

# WildSafeBC Year End Report 2014

## Regional District Okanagan Similkameen

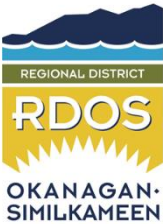
Prepared by: Zoe Kirk, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



Photo: Thomas Born Shutterstock Studios: Summerland Ornamental Gardens Oct 2014



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## Executive Summary

The 2014 season was one of the busiest years for the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WSBCCCC), but a relatively quiet year for bear activity in RDOS. Compared to 2013, calls were down significantly until September, when the CO Service began to get very busy inside and outside the RDOS (mostly in the surrounding communities of West Kelowna, Peachland and further north to Vernon – outside the RDOS).

Naramata receiving Bear Smart Status consumed considerable hours; finalizing details with the application and implementation of recommendations from the Ministry of Environment post evaluation meeting and in preparation for the award celebration and media events.

With Naramata having achieved this long range goal, the WSBCCCC turned the program's focus to Summerland, the next long standing hot spot for human-bear conflict and wildlife issues. A concentrated fall tagging and education program is underway, and a detailed addendum will be added in December once the campaign has been suspended for the season.

Princeton, at the far edge of the region is also on the radar for a more direct campaign for late 2014 and 2015 as the small hamlet has human–bear conflicts (garbage) and a large urban deer population which attracts other predators. School programs will commence once the teachers have settled into a post labour dispute routine and Summerland and Princeton will take the remaining hours for the 2014 program.

Figure 1 A WildSafeBC display Gyro Park Penticton – SPCA Day 2014.



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## Highlights from the 2014 Season

The biggest highlight and accomplishment of the 2014 season was the elevation of the community of Naramata to Bear Smart Status. This was the biggest ‘wildlife related’ event for the coordinator and the region this year.

The continuing expansion of the new WildSafeBC program and social media opportunities were also a highlight of the program this year. Many residents were glad to see the inclusion of information on other species of wildlife and the coordinator found that there was greater program recognition in the region as a result. Keeping WildSafeBC and its messages of attractant management in the public eye continued to be a focus this season as well as providing concrete solutions to human-wildlife conflict.

### Bear Smart for Naramata

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 Naramata was awarded Bear Smart Status from the Ministry of Environment. It was the culmination of nearly four years of WildSafeBC (Bear Aware) work in the hamlet through education, Bylaw introduction, bear-resistant cart options, and changes to curbside pick-up day. The largest component was (and is) the level of community engagement and desire to reduce human-wildlife conflict in their community.

The celebration included many dignitaries including: MP Dan Albas, MLA Dan Ashton, Mike Badry BC Wildlife Conflict Manager, Chief Doug Forsdick of the BC Conservation Officer Service, Inspector Barb Leslie and 5 uniformed CO’s from across the region, RDOS Chair Mark Pendergraft and Area E Director Karla Kozakevich whose community was awarded the commendation. BCCF was represented by Barb Waters. Naramata Elementary School children were a big part of the celebration bringing their specially carved, soap stone, bears to show the community and gathered dignitaries.

Figure 2 – collage- Naramata Bear Smart event drew all levels media from radio through to print and electronic to Global TV.



## Presentations

Presentations were updated and honed for a wide range of audiences this season; to provide insight into the reasons human-wildlife conflict occurs and what we can do to reduce it. Presentations were designed for kindergarten children through to mature adults and specific to agricultural industry including multi-cultural agricultural workers. RDOS WildSafeBC has or is booked to give presentations (or demonstrations) to the following audiences this season:

- Oliver Grower’s Day (250 tree fruits and wine growers) - March
- Penticton Girl Guides – April
- Upper Bench Elementary - May
- Pacific Agra research Station -May
- Canadian Tire Presentation in store - May
- Naramata Elementary (Grade K-5) Nov
- West Bench Elementary (Grade K-6) Dec
- Staff Training – RDOS (outside workers) May
- Museum of Penticton – Wild Camp - July
- ATV Jamboree – Summerland – July
- Manning Park – BC Parks Day - July
- Gallagher Lake Homeowners (Oliver BC) Sept
- Summerland - Composting in Bear Country – Oct
- South Okanagan Youth Naturalists - Nov

Figure 3 WSBCCC Zoe Kirk demonstrating the safe use of bear spray, Manning Park 2014.



