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[Home](#) > The Nancy Greene Highlands Recreation Area takes a step closer to reality

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Created Feb 16 2011 - 12:45pm

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Several decades after Nancy Greene's father kicked off the initial effort to achieve protection for the Rossland Range, the most recent effort has been completed by the Friends Of the Rossland Range Society and now sits with government officials for review.

Starting just over a year ago, the Friends set out on a mission to protect the area, this time taking the tact of applying for a Designated Recreation Area tenure. Focusing on the core high country recreational use area between Red Resorts' tenure to the south and Big Red Cats' tenure, the area in question is significantly smaller than previous proposals and concentrates on the areas of greatest recreational and ecological values in the Rossland Range high country.

Building on the previous efforts of numerous community members aimed at gaining official recognition and protection of the range, this proposal has taken a decidedly different direction. Rather than a government-initiated plan, the proposal known as the Nancy Greene Highlands Recreation Area is unique in that it is more a cultural plan rather than a hard and fast enforcement plan.

Through a year-long process of community consultation that saw the membership numbers of the FORRS grow dramatically as folks got on board with the planning process, the completed proposal is an expression of how the people who use and value the Rossland Range have decided its high country core should be managed. Over the years and particularly in the last decade, the use of the Rossland Range for recreation of all sorts has increased dramatically and can be counted among one of the reasons many people choose to live in Rossland.

"In the 13 years I've been skiing that area, we've seen the use increase at least double, if not ten-fold," noted Les Carter who has been a key player in leading the charge to achieve a recreation area designation for the area. "There are double the cars up at the pass now on a weekday than there used to be on a weekend."

Throughout the planning process, efforts were made to include all stakeholders so as to best achieve a consensus on the best practices for managing the area.

"The Recreation Area proposal gives much positive, common-sense direction on things like looking after the day-use huts, good relationships between motorized and non-motorized users, working effectively with the forest tenure holder and commercial tenure

holders, and generally being responsible for the places in the Rossland Range high country enjoyed by so many people,” wrote Carter in an information summary.

The plan is not focused on enforcement. The FORRS, who would be the governing body for the recreation area should it be approved, would not have that capacity. Instead, the plan would be about managing the area in a way that doesn’t negatively affect the environmental values of the zone as well as maintains and manages the recreation values of the area.

For example, the much-used, much-loved cabins that dot the landscape (particularly around the South slopes of Mt. Crowe and on the South side of the highway at the Nancy Greene Pass) will have guidelines and policies in place to ensure they remain compatible with the landscape, don’t put an overbearing stress on the environment and that they are maintained to standards set out in the plan. To that effect, a group of 50 volunteers has already stepped forward to participate as the cabin management group.

From among those volunteers, a custodian for each cabin will ultimately be named. Through the planning process it was also identified that the cabins need to be managed both in terms of numbers, size and location. Each zone within the proposed recreation area will have a maximum number of cabins and size restrictions.

“Through the process it was mentioned that these cabins can go through a lot of firewood,” commented Carter. “That firewood can create quite a hole in the forest, so we have to make sure we don’t have more cabins in any particular area than can be supported by the surrounding environment.”

The plan has now been submitted to the District Recreation Office--sort of. At present there is no district recreation officer in place so the office has requested that the plan not officially be submitted until later this spring once they have filled that position.

Once officially received, the plan will then go through a referral process in which all key stakeholders will have a chance to comment on the plan. Carter expects this process, although potentially lengthy, to be relatively easy.

“Quite a few of the entities to which it will be referred we have already dealt with and involved in the process. The City and Regional District, none of this is a surprise to them, they both wrote letters of support. The forestry company as a matter of policy doesn’t write letters of support, but they were involved throughout this plan, however, and they’ve looked at it and said, ‘Okay, it looks good’.”

Although the official designation may take some time to be completed, the group notes that there have already been benefits from the process given that there has been a great deal of public education involved in figuring out what the user values of the zone are. Even without an official designation, the hope is that the proposal can be lived by as if it already were in place.

“Most of the process was simply writing down a long standing understanding of what we want to accomplish up there anyway and a lot of it is common sense,” added Carter. “Until it’s official we’ll treat that as a handshake agreement of everyone up there that this is just how it is.”

Should the application get approved, the result will be a key step for that portion of the Rossland Range. However, Carter hopes that one day such a plan may grow into a greater integrated land use plan for the entire region. For now, however, simply achieving the recreation area designation will be a major achievement in a decades-long dream that has been held by those who play in the mountain playground that is the Rossland Range.

See attached files to view the entire plan and map.

For more history on the previous efforts to protect the range, you can read a previous article in the Telegraph here.

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