

THE ROSSLAND RANGE, OLD GLORY AREA.

Executive summary.

The Friends of the Rossland Range Society, on behalf of the local outdoor community, seeks to accomplish the following with respect to the Old Glory area.....now formally known as the "Nancy Greene Highland Forest"....and formerly the "Nancy Greene Recreation Area".

- Restore and implement protected status that is equivalent, or better than what was lost during the mid-1990's
- To establish the area for non-motorized recreation activity and preservation of natural and wildlife values, with logging undertaken with considerable planning and care due to the concerns for its community watersheds, visual landscape, wildlife and recreation values.
- Prevent applications for motorized commercial recreation activities being accepted by Lands and Water BC.

We request that the Provincial Government of British Columbia take the following actions as first steps towards achieving these goals:

1. Formally incorporate the Nancy Greene Highland Forest Management Plan (1997) as part of the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan
2. Increase the land use category of the Nancy Greene Highland Forest to "special management" status from "integrated" status
3. Implement the intent of the Nancy Greene Highland Forest Management Plan (1997) with respect to preserving the area for non motorized recreation use.

Other goals that the Friends of the Rossland Range seek to accomplish are: -

1. Increase the recreational value of the Old Glory Alpine Area through upgrading of trails, building additional trails, completion of the 'flagship' Skyline Ridge trail, improved signage & maps, increased parking (especially in winter)
2. Promotion of recreational use by local and regional residents and by tourists.
3. Collection and publication of history of the Old Glory Alpine Area.
4. Strenuous opposition to any activity that is not compatible with non-motorized use and the natural and wildlife values of the area.

The justification for this is as follows:

1. The Old Glory Alpine Area is of exceptional value for access on foot into the natural alpine terrain, due to:
 - easy access off a provincial highway at a relatively high elevation within minutes from Rossland, and within an hour from all other cities in the region;

- the attractive summits and ridges in the Old Glory Alpine Area being able to be reached within a few hours by the average hiker from the highway (no special vehicle required); and
 - it being one of only three such easily accessible backcountry sites in the Kootenays; the others being (a) at the Salmo-Creston Summit, and (b) above the Whitewater Ski Area {with the Old Glory Alpine Area being the most accessible and the most comfortable of these for the average hiker}.
2. The Old Glory Alpine Area has been, and continues to be utilized extensively and be highly valued in its natural state by residents of Rossland, Greater Trail, and the entire Kootenay region, and also by newcomers and visitors to the area.
 3. The area was formerly a designated Recreation Area
 4. There is a land use plan for the area, the Nancy Greene Highland Forest Management Plan, developed by Government Professionals in the Ministry of Forests and the local community as recommended in the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan
 5. The plan was never formally integrated into the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan
 6. The plan was endorsed by the local community and the City of Rossland
 7. The plan clearly recommends that the area is best suited for non motorized recreation
 8. Government removed the Recreation Area status without the involvement of the local community.
 9. Most of the CORE process committee in the 90's favoured "special status for the area
 10. There is vigorous local opposition by the local community to the area being used for mechanized recreation
 11. Strong local opposition has defeated two applications for tenure for mechanized recreation in recent years; however, the process has consumed considerable time and effort by local people, government departments and the local MLA. Implementation of the recommended actions would avoid this situation recurring in the future.
 12. A protected area for backcountry activities would be an economic benefit to the community
 13. Because there is an existing land use plan for the area, the community should not have to wait for a Recreation Management Strategy for the West Kootenay Region, which could take three or four years
 14. Resident grizzly bears in the Old Glory area should not be disturbed by motorized recreation

Background.

The Old Glory area 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 Motorised area and to provide opportunities for dispersed non motorised 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-mechanized recreational use.

Justification for protection of the Old Glory area

Recreation.

The Old Glory Area is used extensively in summer and winter for non mechanized 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 snowshoing 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.

The 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 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.

Mechanized 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 mechanised access has been well documented in other areas.

Visual Landscape.

Old Glory is a prominent and dominant feature of the landscape to travellers 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 area 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 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 area protected for non mechanized 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 Area 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 area complement the known winter activities in the Rossland area.

Conclusion.

Protection of the Old Glory area for non-motorised recreational activities is important to local residents and the future economic well being of the area to provide some degree of balance to the wide variety of recreational opportunities, which exist in the Rossland area.