## Displays

Educational displays at local events proved once again to be an effective part of the program's delivery. The display, updated with new banners and materials from BCCF was once again a big hit with people and a great place to discuss local wildlife issues with residents (Figure 3). People shared their stories and were able to access information and solutions for their own attractant management challenges.

WildSafeBC spent 17 days at the following local events:

- Southern Interior Local Gov't Conference (3 days) -March
- First Nations Elder's Conference (2 days) -July
- BC Wine Grape Council Conference – July (2 days) & Deer Forum facilitator
- Summerland Fall Faire (2 days) Sept
- Princeton – New Beginnings - Sept
- Challenge Penticton (4 days) – Aug
- OK Falls – See Ya Later Ranch Winery event - Aug
- Gyro Park SPCA Fundraiser – Penticton - September

Figure 4 Hidden by booth attendees - WSBCCC Zoe Kirk discussing human-wildlife issues at Summerland Fall Faire 2014.



## Forums/Focus meetings

A wide net was cast across the region and province and the first 'deer meeting' was convened at the RDOS on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. In attendance a broad selection of representatives from MoE, BC CO Service, FLNRO, Ungulate Specialist, BC Tree Fruits, BC Wine Grape Growers, City of Penticton councillors, Provincial WildSafeBC Coordinator - Frank Ritcey, Electoral G Area Director, Lower Similkameen Indian Band, and facilitated by the RDOS WSCC Zoe Kirk.

A second meeting was held to teleconference in the District of Saanich which has implemented a deer management plan. This was a very informative session, and helped to establish some options for this region.

Further meetings are to be slated for November/December of this year to continue the momentum.

As a result of the first two meetings, the WSCC was asked by the BC Wine Grape Council to host a break-out session 'management of deer in the vineyard' forum at their annual conference on July 21<sup>st</sup>. 35 growers, winery owners and vineyard managers attended, and was clear that they were very frustrated by the increasing levels of damage deer are causing the industry.

The content and intense engagement at the forum and meetings illustrate the need for continued work on this issue in 2015.

Figure 5 WildSafeBC facilitating a forum on 'Managing Deer in the Vineyard' July, 2014



## Garbage Tagging – Summerland Hot Spot area campaign

After an intensive few months getting Naramata Bear Smart completed, the focus swung to the next biggest challenge in the region – Summerland. The garbage tagging campaign and educational support component began with a kick-off launch at the very popular Summerland Fall Faire where close to 5,000 residents attend. The launch was bolstered with a print article in the local Summerland Review newspaper. We are continuing to conduct garbage audits and tagging from Oct 1 – Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, leaving a bright yellow “Bear Attractant” sticker on bins put out too early. Along with the audits, more articles will appear to add depth to the overall campaign’s intended reach. Without a specific Bylaw in place, these audits are an educational foray, rather than the ‘warning letter’ generator that the Coordinator can pursue in three other electoral areas in the region. It will be interesting to compare recidivism rates. *See Addendum page 10*

## Challenges of the 2014 Season

The biggest challenge of the year is also one of the highlights; added responsibility with additional species to address. The coordinator had to be careful, as it was easy to be pulled in several different directions i.e., the urban deer issue vs. hot spot education – Summerland. The urban deer issue in the South Okanagan is one that is growing rapidly, both in the denser populated municipalities and towns plus the agricultural sector damage and stress put on farmers. Finding the time to bring the disparate groups together, keep focus and look for solutions could be the ‘bear smart’ sized consumer of precious WildSafeBC program hours. This will be a continuing issue in the region.

Time constraints were a bit less of a challenge this season, as it was negotiated to start the date of the coordinator’s contract earlier – which proved helpful. While the usual contract begins June, many bears are already awake and active in March. A consistent earlier start date would certainly help the coordinator(s) hit the ground running; with preparation and booking time before the start of the bear season.

