



WILD TIMES

Summer 2014



Howard Smith, phototide.com

THE FUTURE OF OUR FARMS

Kootenay folk have an insatiable appetite for locally-grown, homemade and organic food. It just tastes better when your food is fresh and local - and it feels better to support local farmers. Young farmers are heading back to the family farm or finding small plots to start fresh. Farming is hip again, but the local food movement has roots that go much deeper.

But now, changes to our Agricultural Land Reserve threaten the future of local farming across the province. For more than 40 years BC's Agricultural Land Reserve has been critical to protecting the farmland that feeds British Columbia. During the 1960s, BC was losing up to 6,000 acres of farmland a year to subdivisions and other development. Five percent of BC's land-base was placed in the Agricultural Land Reserve and 40 years later, 5% remains protected. It worked.

This spring, the BC government unravelled protection for most of BC's farmland. While protection remains strong in the Okanagan, Lower Mainland, and on Vancouver Island, the rest of our farmland - 90% of it, including the Kootenays - has new rules that make it easier for energy extraction, industrial development, and endless subdivisions to replace farmland.

Farmers across BC, young and old, including Kootenay farmers and the BC Agriculture Council, were vocally opposed to changes to the ALR, but their opposition fell on deaf ears at the legislature.

Even so, our farmers across the Kootenays are working the land, putting food on our tables. Your local farmers' market is the place to connect with local farmers. This summer, Wildsight is launching Kimberley's first-ever farmers' market, which runs on Thursday nights from 5-7:30pm, July 3 to September 11 on Howard Street above the Platzl.

INSIDE: 40 YEARS OF PURCELL WILDERNESS



Art Twomey on Saffron Peak during a 9-day hike from Toby Creek to Dewar Creek to scout the proposed boundaries for the Conservancy. Photo by Roy Moe.

PURCELL WILDERNESS CELEBRATES A CONFLICTED 40TH BIRTHDAY

In the opening years of the 1970s, a dedicated band of wilderness activists began the push to create what would become the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Provincial Park. The group, including Wildsight Executive Director John Bergenske and photographer and filmmaker Art Twomey, alarmed at the pace, scale, and careless nature of the industrial activity around their homesteads in the upper St. Mary's watershed, made movies and slideshows about the Purcells, and toured the province drumming up support for protection of their beloved mountains.

"Even as we had the park creation order in front of the legislature, Crestbrook had their road building crew out pushing the roads in as far as they could," Bergenske remembers.

AT 200,000 HECTARES, THE PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY IS THE LARGEST PROTECTED WILDERNESS IN SOUTHERN BC.

Thankfully, long-term vision prevailed, and in 1974 the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy was created. A 1995 expansion to 200,000 hectares made it the largest protected wilderness in southern BC.

Forty seems to be a tough birthday for parks and humans alike, and with the passing of the Park Amendment Act (Bill 4) in the BC Legislature this past March, 2014 became the year that BC parks changed, forever.

Bill 4: Industrializing our Parks

Bill 4 paves the way for consultation-free park boundary adjustments and industrial activities that were formerly prohibited in our parks.

Before Bill 4, any activity that disturbed the land or aimed to remove natural resources from a park was only allowed if it was "necessary for the preservation or maintenance of the recreational values of the park involved". Pipelines, transmission lines and other industrial activity didn't pass the test.

But now, with the rules changed, more than 30 parks have already been earmarked by the B.C. government for boundary adjustments for industrial purposes, with one pipeline company,

Kinder Morgan, already holding permits for industrial activity inside five BC Parks.

Despite a 166,000-signature petition, one of the largest environmental petitions ever in BC, Bill 4 was passed. Our parks were designed for perpetual protection, but Bill 4 weakens that protection in the name of profit, leaving parks like the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy looking towards an uncertain future.

The Power of the Lens

Photography played a pivotal role in protecting the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy and the St. Mary's Alpine Park.

After building a small log homestead in the St. Mary's Valley, Art Towmey began documenting the beauty that surrounded him. Collaborating with Anne Edwards and mountaineer Pat Morrow, they produced the first hiking and natural history guide to the region, "Exploring the Purcell Wilderness". That book, plus slide shows made up of photos that poured in from impassioned hikers, climbers, hunting outfitters, fishermen and nature lovers, captured the rugged beauty, the biological diversity, and the vast wilderness of the Purcells - and were instrumental in the creation of the park.



Above: Art Twomey and Margie Jamieson were the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy's first rangers, patrolling the park on horse.

Below: Upper St. Mary's Valley. Photo by Bruce Kirkby.



BAT GIRL RETURNS... TO THE FLATHEAD FOR BIOBLITZ 3



Building on the successes of Flathead Bioblitz 1 and 2, which took experts deep into BC's wild Flathead Valley to inventory bugs and birds, Flathead Bioblitz 3 is scheduled for this coming July. Bioblitz 3 will focus on bats, led by the Kootenay's very own Bat Girl, Kaslo's Dr. Cory Lausen.

After the identification of new endemic species and species completely new to science, who knows what nocturnal discoveries await in the batty world of BC's Flathead River watershed.

Dr. Lausen has studied bats in Africa, Belize, and Mongolia, as well as across northwestern North America. She specializes in acoustic monitoring and detection of bats. More on Dr. Lausen at BatsRus.ca.

I LOVE MY LAKE



Photo: Bruce Kirkby

Water. It's at the heart of everything, including many of our programs. Much of our work involves helping you get involved in planning, mapping, and monitoring water issues on your favourite local creek, river, or lake. Using citizen science, we are helping to identify and tackle the challenges of maintaining healthy aquatic systems.

That's why Wildsight's Living Lakes Canada program launched the 'I Love My Lake' campaign: to bring you closer to the lake, river, or wetland that you love.

Make your lake love affair public! Email us to get your bumpersticker or to get involved in water projects in your area: info@livinglakes.ca.

LOOK OUTSIDE!



Photo: Yuichi Takasaka

Click. Share. Connect. That's the nature of it. Look Outside is a celebration of the wild, wildlife and life in the Purcell region. Submit photos, share images and show us how you're connected to the wild!

This year-long celebration will feature monthly prizes and grand prizes, with winners selected to be part of the 2015 Look Outside multi-media region-wide tour. We live in one of the most stunning places in the world. Let's celebrate. Look Outside.

There are two ways you can participate in the photo contest. Go social and submit photos tagged #WildLookOutside on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook or submit them online at wildlookoutside.com.

WILDSIGHT IS PEOPLE LIKE YOU

Join in our vision of a landscape with connected wild spaces, roaming wildlife and healthy ecosystems. Join us in supporting communities thriving with sustainable livelihoods and lifestyles. Become a Wildsight member.

250 427 2535 | 2 - 495 Wallinger, Kimberley, BC V1A 1Z6

WILDSIGHT.CA