

Old Glory Alpine and the Nancy Greene Recreation Area

The History

The Old Glory Alpine has been used by many generations for year-round backcountry activities. These recreational values were recognized in 1969 when it became the Nancy Greene Recreation Area.

It remained a recreation area until the 1990's when the whole question of Protected Areas or Parks was debated in the "Parks and Wilderness for the 90's" process. In the end, the Parks Act was amended but it only made provision for Class A Parks without any provision for Recreation Areas.

The Parks Act was amended in July 1995, which created new Parks and de-commissioned the Nancy Greene Recreation Area without any local community consultation. Many local residents were outraged and felt that a valuable recreational asset of the region had been "stolen" from them by the Provincial Government.

The Kootenay/Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy was issued in June 1997 and under Recreation says " *Ministry of Forests to work with the community of Rossland to develop an integrated resource management plan for the former Nancy Greene Recreation area.*"

The Nancy Greene Highland Forest Management Plan issued in July 1997 resulted from that strategy. This document lists representatives from the community of Rossland including Rossland City Council, Rossland Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from Environmental Groups, Mining, Trappers, Recreation Groups, and Commercial Recreation.

In the Executive Summary it says..... "*The NGHF is a very popular location for winter and summer recreationalists. The terrain of most of the area is suited to non-motorized travel on foot, skis or horseback. Any resource development in the NGHF will have to consider the importance of this area to residents throughout the region.*"

The report goes on to say: "*Due to steep and rugged terrain, much of the area is not suitable for motorized activities. The existing recreational use of the area may be considered to be incompatible with motorized activities except for the established road systems north of Hanna Creek . It is expected that these recreational trends will follow much the same pattern into the future.*"

It defines the Objectives of Recreation Management:

To ensure compatibility of recreational activities and provide a range of recreation opportunities.

To maintain the character of the Semi Primitive Non-Motorized area and to provide opportunities for dispersed non-motorized recreation.

In January 2000, the Red Mountain ski area issued their Master Plan, which included for expansion of ski area boundaries into part of the former Nancy Greene Recreation Area. The plan included for snow cat skiing in the Mount Kirkup/Plewman Basin area.

As a result of vigorous opposition from the local community, the Master Plan was revised to take out this part of the plan. Many people considered the process to be a trade-off..... "*Remove this cat ski proposal and exclude the Plewman basin from your plan and we won't object to the expanded boundaries.*" The application for increase in tenure area was approved.

A recent application, in November 2003, by Red Shutter Inn Ltd for commercial cat skiing tenure was far more extensive and included virtually the whole of the former Nancy Greene Recreation Area. Once again, there was vigorous opposition and as a result, the applicants withdrew their application.

A public meeting held in Rossland in December 2003 attracted several hundred people, all opposed to the proposed cat ski operation. The meeting gave a mandate to the Friends of the Rossland Range to form a society and to work on their behalf to obtain protection of the Old Glory area for non-motorized recreational use.

Recreation

The Old Glory Alpine area is a special part of the Rossland Range that is used extensively in summer and winter for non motorized recreation. Ski tourers, snowboarders and snowshoers use it in winter and hikers, horseback riders and others such as bear watchers, berry pickers, naturalists and photographers in summer. The natural obstacles which developed during its many years as a Recreation Area have, to a large extent, prevented use by motorized vehicles such as ATV's 4 x 4's and snowmobiles. The area offers peace and tranquility to those who access the area on foot.

It is one of only three or four areas in the West Kootenays suitable for ski touring and snowshoeing which is readily accessible from a maintained public highway in winter close to centres of population such as Trail, Rossland, Castlegar, Grand Forks and Nelson. It can be reached generally within 1 hour or less driving time from any of these centres of population.

There are innumerable back country areas in the West Kootenays which can be accessed for motorized recreation. The few areas accessible from a maintained public highway should be protected for pedestrian users.

Wildlife

The Old Glory Alpine area provides habitat for some of the rarer species of wildlife. The Old Glory area is known to be a denning area for at least two grizzly bears and is the core habitat for others.

Grizzlies in the area are a recovering population that is at the very southern edge of grizzly range in this part of British Columbia . They are of international significance and importance to grizzly bear recovery and conservation efforts. They are the basis of an ecotourism industry, which in a tourist economy like Rossland is an important asset.

Grizzlies need secure unroaded habitat. The Rossland range is the last undisturbed and unroaded island of high elevation grizzly bear year round habitat in the region. There are no areas in the region where wildlife conservation has been undertaken on a large enough scale to make a long-term difference. The Rossland range area is suitable for that purpose along with its high recreational values as part of a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan.

Bobcats are seen in the forest areas around Old Glory.

Motorized recreational use of the Old Glory Alpine area has a negative impact on these animals and would probably drive them to seek other areas for their habitat. Negative impact of motorized access has been well documented in other areas.

Visual Landscape

Old Glory is a prominent and dominant feature of the landscape to travelers on highway 3 and 3A. It attracts outdoor enthusiasts who see it whilst passing through the area.

It is also a dominant feature seen by skiers from the Long Squaw run at the Red Mountain ski area.

It is important to protect its natural features and ensure that any logging or other resource extraction is undertaken with considerable planning and care to protect not only the visual impact but also address concerns for the community watershed, wildlife and recreation activities in the area.

Economic

Many people are attracted to live and work in the region because of the wide variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation, including downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, ski touring, snowshoeing in winter and hiking, fishing, sailing, boating, horse riding, mountain bike riding in summer.

The Red Mountain ski area is well known and uses a large part of the Rossland Range. The ski area boundaries were recently changed to provide for its future development.

There is land in the Rossland Range available to the two local cross-country ski clubs, which provides for 90 kilometres of cross-country ski trails in the area at the Black Jack and Paulson cross country ski areas.

Snowmobilers use mining and logging roads available in all directions from Rossland but especially those on the east side of highway 3B with access to the Mackie and Neptune areas and the network of logging roads on the North side of highway 3.

Snowcat skiing can be experienced with 4 operations within one hours drive in the Bonnington range, at Baldface near Nelson, Qua creek near Whitewater and the Valhallas near Passmore.

Having the Old Glory Alpine area protected for non motorized recreational use complements these other winter activities and adds to the attractiveness of the area for new residents and tourism. It would provide for a wider range of winter activities and would respect the needs of people who choose to access the backcountry on foot, snowshoe or ski.

The Red Mountain base area development has already begun and is projected to increase to nearly 2000 units over the next 15 years with a considerable economic investment of approximately \$ 500 million in construction investment and consequent additional income in the area of \$ 20 to \$ 30 million annually.

The Old Glory Alpine is a key component in offering lifestyle and recreation activities to attract people to invest in the area and buy condominiums and houses at the Red Mountain base area.

Potential property owners are interested in year-round recreational activities and the exceptional summer hiking, biking and horse riding opportunities available in the Old Glory Alpine complement the known winter activities in the Rossland area.