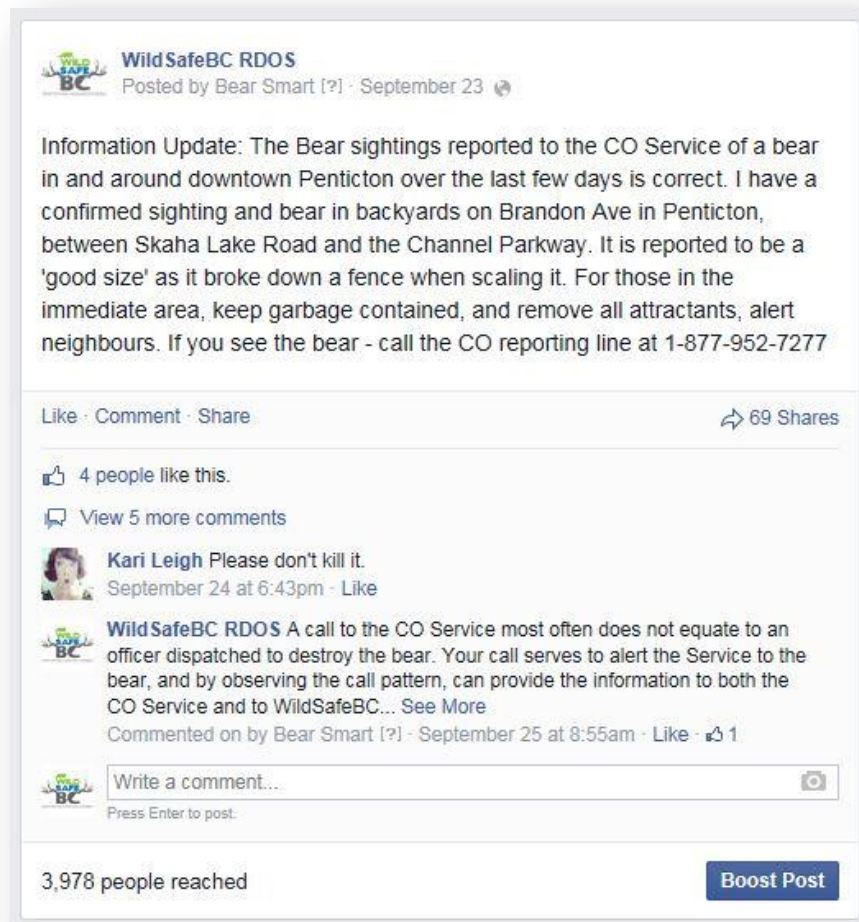
## Goals for 2015

Looking forward to the 2015 season, RDOS WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to ‘Keep wildlife wild and communities safe’.

- Work with Summerland to address bylaw revision to restrict residents from placing garbage to the curb early
- Add Princeton to focussed educational campaign in 2015
- Work towards the community of Kaleden in Electoral Area D becoming Bear Smart in 2015
- Continue to build upon existing agricultural based partnerships and forge new relationships with the goal of making WildSafeBC a familiar and integral part of the wildlife conflict solution
- Develop a series of video shorts for the RDOS web site on attractant management, composting in bear country as examples
- Continue to offer educational presentations to a wide range of audiences, integrating new materials and timely ‘angles’ keeping the message consistent but ‘fresh’



Figure 7 WildSafeBC sees social media uptake – nearly 4,000 on one posting



## Acknowledgements

RDOS WildSafeBC is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its sponsors, partners and volunteers. Thanks to our sponsors: The RDOS, the Ministry of Environment, and British Columbia Conservation Foundation. Our community partners have provided invaluable support and guidance; the South Okanagan Similkameen Community Program - Brynn White, Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance - Marg Holm. A heartfelt thank you to the BC Conservation Officer Service and specifically Inspector Barb Leslie, Sgt. Jim Beck, CO's Mike Stern, Josh Lockwood, (and the new guys); WSBC Volunteers (retired CO Bob Hamilton the garbage audit master and Cailyn Glasser – remote camerawoman extraordinaire); BCCF Staff (WSBC Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey, Barb Waters and staff); fellow mentors and WSBC Community Coordinators across the province.

