE NANCY GREENE PASS DAY USE SHELTERS

The small shelters scattered throughout the Nancy Greene Pass area (and a few elsewhere) have become a major winter recreational attraction - locally, regionally, and beyond. Use of the huts has increased many-fold in recent years, which places a strain on the volunteers who maintain them. While the huts are presently unauthorized, there is potential in a Designated Recreation Area for approval of some number of huts, thus protecting them from removal by the Ministry of Forests.

-How important are the day-use huts in the Rossland Range?

Very important

-How could the community best manage the huts?

Individual groups manage own cabins, but share

-What limits and cautions might be appropriate?

Restrict new cabins in crowded areas

-How can we balance the huts' attractive history of being informal with the need to keep them up, and to protect them from misuse?

Day use huts appear to be very important to the Rossland Range, though I don't use them so am not sure. The best people to know about them are the builders and users. Talking directly to them is important. How misused are they? I am not current on the situation but if they aren't a hazard and aren't destroying the health of the land or people, I would just move on and worry about other key things like signs, trails, parking, toilets, etc.

Keep them primitive

Day use cabins allow older/less able people to access the backcountry and enjoy the mountains.

It is important to get a feeling for what MoF, MoTCA and other view as an appropriate maximum or ideal. My view is 4 (ideal) to 8 (maximum). Look at other recreation area strategies e.g. USA has similar sites – recreation area in the Sawtooth Range near Sun Valley, Idaho. (Ron Ozanne)

The huts need to be protected. Unfortunately, the reality [is] the BC government will not contribute any funds. As a result, volunteers will need to maintain the huts. The volunteers should be organized.

COMMUNITY WATERSHEDS

A significant portion of the Rossland Range is within community watersheds, either for Rossland, or for communities along the Columbia River.

- What concerns arise from using community watersheds for recreation?
- How could those concerns be resolved?

This is an issue to look into further. Maps of the watersheds, where the water runs, how it is treated, etc will all influence the response.

What is taking place currently and how will this tenure change that? I.e. if Logging is taking place, I doubt that skiers will have much influence. If oils, fuel, etc from snowmobiles can leach into the soil/water, perhaps that is an issue. Still, it's all about balance. How harmful are the activities?

Generally speaking, an intact ecosystem will help the watershed functions such as contributing to filtration, flood control, reduced erosion. These are all qualities that would reduce the need for costly infrastructure measures downstream.

First step is to consult City of Rossland (community watershed license holder) and Atco Wood Products, who incorporates forestry with community watershed license concerns. A recreation plan worked out in association with both is the key to activities in community watersheds. (Ron Ozanne)

Watersheds are important; they cannot be abused. No motorized vehicles should be allowed.

RESOLVING POTENTIAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN RECREATIONAL USERS

At present, there are unwritten understandings about how people using the Old Glory Alpine and Nancy Greene Pass get along. For instance, there is a general understanding that the forestry road (the Crowe Road) which is a popular skiing and snowshoeing route, is also an access corridor for snowmobiles traversing the area. There is also a general understanding that all types of winter self-propelled recreation are accepted. For instance, dogs are welcomed on the trails. Skiers, snowshoers, and walkers share the trails. As climate change affects the quality of snow at lower elevations, with a further increase in users in the high country, these informal understandings may be strained.

-How can we manage potential conflicts among users while retaining our historic sense of sharing and community?

I agree this is an important question. I am not sure about the climate change part as I think the issue of conflict will exist, climate change or not. For example, snow mobiles travel in higher and steeper places all the time. I suggest the question of climate change should be asked but separately.

Informal understandings need to be formalized and designated use areas made. You could also have things like alternate days (i.e. walkers on Saturdays, snowmobilers on Sundays) or some sort of schedule that lets walkers know not to go out if they are going to be bothered by noise. Some areas should be non-motorized as is current informal practice.

Work with all groups to look at land use/designated trails.

Key is communication and agreement in principle [on] practices between groups. Keep the principles and guidelines simple and clear.

Designate certain areas for motorized use only. I also feel there is no need to promote motorized use – they contribute to global warming.

SIZE AND SCOPE OF A DESIGNATED RECREATION AREA

Our initial thought was to seek Designated Recreation Area status just for the parts of the Rossland Range that are experiencing the heaviest use, and seem to have the greatest need for protection - the Old Glory Alpine and the area around Nancy Greene Pass. There may be some value to seeking a larger area, for instance to provide recognition for motorized use. On the other hand, we may face limited resources with which to look after the Designated Area.

- How inclusive of all recreational interests should the Designated Recreation Area be?
- What areas of the Rossland Range should be included

What do the snowmobilers think? Do they want to be involved or left on their own? I would include it if they want it as part of the recreation area. If not, leave it out and don't waste energy.

For sure Old Glory Alpine Area and 7 summits trail locations in that specific area. I currently like the idea of non-motorized on one side of the highway and motorized on the other.

The mapped propose area is the maximum that should be included. A larger geographic area complicates the process – expands the plan and it loses its localized intent. (Ron Ozanne)

I would not include motorized use areas. Let that group fight their own battles.

OTHER ISSUES

Are there other concerns not mentioned here that you feel would need to be addressed in a proposal for a Designated Recreation Area?

There is the issue of human and animal waste that has not been mentioned. Perhaps this could be an issue to look at. The issue of climate change is one that projects less snow at lower elevations. This may impact tourism / recreation potential. It may also mean reduced need for shoveling parking areas. My only additional comment is that likely not all these answers can be found early on and that shouldn't uphold the plans development. I believe a plan that has above concerns as part of the management, i.e. to design a monitoring plan based on good practice and reviewed by technical experts, etc , to engage with stakeholders and adapt as needed (i.e. days for skiers, sledders, walkers, bikers, horses.....) is probably enough. Good luck – sounds like a worthy endeavour.

[Talk to] MoTH, City of Rossland, Atco Wood Products, MoF, MoTCA 9as it is close to Red Mountain CRA, Big Red Cats)