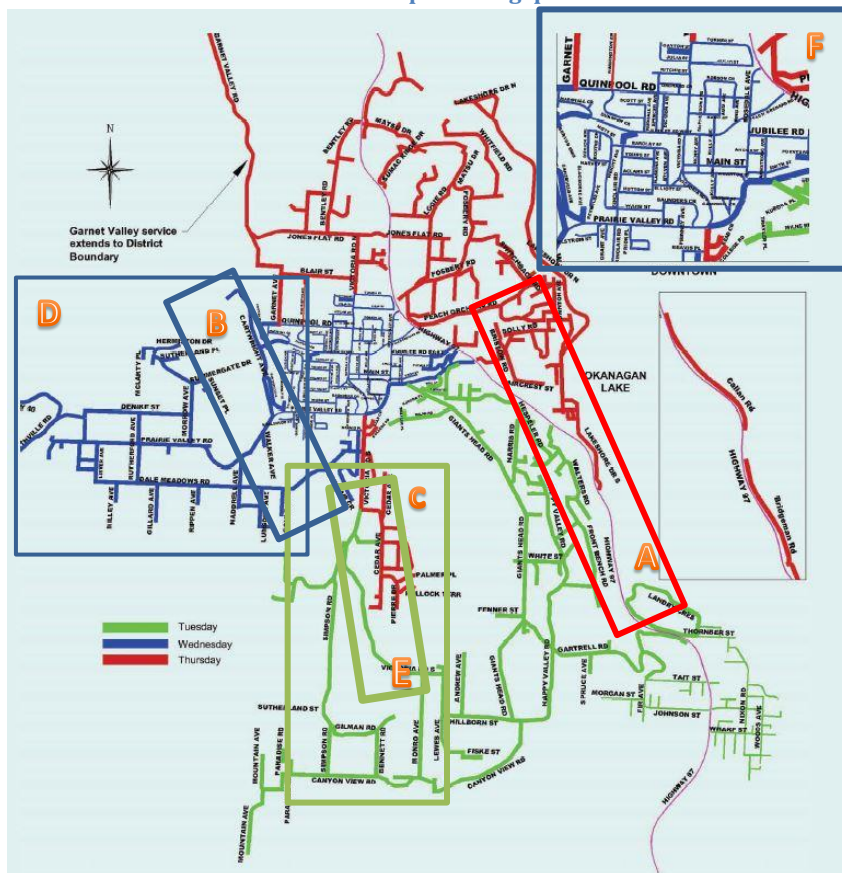
Summerland family of bears, Summerland Ornamental Gardens 2014



British Columbia Conservation Foundation

## Addendum: Summerland Hot Spot Campaign

Summerland Curbside Collection map showing quadrants where audits occurred during October/November



- A) Oct 1 - **Lower Summerland** – Lakeshore - where 3 bears were destroyed earlier this year:
  - 21 cans out early (represents 80% compliance in a known bear corridor and conflict area)
- B) Oct 7 – **West Summerland** adjacent to City boundaries – Cartwright area:
  - 13 cans out early (represents 90% compliance)
- C) Oct 20 – **South Victoria** – runs along KVR, interface and corridor area:
  - 28 cans out early (represents 65% compliance)
- D) Oct 21 – **Extreme West Summerland** – urban moves to rural properties towards Landfill:
  - 28 cans to the curb early (represents 90% compliance)
- E) Nov 3 – #2 **South Victoria** only – as lowest compliance rate:
  - 12 cans out early (70% compliance rate with 4 repeat offenders)
- F) Nov 4 – **Reynolds/Durick** – in the urban core:
  - 15 cans out early – a neighbourhood where bears have been known to wander into (represents a 90% compliance)

Audits were carried out with the assistance of retired CO officer Bob Hamilton 8 – 11 pm the evening prior to garbage collection. Compliance rate percentages are based on total number of houses in each audit area. Conclusions support that Summerland has an issue with garbage to the curb early. In those where close to 90% of compliance was recorded, population densities skew the reality. The visual

amount of garbage available to wildlife and domestic animals at the curbside is significant, and it is available for a considerable time before collection takes place.

Summerland statistics were compared with another South Okanagan community by Cailyn Glasser in her study: Understanding black-bear human conflict in the South Okanagan Similkameen – Summerland/Naramata comparison 2014. Excerpted here:

*As I predicted, the data suggests that garbage related problem bear reports occurred most often the day before garbage pick-up in both communities before bylaw no.2523, 2010 was implemented in Naramata, however, after the bylaw was in place the number of problem bear reports was not related to garbage pick-up day. The number of problem bears reported relative to the number of days to pick-up was similar between Naramata before Bylaw no. 2523, 2010 and Summerland. The trends between Summerland and Naramata before the bylaw are almost identical, with the highest number of PWORs occurring the day before garbage pick-up(fig 5). Once the bylaw came into effect the trend in problem bear reports in Naramata and days to garbage pick-up was not apparent. The change in trend in Naramata after the bylaw was implemented suggests that bears had been using garbage as source of high quality food when it was available, and that implementing the bylaw effectively reduced the availability of this food source and hence reduced the number of garbage related bear-human conflicts. The general downward trend in PWORs post-bylaw suggests that much of the conflict pre-bylaw was garbage related and that reducing the availability of garbage greatly reduced the number of PWORs.*

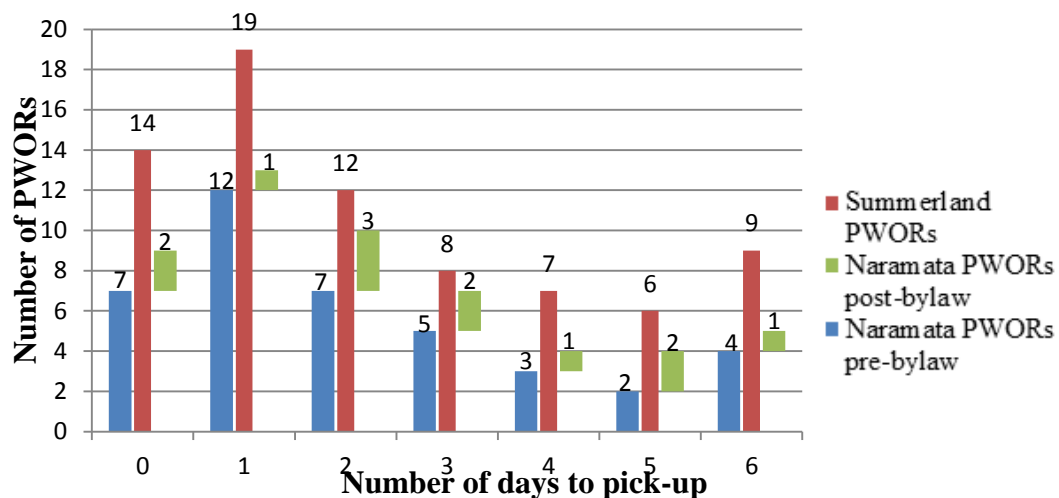


Figure 5 – The number of Problem Wildlife Occurrence Reports (PWORs) for black bears in the District of Summerland and Community of Naramata before and after implementation of bylaw 2325, 2010 (effective July 2011), relative to the number of days before garbage pick-up, 2009-2013.

This comparison study points to the difference a Bylaw can provide a community with very little cost. In the RDOS Electoral Areas D, E (Naramata), and F residents with documented curbside Bylaw infractions are sent a soft warning letter oriented towards education. The recidivism rate is nearly zero when a letter backs up the garbage audit. Community safety is always of paramount concern; reducing the incidence of bears in the community reduces potential risks of conflict. Bylaw introduction and cost effective soft enforcement also has additional benefits. Naramata has noticed a complete reduction of garbage and refuse strewn on streets because wild and domestic animals are not able to gain access to the refuse.

In Summary, Summerland will remain a focus of RDOS WildSafeBC in 2015, and concerted efforts will be made to engage the new Mayor and Council with assistance from the CO Service.

